

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 11, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by: Elvin Enns, Malcolm Enns, Albert Courcelles and others.

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

Provincial Road 355

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The unsafe conditions of PR No. 355 from the western edge of Minto municipality to PR No. 270 (including the hill out of the Minnedosa valley), poses an undue risk to Manitobans who must travel on this roadway.

The steady stream of traffic on this stretch of PR No. 355, which includes automobiles such as "B" train semi-trailer tractors, mail delivery vehicles and school buses, make the roadway in its current state dangerously impassable.

Continued expansion of the regional economy in livestock development, grain storage and transportation and the proposed Mohawk Plant, puts additional strain on PR No. 355 and creates further safety concerns for motorists.

PR No. 355 experiences an increased risk in traffic flow during the spring season when there are weight restrictions on surrounding provincial trunk highways.

For several years, representatives of six municipality corporations, as well as an ad hoc citizens' group have been actively lobbying the provincial government to upgrade and reconstruct the stretch of PR No. 355 at issue.

Manitobans and visitors to the province deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider upgrading PR No. 355 from the western edge of the R.M. of Minto to PR No. 270 (including the hill out of the Minnedosa valley).

To request the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) to consider supporting the said initiative to ensure the safety of our Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

Signed by Gavin St. John, Wendy St. John, Shirley Rose and others.

*(10:05)

Minimum Sitting Days for Manitoba Legislature

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 35 days in 2003.

In 2004, there were 55 sitting days.

The number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by Danielle Zelinsky, Ron Zelinsky and S. Howanyk.

Ambulance Service

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Signed by Shirley Zacharkiw, Kay Beddome and Fern Julmi.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 14—The Electricians' Licence Amendment Act

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 14, The Electricians'

Licence Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le permis d'électricien, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education, that Bill 14, The Electricians' Licence Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, the purposes of this bill are to enhance safety and increase the supply of skilled tradespeople. It does this by encouraging entry into the apprenticeship program in the electrical trades through the elimination of the category of electrician's helper and by specifically indicating who may perform electrical work and under what conditions.

*(10:10)

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipalities Revenue Sharing

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it has been well known that there has been an incredible amount of revenue that has come into the province of Manitoba. It is unfortunate that the NDP threw away a perfect opportunity to structure a deal with municipalities that would be tied to revenue growth.

I would ask this Premier if he would explain to mayors, reeves and all Manitobans why he will not give municipalities a percentage of a revenue stream that will grow with the economy so that they can start to seriously attack their infrastructure deficit in their areas. Will the Premier agree to do that today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, one should not ask a question if he does not understand the basic facts under which the question is underpinned.

Manitoba is the only province in Canada, and I repeat this, the only province in Canada that has a municipal tax transfer based on the increase of corporate and individual tax. We have further introduced a new growth tax in this budget that deals with the freeze that was made in the mid-nineties by

the former Filmon government on transit grants and, instead of having a static situation on those grants, Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where those grants will grow with gas and fuel tax revenues in the communities of Flin Flon, Thompson, Winnipeg and Brandon.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we have announced an unprecedented amount of capital. I think the last capital agreement announced by members opposite for the City of Winnipeg was \$96 million over five or six years. I will check the number, but that amount has been announced at \$500 million. It includes major capital investment in sewage treatment. It includes major capital investments in the underpass, a project talked about by members opposite, but they never got it off the ground. It includes a discussion between the federal and provincial governments on the issue of the rapid transit agreement that is now being renegotiated by the mayor. It includes agreements on capital for the Keystone Centre. It includes capital agreements to clean water and boil water orders, some \$80 million on cleaning up water and sewage treatment across Manitoba, including in the community of Gimli.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba provides the second highest per capita amount to municipalities in Canada. If you include welfare, which the Ontario Tories delegated down to the municipalities under the Harris years, Manitoba's per capita grants are some of the best in the country.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that this Premier would make reference to welfare rates because that is exactly what he is doing to the province of Manitoba because he cannot grow the economy. He has to rely on federal transfer payments from the federal government. That is the kind of welfare state that this province is under this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, it is not because there is a lack of money in Manitoba. The problem is that this NDP government under this Premier has a Big Brother approach. In other words, all the tax money that comes in, let us spend it because we know better than everybody else, including municipalities. We disagree with that. Manitoba has an infrastructure deficit of over \$7.4 billion.

Will this Premier agree to work with municipalities to tie it into revenue growth, a revenue

growth stream so as Manitoba grows, our municipalities can grow and start paying down this deficit, rather than a father-knows-best policy?

Mr. Doer: An increase in transit grants from the Tory frozen grants provides more money for public transportation, so if the members opposite with their freeze mentality are suggesting today that having an increase in funding of some 15 percent for the City of Winnipeg for transit grants is a bad thing, then we are guilty. If the member opposite who put in his alternative budget nothing for municipalities, nothing for municipalities is against an 8% increase for municipalities. What hypocrisy.

There is \$11 million more in the City of Winnipeg, for example, this year than in previous years in terms of growth. Mr. Speaker, the unemployment stats came out, and more importantly for Manitoba, the employment numbers came out. There are 9000 more people working today than a year ago. We averaged about 3000 jobs a year in the bad old days of the Tory cutback, extreme government. The economy is growing, housing is growing, population is growing, jobs are growing, the economy is growing, and we are not going to go back to the flat-earth days of members opposite.

*(10:15)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in the union-hall-style rant that we just heard from the Premier, the only thing he forgot to say is that the debt is growing under his watch, too. He refused to say that.

This Premier is guilty of not coming up with a plan that ties municipalities to give them an opportunity to share in economic growth. It should be a plan for Manitobans that the harder we work with our partners, our municipality partners, as hard as the economy grows, as it grows, everybody should share in that revenue. There should be something tied to the revenue stream. As the economy grows, the municipalities grow.

Will this Premier agree today that he should start doing something to look at this infrastructure deficit of \$7.4 billion that we have in the province? Will he agree today to work with municipalities to tie the revenue growth of Manitoba to ensure that that track of expenditures and that track of revenue is shared with municipalities? Will he agree to do that today?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, you are asking us to do something that Ed Schreyer did in the mid-seventies.

He established the Municipal Tax Sharing agreement, and that is already in place. It went from low 80s to \$86 million in this budget to municipalities. That is the equivalent of over 4 cents of fuel tax, plus we announced a new tax, a new conversion with an increased amount of money for transit grants to Thompson, Flin Flon, Brandon and Winnipeg. The members opposite froze it.

Mr. Speaker, we have announced a \$500-million capital program for the City of Winnipeg alone. We announced money for sewage treatment. We announced money for transportation. We announced money for streets. We announced money for transit capital, \$80 million for boiled water orders. The bottom line is what we are attempting to do is also invest in other infrastructure. The University of Manitoba had a leaking roof at the Engineering faculty when we came into office. That was an infrastructure deficit left by Tories to the people of Manitoba. We are putting a new roof and a new building at the University of Manitoba.

The operating rooms at the Health Sciences Centre were not meeting accreditation standards. We had fruit flies in the operating rooms. We are rebuilding the Health Sciences Centre. That was an infrastructure deficit left by members opposite and we are cleaning it up. I could go on all day long, Mr. Speaker. We are improving infrastructure over and over and over again: health care, education, post-secondary education, water treatment, sewage treatment, floodway development. Infrastructure is being built where it was neglected in the 1990s.

Municipalities Revenue Sharing

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the Premier to take a walk over to the University of Winnipeg where there are pails in the hallway to collect the drips from the leaking roof today. This government has got over \$500 million in new revenue and \$40 million of that comes from new sources of gambling revenue, yet this government refuses to strike a deal with our major cities to give more money to fix the crumbling infrastructure. The only thing that is growing under this government is the size of the potholes.

I would ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) if he will finally, for once, take the initiative, sit down with the cities and negotiate a

new deal that will give them enough money to fix the crumbling infrastructure the citizens of Manitoba are faced to deal with day in and day out.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to think that the members opposite missed the Throne Speech where we shared casino revenues with the City of Winnipeg, the first time in the history of this province that has been done. If you look at the facts, PMTS has gone from 82 million last year to 86 million this year, roads and transit grants, 27.9 to 32. The total has gone from 110 to \$118 million, an increase of 8 percent based on growth revenues in this province, unique in the country. They never did as well. Nobody else in the country does as well. We were the most generous, sharing of provincial revenues with municipalities of any jurisdiction in Canada.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, once again, this Finance Minister continues to mislead Manitobans by omission. The reality is this government is getting over \$40 million in new revenue on gambling. They are justifying an \$8-million increase to fix the crumbling roads that have to be dealt with in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon and other cities in this province. This is totally unacceptable.

I would ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) if he will finally take this issue seriously, if he will force his counterparts, his Finance Minister, to go out and seriously negotiate with the cities of this province, how they can grow their revenue stream through the growth in the economy. I know the problem is the economy in Manitoba is not growing nearly as fast as other provinces, but will he strike a deal?

* (10:20)

Mr. Selinger: I can tell you this, there is a lot of eagerness to answer this question, Mr. Speaker. Everybody on this side of the House would like to answer this question because the economy has grown \$10 billion since we have come into office; 33 percent. The members opposite do not want to speak that number. They would rather see it whispered in the halls of the Manitoba Club, \$10 billion. The member opposite gets up and says we should share growth revenues. Show me any other jurisdiction in the country that does.

When it comes to lottery revenues, maybe he missed the 40 new police officers that were

announced in the Throne Speech that we are sharing; 20 of those officers outside the city, 20 inside the city. What about that 50% reduction in education taxes to farmers? We funded that. They talked about it. We do it.

City of Brandon Gaming Revenue Sharing

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the member from Brandon, was eager to get up on a question, I am going to give him the opportunity. This government announced in its Throne Speech that it would be sharing casino revenues with the City of Winnipeg. Our city in Brandon, the second-largest city in this province, does not have the opportunity to have a casino within its boundary.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs whether or not the government is going to be prepared to share some of the casino revenues, as it does with the City of Winnipeg, with the City of Brandon, the second-largest city in Manitoba.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): I thank the member very much for his question. As we move ahead with our policies in Manitoba Lotteries and the sharing of that revenue with all municipalities in Manitoba, I think we have seen very clearly in this budget the 20 police officers that will be funded here in the city of Winnipeg, the 20 police officers that will be funded outside the city of Winnipeg, and, certainly, police officers in Brandon. The expansion that took place throughout the 1990s with Manitoba Lotteries saw revenue sharing go back into rural Manitoba as the expansion of gaming in Winnipeg through the previous government on the lotteries with two locations here in Brandon and here in Winnipeg had an overexpenditure of \$140 million. Something we had to clean up when we came into government, certainly now is turned around. It is a corporation that is doing very well.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, as we have seen with many ministers in this government, if you do not have the answer just go on with something unrelated.

I ask this Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the member from Brandon, why it is that the City of Brandon is not able to partner adequately to address

some of its growing and desperate infrastructure needs, and why it has been excluded from sharing the casino revenues that this government has said it would share with the city of Winnipeg. Is Brandon not as important to this government as the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Smith: I thank the member very much for that question, Mr. Speaker. I look back into the nineties when Brandon was promised a hospital, I believe it was six or seven times. We promised a hospital in Brandon. If you drive into Brandon now, and you drive into my friend's Brandon East ward and you drive by the redevelopment of a \$60-million health centre, it is absolutely not hard to see who has invested in Brandon.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, the member asked about reinvestment, an 8% increase in the transfers from Manitoba for infrastructure in Brandon. We are seeing the Keystone Centre redevelopment, one of the largest projects we have seen in a long time. Their funding to the Keystone Centre decreased to zero by the time we got into government, down to nothing on a declining scale. We reinvested in the Keystone, Brandon hospital and many other things in Brandon.

Red River Floodway Expansion Labour Agreement

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as the Manitoba heavy construction industry said today in a reaction to this NDP's floodway agreement, this is an outright betrayal of Manitoba taxpayers, and it is a scandalous waste of Manitoba taxpayers' dollars that is wasted to line the union bosses' pockets. Under this NDP floodway agreement, for every 10 hours a non-union worker puts into the floodway project, this NDP agreement forces that non-union worker to hand over \$30 to the NDP union bosses. For a 40-hour work week, that is more than \$100. In fact, according to their own calculations, if there are around 2475 people who will be working on this floodway, that translates to \$7,000 per hour they are forcing upon non-unionized workers to pay additionally.

Mr. Speaker, how can this Premier force non-unionized workers to pay for these union dues? Will he do the right thing and make sure that this agreement is fair and equitable to all?

*(10:25)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The members opposite will remember when the member opposite was working for Brian Mulroney, there was a labour management agreement for the Confederation Bridge in Charlottetown. I did not see the member opposite resign from the Mulroney administration when that agreement was signed. I do not recall that as a matter of principle.

The Hydro agreements in the late sixties with the former premiers in Manitoba before the NDP was elected had labour management agreements. Why did they have that, Mr. Speaker? They had it because there was a desire in the public and financial interest to have no strikes or lockouts.

There is only one party in this Chamber that banned unions and corporations of donations to political parties. The only party that supports kickbacks are the Tories opposite who want to return where unions and corporations donate to the political parties. It will never happen as long as we are in office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: There is only one party in this Chamber that is going to force non-unionized workers to pay union dues. Mr. Speaker, that is a shame and that is a slap in the face to all of those workers in 1997 that worked 24 hours, seven days a week to ensure that the Z-dike was built. They did not have to force them to pay union dues. They gave that to businesses in Manitoba because they wanted to do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, another part of this NDP floodway agreement, it is going to force all non-unionized workers to put their names and addresses forward to the Floodway Authority. This NDP government did not get elected to allow the unions to build their data base to go out and start unionizing companies in Manitoba. Will this NDP government please put this blatant misuse of their power to an end? Build the floodway, but build it fairly.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, again I say that labour management agreements have been around in the province for the development of the Kettle Rapids dam long, long before any NDP government was elected. I point out that the member opposite worked for Brian Mulroney. He had a labour management agreement with the Confederation Bridge. We are a

partner with the federal government. When Treasury Board reviewed this in Ottawa, they said this is sensible. This is sensible because there have been other precedents and the key to it, of course, is to stop labour management disputes in stalling a major project. The liability identified by the International Joint Commission was \$75 million a year.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite, a couple of years ago, the sky was falling when we passed the new Labour Relations Act. There were people in the hallways saying, "Oh, the Labour Relations Act is horrible." Well, here we have two things happening. Three years later, four years later, there are 9000 new jobs today than there was 12 months ago. Oh, the sky is not falling.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is we have 60% less days lost to strike and lockout. The sky was not falling then and it is not falling now with the agreement that was reached with people like Mr. Rajotte from the Construction Association and the Floodway Authority.

Mr. Murray: This Premier loves to spin rhetoric and talk about all sorts of issues, much the same way that it would be that his leader, Jack Layton, wants to bring back the inheritance tax to Manitoba. That is what that NDP government is all about.

The fact of life, Mr. Speaker, is under this NDP government, they pushed away the Manitoba heavy construction industry. They pushed away merit contractors. They pushed away all the non-unionized companies from this agreement so they could put in place a system that forces non-unionized workers to pay union dues, that ensures non-unionized workers have to put their names and addresses forward to build a data base. Now they are going to tell those non-unionized companies that they have to hire unionized workers if they have to hire somebody.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit to this Premier, rather than talking about other projects around Canada, why does he not concentrate on the one in Manitoba? That was the floodway that was built under Premier Roblin. He did not impose unionized agreements on anybody. That premier had it right; this Premier has it wrong.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite are out of any thoughts, they come back to the floodway. Last year they led with 13 questions on

the floodway and 2 on BSE when there was a crisis in Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, we think the agreement that is reached with Hydro projects in the past and the Confederation Bridge to have no—

An Honourable Member: Forced unionization.

* (10:30)

Mr. Doer: Well, the Fox-Decent report said that the statement made on forced unionization is not—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of the rules. I am sure if there is, you would expect me to call it to order, but I need to be able to hear it. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line is that we feel that the agreement to have no strikes and lockouts, and I would quote Mr. Wightman, executive director of the Construction Labour Relations Association of Manitoba, where he said, "there was unprecedented concessions from both sides to get this agreement."

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we are very pleased that there will be no labour management disputes on the floodway. We are pleased that the floodway will be built without disruptions, which we think is crucial because every year the IJC has identified a \$70-million to \$90-million liability. It would have been—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the member opposite when he made a prediction on labour management relations before about The Labour Relations Act, the days lost to strike and lockout are down 60 percent. When he made

predictions about our workplace safety and health legislation, he was wrong as well. The workplace safety and health injuries are down 19 percent. We deliver, and we will deliver this without any strikes or lockouts.

Red River Floodway Expansion Labour Agreement

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government first stripped workers of their democratic right to a vote, then took away protection from picket line violence. Now this NDP government is going to force unionization on an entire workforce at a cost of up to \$7,000 an hour. Now that is the big daddy of payback to NDP union bosses. Why is this being forced on Manitoba taxpayers?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that we are very pleased with the project labour agreement that has been negotiated—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that when the Speaker is standing all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I know it is Friday, but it is getting very difficult to hear. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important that you reflect all of the facts when you are standing up in the House and speaking about labour issues. I think that that is very, very important.

The last time I checked, all of the stakeholders were at the table. We are very pleased at the work that was done. I am very pleased with the agreement that was negotiated. There were concessions that were made by all of the stakeholders—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are going to get on with building the floodway. We are going to get on with protecting Manitobans against another

flood of the century. This project labour agreement is going to build Manitoba's economy.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, as a worker in Manitoba, you have no rights to democracy in the workplace, no protection from violence, forced to participate in an NDP kickback to NDP union bosses. What is next? Opening the flood gates to forced unionization of all workers in Manitoba. When will this minister stand up for all workers in Manitoba and not just the union bosses?

Ms. Allan: Whenever the Labour critic from Springfield asks me to stand up for all of the workers in Manitoba, I always take a great deal of pleasure in reminding the MLA for Springfield about the compassionate care legislation, Bill 4, which was my first piece of legislation in this House that provided job protection for workers who were returning from parental leave and maternity leave, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? They voted against that legislation. Shame on them.

Livestock Industry Slaughter Facilities

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The R-CALF group is working hard to close the border to boxed beef of 30 months and under. Today the Canadian Cattlemen's Association is saying that the border can remain closed for up to 18 months. The BSE crisis is far from over, yet this NDP government continues to make empty announcements. They have no real impact on those affected by the crisis. Will the minister tell us this NDP government's plan that will finally see slaughter facilities built in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely evident that the BSE crisis has had a negative impact on many of our constituents in this province of Manitoba. The thing that I do find provocative is the approach of members opposite whose own members have doubted whether we should be investing in processing of cattle in Manitoba. Our position has been clear. Our commitment, our actions have been clear from day one, from May 20, when that one cow was found in Alberta. We have been solid behind the farmers, behind ranchers on this issue. We have come through with the things that we have said we are going to do. I paraphrase John Diefenbaker who said we know

Manitobans know where we stand, I want to know where you stand.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we tabled our plans six months ago, and they have yet to even implement part of it.

Yesterday the federal and Alberta governments announced funding to seek out new foreign markets for our processed beef. This NDP government continues to dither and miss opportunities of establishing processing facilities and jobs right here in Manitoba. Will the minister of the NDP government get on with the job and not leave our livestock producers in the lurch once again?

Mr. Struthers: This is amazing, Mr. Speaker. The member across talks about their plan that they put forward. The cow that got us into this problem in the first place was detected on May 20—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very, very difficult to hear. I do not even know how we can go on with Question Period when no one can even hear the questions and the answers. If it requires taking a recess for people to regroup that would be an option we could look forward to, but right now I cannot even hear the person who has the floor. I am sure that you, the person who is asking the question, would like to hear the answer, and also the person that has to answer the question needs to be able to hear the question. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Struthers: That case was detected on the 20th of May, 2003. My friends opposite took over a year and four months to come back with a plan that they said would work. It took too long for your plan to come forward. We were acting immediately. Our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) moved forward on a number of very specific, very helpful cases, including providing money to feed the cattle we knew in this province was going to grow. We came forward with a slaughter deficiency program well before our friends opposite even were talking about it. Still our friends opposite debate whether we should actually be involved in the slaughter of these cattle. So I still want to know where they stand on this issue.

Childhood Obesity and Diabetes Fitness Programs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, since December there have been many meetings of

the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force. What has become abundantly clear from these meetings is that the incidents of obesity and diabetes in Manitoba have been going up under the watch of this government. When it comes to fitness in children, we have a government which talks a lot, but has failed to improve the health and the level of fitness of Manitoba children. During the last five years, the government has increased spending by \$2 billion a year.

I ask the Minister of Healthy Living how it is that so much has been spent and yet so little accomplished when it comes to improving fitness and decreasing obesity and diabetes in Manitoba children.

* (10:40)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): Indeed, the Healthy Kids, Healthy Task Force has been travelling throughout the province to address this serious issue. I find it, first of all, curious, strange that the member opposite would inquire about what is being done when, in fact, he has heard from so many Manitobans who have told him while he sat on the committee. However, I would carry on by saying that Manitoba has been working on a comprehensive healthy living strategy in the meantime during those hearings including a very aggressive tobacco cessation program, including the development of an extraordinarily exceptional physical and health curriculum which is being touted nationally and internationally. Indeed, we will continue to listen to Manitobans about their ideas about how we can work together as all parties for the health of Manitoba children.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, at meeting after meeting of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, we have heard from presenter after presenter saying that in the last five years this government has done little to nothing to improve the fitness of Manitoba children. The number of children with obesity and diabetes has been going up for five years, and this government has not been effective. It has done nothing.

I ask the minister why her NDP government has been so ineffective in spending \$2 billion more a year while producing worse results instead of better results when it comes to childhood obesity and diabetes.

Ms. Oswald: Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we have, in fact, been consulting with Manitobans on this particular task force. I am somewhat flummoxed by the fact that the member opposite has not listened to the extraordinary programming that is going on across Manitoba to ensure that all children can be engaged in activities.

However, Mr. Speaker, I might note that it is no secret to anybody in the House that the member opposite has spent some time dealing in particular with the issue of physical activity. It does purport from time to time to have one rather single-minded solution to this. We have been listening to all Manitobans about a comprehensive strategy on nutrition, on physical activity, on injury prevention. Perhaps fewer caucus meetings at McDonald's might assist in him seeing it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think it is warranted where we have to bring up where members have their lunch. I do not know what it has to do with the question, so I would ask members to just be a little cautious of it when they are addressing questions or answers.

Child Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I would say it is extraordinary to spend \$2 billion more a year and have the level of diabetes and obesity go up in children in Manitoba instead of going down. At meeting after meeting of the task force, we have heard the importance of nutrition to health and the importance of addressing child poverty in order to improve the nutritional status of children. In a poverty barometer to be released today, we will hear abundant new evidence that in Manitoba poverty increases obesity because poor children, generally, eat less healthy foods and are less active.

I ask the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) why, when their government is spending \$2 billion more a year, does Manitoba still have one of the highest incidences of child poverty. Why has the government spent so much and been so ineffective in how it is spent?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Perhaps the member

opposite is not aware of what we have done on poverty. I am happy to let you know that just about a month ago, I travelled to Thompson, in northern Manitoba, where I announced a 20% increase in all of the three regions of northern Manitoba for individuals on income assistance. That was under the northern food strategy. That was increasing the northern food allowance. Instead of just sending barbs across the House, we are working, Mr. Speaker.

We have also increased minimum wage five times to \$7.25 an hour. We have improved access to affordable housing for low-income people. I am a minister who sits on the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. We have parent-child committees around this province. We also have the Healthy Baby Initiative. We were the first government in the history of Manitoba to bring in a prenatal supplement, taking care of moms and babes.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired, and time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by asking if there is potential leave of the House to ask a very time-sensitive question of the First Minister (Mr. Doer). It involves the commercial fishing industry here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave?

Order. Members who wish to have a conversation, please take it to the loge or out in the hallway. We need to be able to hear the business of the House that is being conducted. The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie has asked the House for leave to extend Question Period to pose a question. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Commercial Fishing

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that the government

will not entertain a question. It is a very important question regarding the commercial fishing industry here in Manitoba.

More than a month ago, the Commercial Fishermen's Association asked of this government for extension to the commercial fishing season here in the province of Manitoba, from the 15th of March to the end of the month. As we can appreciate by just looking out the window, Mother Nature is not following the Gregorian calendar as we do here in the Legislative Chamber, with forecasted temperatures of minus 20 this weekend.

There is no reason why we cannot extend the fishing season here in Manitoba. It has been a horrendous season for the fishers here in Manitoba because of the weather they have had to experience during their fishing season. The month of January, out on the open ice, was absolutely horrendous, and it impacted greatly on their harvest this year. Many fishers operating on the south basin of Lake Manitoba have harvested only 25 percent to 30 percent of their licence. This is having a tremendous economic impact on their operations, their families. I appeal to this government to respond to the commercial fishers in a positive fashion, recognizing that the weather we have outside will not adversely affect the operation on the lakes. The ice is still thick and the temperature of the water is still low, therefore I believe this government should extend the fishing season to the end of the month.

R.M. of St. Andrews

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to and applaud the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews on the celebration of its 125th anniversary of incorporation as a rural municipality in the province of Manitoba.

Many residents of St. Andrews can trace their family ancestry back to the original settlers who laid the cornerstones for the communities within this municipality. As immigrants moved north in the 1800s, they found the land west of the Red River very suitable for settlement. From the days when Petersfield was known as St. Louis for its founder, when York boats travelled to Lower Fort Garry, and since the days when retired employees of the Hudson Bay Company were given land fronting on the Red River, this municipality has been a vibrant part of the history of our province.

Today it is the quieter rural life and friendly atmosphere that continues to draw people to St. Andrews. The people of St. Andrews began the celebration of their heritage on February 14, 2005, and will continue to do so for the remainder of 2005. Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all the honourable MLAs to join me in congratulating Reeve Don Forfar, the members of council for the R.M. of St. Andrews and all citizens, past and present, whose pioneering spirit and sense of history and heritage ensured this auspicious anniversary will be a memorable one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sally Armstrong

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I know many of my honourable colleagues have put some words on the record this week about women's issues, women's organizations and those women who have made a profound difference in our communities and throughout this province. Last night I, along with all of the women from our caucus, had the opportunity to attend the UNIFEM celebration of International Women's Week and hear from Sally Armstrong, one woman who has made a difference for women around the world.

Sally Armstrong, the keynote speaker at UNIFEM's dinner, is a member of the Order of Canada and a human rights activist who is a passionate advocate for advancing the rights of women and children. As a documentary filmmaker and award-winning author and journalist, she has filmed and written stories about women in conflict all over the world, including Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and Afghanistan.

Also, Ms. Armstrong is the winner of the UNIFEM Canada Award and will be receiving this next week in Ottawa. Yesterday Sally Armstrong shared with us a story about Lima, a little girl who she spent time with. Lima is a 13-year-old girl who lost her mother and father at a very early age and is left with the responsibility of raising her three younger siblings. I think, Mr. Speaker, we sometimes tend to lose sight of how fortunate we are to live in a country like Canada. Thirteen years old, it is quite something, quite a responsibility. I cannot even imagine. On behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House, I wish to extend congratulations to Sally Armstrong on receiving the UNIFEM Canada Award.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Sally Armstrong

for the work that she has done to educate others about women in areas of conflict and for the impact this has had on the rights of women and children around the world. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:00)

Crime Prevention

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to report on the overwhelming success of a series of crime prevention meetings which I sponsored in my constituency recently. These five meetings were organized to inform seniors in my constituency about the importance of taking proactive measures to ensure that they do not fall victim to crime. All of the meetings were extremely well attended, and in a couple of cases the crowds were so big there was standing room attendance only.

The terrific presentation was made by Constable Lynn Latozke of the Winnipeg Police Service Crime Prevention Unit. Constable Latozke stressed the importance of seniors locking their doors when at home, not allowing unknown people into their apartment blocks, shopping in groups, leaving big purses at home and to be wary of debit card fraud. The constable talked about auto thefts and the importance of using the club and, better yet, the installation of immobilizers in their cars.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the seniors at 1080 Henderson Highway, 210, 220 Oakland, 404 Desalaberry, 163 Rowandale and 53 Stadacona for attending these important meetings and for the welcome they gave us. I would also like to thank Constable Lynn Latozke of the Crime Prevention Unit for taking time out of a busy schedule to attend all five meetings and give such an informative talk.

Joan Thomson

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, we celebrated International Women's Day, but today I would like to take this opportunity to recognize one woman because one woman can make a difference. Today, I would like to speak about a personal friend, Mrs. Joan Thomson of Rivers. I have seen first-hand how hard Joan works without expecting a thank you or even realizing how special she is for her efforts.

Joan is a retired nurse and will always be remembered for her dedication and sweet nature, whether she was tending a child's cut or saving a life. Over the years, she passed on her knowledge to others by instructing hundreds of students in first aid, CPR and emergency medical service.

Mr. Speaker, it truly is difficult to convey the impact Joan has had on Rivers. I only wish I had enough time to list every one of her many accomplishments, volunteer activities and fund-raising efforts. Members of her community recently nominated Joan for the Women of Distinction awards held in Brandon recently. Joan's community involvement includes her role as emergency measures co-ordinator since 1999, board member for the Riverdale Hospital from 1995 to 1997 and current co-chair of the Rivers Health Action Committee. The Health Action Committee with heavy involvement from Joan has truly made a difference in Rivers from educational awareness to the development of housing for University of Manitoba medical students.

Joan loves young people. She is a loving mother and grandmother, but also committed to all children. She was 4-H leader and supervised a local horse club for many years. As well, each year Joan and her husband, Jack, welcome exchange students into their home. Demonstrating yet again her love for learning and teaching, Joan assisted with the Protect Our Teens program which educated young people on how to react in an emergency situation.

Mr. Speaker, I wish there were more women like Joan Thomson. I genuinely would like to thank her on behalf of her community for a life well lived and her selflessness. On a more personal note, I want to show my appreciation to Joan for simply being a good friend. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official

Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who has four minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: Four minutes, what can you do in four minutes?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): What can you do in four minutes? Well, I can make scrambled eggs in four minutes. I can make porridge in four minutes. I can clean a washroom in four minutes. Instead, what I would like to do is wind up my speech and say that I think we have a balanced government with balanced budgets, and that is a very important message. In fact, Budget 2005 is the second straight budget that is projected to balance and to pay down debt with no draw on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This is a first in the 10-year history of balanced budget legislation in Manitoba.

We have got some praise from some unusual sources. For example, when the *Free Press* compared the Filmon government's approach to budgeting with ours, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, and I quote, "The NDP are the ones who have actually reduced income tax," *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 6, 2005.

We have been creating jobs. This past year Manitoba had the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 5.3 percent. Eighty-seven percent of the 36 000 jobs created since 1999 have been full-time jobs.

Housing starts are up 73 percent since 2000. From '90-99 housing starts declined by 5 percent. Last year's total of 4440 housing starts was the highest since 1988, the highest since we were last in government. House values in Manitoba are up 36 percent since 1999. From '90-99 house values went up a mere 8 percent, and people like me, our housing price did not go up at all in the North End but that has changed. For example, in the William Whyte area, housing values have gone up 60 percent since 1999.

Looking at population migration, immigration, over the past five years there has been an immigration to Manitoba, 1598 young people. Over the last five years that the Tories were in power, 1994-99, Manitoba had a net out-migration of 2370 people.

Over the past five years, real, disposable incomes in Manitoba have increased by 5.2 percent. This contrasts with the previous decade, '90-99, when real disposable incomes actually fell by 4.2 percent.

Statistics Canada reports that capital investment in Manitoba increased by 9.9 percent in 2004, above the national average of 8.5 percent. Private capital investment increased by 8.1 percent in 2004. Private investment in Manitoba has increased by more than \$1 billion over the past five years.

The 2004 Ernst & Young's Global Biotechnology Report said that Manitoba is home to the fastest-growing life sciences industry in Canada. The report went further to note that Manitoba's boom is partially explained by the provincial government's effort to grow the biotechnology sector within the province.

There is more and more good news. I could go on and on, but I am limited by time. I am sorry there is not more time to share all this good news with the opposition. In fact, it is such a good-news budget that I expect they will have to reverse their motion amending the budget motion and actually have to vote for it because I cannot imagine them voting against tax cuts and against investment in rural Manitoba and against all the good, positive, progressive things that we are doing in this budget.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): It is with reservation that I speak to this budget today because, as we heard in this Chamber yesterday, the government Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) admitted that last year's budget in health was not attainable and, in fact, was purposely stated that way, which sounds to me like there was some cooking of the books. I ask how we can trust that the recipe used last year is not the recipe used this year to cook the books for Budget 2005.

We, as honourable members in the Chamber, trust that the numbers we see in the budget have been accurately reflected, but how can we now. We, as opposition members, look at the budget numbers and we compare them year to year. How are we to compare this year's budget to last year's cooked-book budget? How are we to do our jobs here? We have certainly lost trust in this government, and each of us will go out of here and we will talk to Manitobans. More Manitobans will talk about the cooked-book

budget, and they will become very angry. It will spread and the government will soon hear from Manitobans what they think of this fudged budget.

It is our duty as opposition to hold to account. How can we do that? How can we compare? This government is the steward of over \$8 billion of taxpayers' money, of Manitoba tax dollars. When we elect governments, we expect that they will be responsible managers of that money, that they will be accountable and they will be transparent, but what we have seen is a total lack of transparency when the Minister of Health said that his budget was unattainable, and it was done so on purpose.

*(11:10)

We can look at the Minister of Health to see that he is very uncomfortable. He says one thing, his voice says one thing when he answers in this House, but his body language says an entirely different thing. We know what happens with cognitive dissonance in people when they say things publicly that internally they do not really believe or have a hard time with. Their body language betrays what they are really thinking inside. It is very easy to see the body language of the Minister of Health when he tries to defend himself in the ringing of the hands and the scratching of the nose and that means that he thinks his budget stinks.

When we first heard the budget speech, we had to look at some of the reactions from people. I would like to just read you a few headlines: Our have-not heaven; Manitoba advantage slowly slipping away; and this one: A tricky budget with little vision. How accurate is that? [*interjection*] The member opposite asks where that headline came from. Well, it came from the *Brandon Sun*, Brandon.

What we see in this budget is lost opportunities. We have a lot of increased spending which simply appeases interest groups. Everybody comes to the government with their hand out and everybody gets a little bit. But what will happen is that people build this into their expectation, and every year people will build this into their expectation of government until there are no more transfers from the federal government like this last windfall we have seen. When that dries up, then the interest groups will be left with their hands out. This government should have thought about that, but they do not have the

vision and the foresight to look into the future. Well, they have no future, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba is just not competitive. In capital formation across Canada, Manitoba ranks seventh. Our ability to generate capital is what we need in this province because that increases productivity growth and that results in wage growth. Wage growth is what we need to see in this province, but we are not seeing that. Manitoba's GDP is seventh in Canada. Our disposable income is fifth, but we are still well below the Canadian average.

Unemployment growth from 2000 to 2004 was the second last in the country, and there is still bad news. In the private sector growth, we were dead last. We do not have any private-sector growth. At first glance, it seems that the NDP may have—there is a short-sighted and shallow vision of economic growth in this province. Unemployment stats may, at first glance, not look too bad, but let us look a little deeper, shall we? We have not factored in net migration. We have lost 1.8 percent of Manitobans to other provinces and that is about 10 000 people. Those people are young people and they are voting with their feet. They are moving. They are going to Alberta. They are going to Ontario where there is a good strong economy. There is nothing left in this province for young people.

We have in Manitoba the distinction of having a huge, big government. As government increases in its size, it lowers economic growth. The higher the transfer payments from the federal government, the more it fosters dependency. That is what this government's vision is for Manitoba: to foster dependency on the federal government forever. At one time in the future, the federal government will cut off the money source. This government better be thinking about what they are going to do when the money source dries up. Studies will say that the optimum level of government should account for approximately 20 percent of our GDP, but in Manitoba, with all levels of government, we have 47 percent of GDP due to government and that is not even including our Crown corporations.

Our burden of taxes and our regimented and rigid labour laws deter investment in our province. Manitoba ranks 55th out of 60 jurisdictions across Canada and the United States, in labour relations flexibility. What that means is companies do not want to move to Manitoba because the labour

restrictions are so huge they cannot do business here. I was talking to a person at breakfast this morning that said, out of 60 000 jobs that came to Canada from the United States last year, only three big jobs came to Manitoba, only three. New Brunswick had more than that. We had 450 employees come here. New Brunswick had 6700 and they were second to us. We are the lowest in being able to attract business to this province.

If we do not attract business to this province we do not have any economic growth. We have to look at the tax burden that has been imposed here. As an example, we look at the floodway, the forced unionization on the floodway project. It is \$7,000 an hour from all people who are going to work on the floodway project, and even if they are not working they are with a company that is working on the project, they are going to take this money through the back door to support the NDP government. I ask why Manitobans should bear this cost.

I think all Manitobans, not just in the construction industry, Mr. Speaker, but all Manitobans should look very closely at the tactics of this government and what they are doing. It is this industry today, what industry is it tomorrow and the day after that. *[interjection]*

The member opposite, the member from St. James-Assiniboia, asks if I am standing up for my husband. I think he should be ashamed of himself for that, and in fact I will have him know that my husband stands for himself and if he would like to speak to my husband he has the right to do that and please do.

An Honourable Member: And your point is?

* (11:20)

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, the member from St. James says she would stand up for her—the member from Lord Roberts says that she would stand up for her husband. That is admirable. I do not have to stand up for my husband. He stands up for himself. Perhaps she has to stand up for hers. *[interjection]*

The member from Rossmere likes to talk about the kind of vehicle that I drive—the member from Elmwood, likes to talk about the kind of car that I drive. Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the type of car a person drives is mostly testosterone driven.

It is mostly the men that want to talk about the kind of car they drive because it is a phallic symbol to them. To females it is not. We drive cars. We choose our cars for comfort and for visibility, and I can tell you, in a rural constituency we do a lot of driving. We are in our car a lot. I choose my vehicle because it is comfortable, it has got good visibility, it is safe, because I have to drive over a lot of unsafe roads. I will also tell you that this member has asked me about my car many times and told me he has taken one for a drive himself.

I would like to talk more about the missed opportunities in this budget. In justice, we still see all these auto thefts. We still see these gangs moving into the province. Now we have not only got the Hells Angels, but we have got the Banditos. You know, but I think that the NDP government are very comfortable with the Banditos and the bandits.

We have got the drug labs. We knew 18 months ago that there were crystal meth labs down in North Dakota, and we were told they are going to be coming up here. There is prime opportunity for it here. Yes, we are seeing it. You know why they come here, Mr. Speaker? Because they can, and they can get away with it.

Let us talk about finance, talk about the money that has come in. It is an unprecedented amount of money has come in from federal transfer payments this year. There is an opportunity to do something with this money rather than piecemeal, piecemeal, piecemeal. One thing, one thing which could have been done here with this amount of money that came from the federal government. Education taxes on property could have been eliminated now and forever. There was no political will to do that. The talk about tax cuts. Tax cuts are not even going to be in effect until next January.

So, what is that really going to do for us now? Only Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island have a smaller basic personal exemption than Manitoba.

Let us talk about the debt, the increase in debt. The debt has increased \$3.5 billion under this NDP's watch. That means that the per capita debt has grown by almost \$2,500 under the NDP. Now every man, woman and child is responsible for more than \$17,000 of provincial debt. Our debt is growing. Our short-sighted government has not done anything to

pay down the debt. Instead, they spend, spend, spend, spend.

Well, that spending, as I said, is going to come to a complete stop once the feds stop transferring money. What is the plan to get Manitoba off the federal dole?

An Honourable Member: There is no plan.

Mrs. Taillieu: There is no plan, as the member from Inkster says. Rightly so. There is no plan to make Manitoba a have province instead of a have-not province. I can see that Manitoba will have the dubious distinction of being the last have-not province in Manitoba forever.

We are just fostering dependency, Mr. Speaker. We are fostering dependency on the federal government, which means we are fostering dependency on every other single Canadian in Canada. We are telling other Canadians we cannot take care of ourselves. You have to help us. I suggest that is the wrong approach to take. We need to say, proudly stand up and say that we can take care of ourselves.

An Honourable Member: Like Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C.

Mrs. Taillieu: Like Saskatchewan, like Alberta, like B.C., and unlike Manitoba.

This government likes to say, "Well, we put \$314 million into the rainy day fund." But what they did not say was that \$150 million of that is part of a multi-year funding deal from the federal government for health. Now here we go back to health. Can we trust our Health budget? Can we, after what the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) has said? He does not believe that his Health budget is accurate. Therefore, we cannot believe that any budget, this year's budget, next year's budget, we cannot believe that these budgets have accurate numbers. We are going to have a difficult time comparing when you compare numbers that come from cooking the books.

There are many reasons why I cannot support this budget. There are a lot of missed opportunities to do the right thing here in Manitoba, make happen in Manitoba. There could be a plan to make Manitoba a have province. We have not seen that. We have seen increased spending which again just fosters dependency on the federal government. We have

done nothing significant to relax the tax burden, nothing significant in tax relief for corporations and business, and consequently they are not moving here.

We see nothing. No movements forward in health; wait lists are still very long. We see a lack of commitment in education. In family services, we do not even have a plan yet because they are waiting again on the federal money. They keep rolling out a five-year plan every year, but they really have not got a plan. And so, Mr. Speaker, with these brief comments I must say that I find several, many reasons for my decision to not support this budget. Thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I am very pleased to rise today to address the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), which, for many reasons, I will be voting against, and for many reasons then I will in turn vote in favour of what I think is a very good budget for Manitobans.

A number of years ago when I was first a member of this Legislature, way back then, I can remember conversations that I had with a former member of this House, the former Member for Lakeside, Mr. Harry Enns, who was known in this House to come up with some pretty good slogans, pretty good sayings. I thought he was a pretty good heckler. He could infuse a sense of humour into this Chamber, and he would have appreciated my reference to John Diefenbaker in Question Period. I think the former Member for Lakeside and Mr. Diefenbaker went to junior high together.

I am sure that Mr. Enns would not mind my saying that. The next time I see him I will fess up to putting him in the same junior high class as John Diefenbaker. I do not think the former Member for Lakeside would mind, but what Mr. Enns said to me one time—it was when I was in opposition—"You know, you people in opposition have all the fun and none of the responsibility." I think Mr. Enns was almost correct. I watch members opposite as they talk about this budget, and I see what Mr. Enns was saying at the time.

You look at the approach that our friends opposite have when it comes to the BSE crisis. You have one member, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), saying, "Well, I do not think it is really necessary that we have to invest in processing cattle

in Manitoba." But, when we put out a plan, some announcements on some programs and we flow some dollars to ranchers, he is in there along with some of his other colleagues saying, "Oh, it was not fast enough. You are a year late." Where do they stand over there? What side are they?

The problem with what Mr. Enns was saying was that there is a little bit of responsibility when you are in opposition. It is called voting, and I think for the most part, the former Member for Lakeside is right that you do have a lot of fun in opposition, you do have not the kind of responsibility that comes with government.

* (11:30)

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I know that some of the veteran members across the way understand the difference between being in government and being in opposition. They know what Mr. Enns is talking about. But it also should be very clear that at some point you are going to be asked to stand and go yea or nay on these amendments and yea or nay on the budget itself. So, given that I know people in the opposition understand that, they are dreading the day that comes when they actually have to stand up and vote on this budget. They do not want to be out there in rural Manitoba saying that they voted against reductions in taxation on farmland. They do not want to be out there voting against a 19.5% increase to the Department of Agriculture. They do not want to be out there seen as not being supportive of the very good, very helpful, very useful measures that we have put forward in terms of helping cattle producers with the BSE crisis that we face.

They wanted a way around that. They wanted to find some excuse not to vote for this budget because they could not vote against the money we are putting into health care, they could not vote against the money we are putting in education, they could not vote against the extra money that was coming in for highways. Too many members opposite have got highway projects in their constituency that they would be voting against. Too many members opposite, including the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), have people who have actually benefited from the BSE money that this government has flowed. They do not want to be seen voting against that, so what do you do, Mr. Deputy

Speaker? What do you do when you have got a very good budget before you and you know you cannot vote against it? You know you would be in hot water with people locally if you voted against a good budget like this. What do you do? You find a straw man. You find a windmill you can tilt at. You find an excuse not to do the right thing on this budget. So what do you come up with? What is the best this feeble opposition can come up with? We do not trust the numbers in the budget. Oh, we do not trust this government anymore. Oh, we lost confidence in this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how I can sleep tonight knowing that I have lost the trust of the members of the opposition. This is really going to bother me, because last year we never could have got our budget forward without their loyal commitment, their support. Without their trust of our numbers last year, I do not think we could have passed that budget. I feel really badly that they do not trust our numbers. The truth is, they did not trust our numbers last year either or the four previous years. If they had trusted our numbers, they would have voted differently than they did. They would not have sat in one Estimates session after the next using different numbers than the ones that we put forward in the budget.

I thought it was amazing yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the member, the former critic for Health, was a nurse. I could not believe it when she said to our current Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) that she would not trust the numbers that we put forward this year. I heard her over and over again in Estimates not trusting the numbers for five budgets in a row. Five budgets in a row coming forward with different numbers than we were using in the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if their argument made sense, then they would not have been using different numbers last year or the year before or the year before that. No, this whole talk of our numbers being untrustworthy is a smoke screen. I agree with the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). They have no issues. They cannot muster support against our budget, and they cannot go back to their own constituents and face them saying they voted against the good progressive measures in this budget, so they needed a way out. I feel for the members across the way. I do. I sincerely feel sympathy for their position.

I thank my lucky stars that when I was in opposition they never did come forward with a good

budget, so I was not in the position that they are in now. I can only imagine the caucus discussion that took place when they realized that what was being put forward actually made sense and that what our Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) was laying before the people of Manitoba was a good plan for our economy, was a good plan for our environment, was a good commitment to the rural Manitobans that I represent. It furthered our commitment to people living in the North, and it underscored our commitment to the people that live right here in the capital city of our province.

I understand the frustration of members opposite, but I want to remind people opposite that they will have to vote on this budget, they will have to stand and be counted, they will have to face their people at home. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) will have to go back and tell his producers that he voted against a budget that increased agriculture spending by 19.5 percent. He is going to have to go back and he is going to have to tell people that. He is going to have to go back and tell his cattle producers in his area that he voted against a budget that had real supports for ranchers in times of a crisis. Now it is pretty handy to be able to say, "Oh yes, I could have voted for that, except, oh, they got the numbers wrong. Oh, they cooked the books." That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a sham. From my perspective as a MLA, I am going to very proudly go back and talk to my constituents about the kind of supports that we have given so many Manitobans in our province.

I want to start with education. Again in this budget, we have shown that understand, that we get it when it comes to education, that we need to support education first and foremost because kids are the future of our province. It is the right thing to do to put money into education. It was the wrong thing for members opposite to cut every year out of the budget, money that was going into classrooms and going to kids. Another reason that it is a good thing to do is that you cannot have a provincial economic strategy without a clearly thought out education strategy and a commitment. It is not good enough to just have some thinking happen. You have to be able to be committed and come through with the kind of funding that our Education Minister (Mr. Bjornson) and previous Education ministers in this government of ours have done. I am confident that the schools in my constituency will be better learning environments because of the commitment of this government, not just this year but in previous budgets.

In my constituency it is very important that we have the kind of transportation links that we need to make sure that the produce that we produce, the livelihoods that we depend on, are connected to the outside world. For too many years, all through the nineties, it was my experience and the experience of my constituents that our road system was neglected. I want to congratulate the Transportation Minister for again coming forward with a budget that increases that commitment, that will produce real results for my constituents who will benefit in terms of agricultural production, who will benefit in terms of getting logging products, timber products from our back yards into to the world markets. That is absolutely important for my constituents.

A number of initiatives in my constituency are moving right along. I am glad that the current Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is showing some interest in the kind of projects that we have on the go in Dauphin. I am very fortunate to represent a group of constituents who are progressive-minded, who are working very hard despite the obstacles that the members opposite seem to dwell on. They have a positive can-do attitude that says, "It does not matter what challenges are before us; we are going to meet that challenge. We are (a) going to provide those kinds of services for the people of Manitoba, and (b) we are going to provide some employment in rural Manitoba," which would be a novel concept to members across the way, I know. But that is something that my constituents are very committed to doing. It is something that I am very proud to be working with as their local MLA, but also in a government that understands the importance of those kind of initiatives taking place in rural communities.

* (11:40)

As the Minister of Conservation, I am very pleased with this budget. It shows a commitment to our park systems. I think that is a priority of Manitobans. I will give you one example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Birds Hill Park is our busiest park in Manitoba. Last year in July my wife and my son and I had an opportunity on one of the July long weekends, it was actually that weekend that we lifted the fee for the weekend. I will tell you it was hard for my wife and me to get our little blanket out onto the beach at Birds Hill. There were so many people there. There were so many families at Birds Hill Park, families that consisted of grandpa and grandma, mom and dad and the kids, and they were

having fun. They had their little hibachis out, and they were cooking and enjoying one of our great provincial parks.

It made sense for this government to capitalize on the popularity of that park and our other parks and move forward with plans to further upgrade. For example, we have committed to Birds Hill Park to start with the concept of accessibility. People with wheelchairs, people who have difficulty getting around need to be accommodated in our provincial parks. That is one of the steps forward that we are making, especially at a park like Birds Hill, so closely situated here to the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also renewed a commitment to ecological reserves, something I am very proud of. Ecological reserves represent that highest level of protection that you can get through our Protected Areas Initiative. That is the highest level of protection you can get in this province.

People like Jennifer and Tom Shay have worked very hard, very diligently, in the whole environmental field. We have worked together with the Shays to bring into our protected area a part of the river bottom forest along the Red River, south of the city of Winnipeg out near St. Adolphe. We brought that into our family of protected areas and have given it that designation so that generations to come can see the kind of river bottom forest that we are all too quickly losing in this province and around the country.

This will not show up really huge on a provincial map because it is a little island out in the middle of Lake Winnipeg called Little George Island. It may be small on the provincial map, but when it comes to migrating birds, it is a huge island. It is a huge step forward to protect that island forever so that four different species of birds can use that island as they wish for nesting. That is an important step.

It is not the kind of thing that hits the headlines of all the press, and it will not be Peter Mansbridge making the announcement on the national news, but that is important stuff for people who live in Manitoba. It is important for the birds that we need to show support for in this province. It is an important step forward that is recognized in our program.

With those few words, I want to encourage my friends from across the way not to worry about finding a way to vote against this budget, but feel free to step forward on behalf of your constituents and recognize the good, progressive steps we have taken in this budget and vote with us when the time comes.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this being my first opportunity to stand in debate since the horrendous events of March 3, last week, where four constables were tragically taken from us through a brutal act of murder, I want to say as a former RCMP officer, I commend their duty and their service to Canadians. I would like to express my condolences to the family and friends of the constables: Constable Brock Myrol, Constable Peter Schiemann, Constable Leo Johnston and Constable Anthony Gordon. They did indeed pay the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty protecting our interests and protecting the peace in Canada. For that, my heart goes out to their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in regard to the budget debate and state that I cannot support the budget as proposed in the Legislative Assembly by the New Democratic Party for the forthcoming 2005-2006 budgetary period. While I appreciate that there are a number of items within the budget that this government—I will commend this government for implementing—I am a bottom-line person.

I believe in paying our own way in this world as I believe you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will support. This budget does not do that. I refer to the budget document as provided to the Assembly which states that this budget, while perhaps in compliance with the balanced budget legislation, does not in any way, shape, or form perform as a balanced budget in my books. We look to the Manitoba fiscal statistics on a 10-year summary which describes the debt as owed by Manitobans, not just you or I, but our children and our children's children will be obligated to repay.

In the past number of years the debt that we are responsible for has continued to increase and this budget, as proposed in this Chamber a few short days ago, does not stem the trend. In 1999, when the former administration left government, we were obligated to pay \$13.459 billion as a direct, or indirect debt, which is the obligation of all Manitobans. This budget is proposing that at the end of the fiscal period, \$16.425 billion will be owed by

Manitobans. That is atrocious and is no way, shape, or form in compliance, in my books, with paying our way in the world.

We should not be making obligations on behalf of our children or our grandchildren. This government seems to want to crow about their fiscal management prowess and that they are indeed complying with balanced budget legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That could not be the furthest from the truth. One also hears in debate about how this government is so generous with their programs and how strongly they believe in providing for the critic's responsibility, and that being Conservation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though they project to spend the amount as documented here in the budget documents, year in and year out they do not comply with their estimates. They fall far short of their estimates. As documents evaluate over the past years, Conservation has underspent their budget, year in, year out. Last year to which the audited figures are available, \$2.2 million underspending by March 31, 2004. They added to that \$234,000 the year previous, \$240,000 the year previous, the year previous to that \$283,000, but just wait, the year before that Conservation underspent what was allocated to it by \$44 million.

* (11:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a terrible track record, and I do not believe the government should stand and be proud of it at all. It is not protecting our environment as this Legislature has given the government the responsibility to do through the Estimates process and the passage of the budget. We should have an opportunity to evaluate the performance of government, and this particular performance I am sure that each minister should be ashamed of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also, the government likes to say that they stand up for persons who are impoverished here in the province of Manitoba, and they had program after program in support of those persons less fortunate financially here in the province of Manitoba. However, this, I believe, is not really the case. A lot of publicity goes along with program announcements, but we have to look at the bottom line and how this government treats those persons that we recognize as being in poverty here in the province.

Why, then, does this province, I have to ask, still believe that those persons making a paltry \$7,800 should be paying income tax here in the province of Manitoba? All other jurisdictions across this land of ours recognize that persons making that level of income over the span of one year should not pay income tax. Even in our sister province of Saskatchewan, they have increased that to over \$8,000. Their budget is yet to come in, and I am certain they will increase the personal exemption to a higher level yet. We are not keeping pace. I do not believe that persons making only minimum wage throughout the year should be required to pay income tax, although this government believes that there is much more benefit to their political ideals and to their political process to announce program after program, yet come back to those very same people that those programs are designed to help and take the money back through income tax. That, I believe, is not right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also talk about the deficit that is not listed here in the budget documents, and that is the infrastructure deficit which is on record as being in excess of \$7 billion—\$7 billion. That is \$7,000 per man, woman and child. It is growing each and every year, and it is not being addressed by this government. This government says they are increasing monies to provide for infrastructure, yet it falls far, far short.

If one was to go and actually evaluate how this government recognizes, and we will just look very quickly at two areas. One is in the area of clean water, lifeblood to every Manitoban. Here in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are cutting resources of capital improvements through the Water Services Board from \$12.5 million to just over \$12 million. Almost a half a million dollars is being taken from a budget that I personally believe is one already inadequate to provide safe, clean drinking water for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, we also recognize that our roadways are not improving. In fact, what I have always believed in is that all revenues, and I hope the Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) pays heed to this figure, is that the Transportation Department provides to the Treasury each and every year over \$300 million. In fact, this year transportation-related revenues will provide to the Treasury of Manitoba an

estimated \$352.741 million. This exceeds the entire expected expenditure of the Department of Transportation. The estimated expenditure is \$349.699 million. We are not even spending on our roadways what revenue is being generated by roadways, and I think that is appalling. We have to increase our expenditures.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have looked at the Department of Transportation, and this Legislature has provided to the Department of Transportation monies to be expended in the area of transportation. Yet, year in, year out, once again, we see underexpenditure. We have provided to the Transportation Department—and all the press releases have gone out, stating this is the amount of money that we are going to be spending; \$115 million, \$120 million, this year, \$123 million. But the catch is when we look back as to the actual expenditures of the government when it comes to transportation, they do not spend the budget allocated on transportation.

Last year, the Transportation Department left in its budget over \$13 billion. The year before, \$14 million; the year before, \$13 million; the year before that, \$5 million. Why, in this time, where our roadways are continuing to depreciate is the Department of Transportation underspending its budget? In fact, the last four years of this government, the Transportation Department has underspent its budget by \$37.237 million.

I wonder when there is a new investment in Portage la Prairie of the Simplot potato-processing plant, and all we asked was that the roadways that provided producers the opportunity for a logistical way of supplying that plant that we are turned down. Provincial Road 305 required approximately \$7 million to upgrade to RTAC standards so that persons producing in the Treherne area would, in fact, have opportunity to travel 305, a much shorter route to the processing plant. That upgrade was denied. Seven million dollars, yet \$37 million has been left on the table by the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux). Not just this current minister, but the two previous ministers have also continued with that way of spending and denying improved roadways to Manitobans and underspending the budget which has been allocated to the department from this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this budget for the points which I have raised because I do not believe

that we should be saddling our children with our debt. We should all take pride in paying our own way in this world. This budget only adds to the debt that our children are going to have to pay back. I believe that everyone in this Chamber should take a good, long, hard look at themselves in the mirror and think about their children and their grandchildren and ask themselves: Why are we spending our children's inheritance? In fact, spending their income which they have not yet even made. I cannot support this budget in clear conscience because this government is not recognizing that fundamental element in accounting.

* (12:00)

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise to speak to our government's sixth budget. I have been a member of this House now for close to 15 years and I have seen budgets come and budgets go. I will have to say that this is the finest budget ever tabled in this Legislature. I think we should all thank our Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) for the work that he has done, members of the Treasury Board for the work that they have done because every part of this province has benefited from this Finance Minister and actions taken by this government. We are builders, and I am very proud of this government, very proud to be part of this team. Every single community in this province has seen investments by this government. Every community in this province has benefited from actions taken by this government, and that is just the beginning.

It is interesting today—this is, of course, the third day of budget debate—that our friends in the opposition have already run out of questions on this budget. They realize that this is a budget for all Manitobans, that this budget will be supported by all Manitobans and we ask the members—we are worried about some of the members over here and their futures, so we are asking them to come onside to vote in favour of this budget. I believe we voted for their budget in days gone by. Here is a chance for them to redo the favour to us.

As I mentioned, we have clearly in this House a tired opposition. We never know who is in charge over there, whether it is the big spenders or the tax cutters that are in charge. I listened to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou), and all I could hear from the Member for Portage was, "Spend, spend, spend. Spend more money." He said, "Spend

more money on health care. Spend more money on highways. Spend more money on infrastructure. Spend more money on water resources." This is the party that is in the House today.

We had yesterday the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) in the House. Let us see what he had to say. He said, "Well, let us cut taxes. Let us cut the corporate capital tax," which is \$168 million. Then he said that, if he was in government, presumably that is what he would do; then he said, "I will cut the payroll tax," which is \$294 million. Then we know they are on record of promising to eliminate the property tax on education, which is another \$500 million. The Member for Fort Whyte brought forward a private member's bill in this House two sessions ago saying that he would remove gambling from this province. Another \$300-million promise that he brought in. You notice he has not brought that bill back, but that is the record, that is the policy of the Conservative Party in Manitoba. They are going to eliminate the capital tax, the payroll tax, the property tax; they are going to get rid of lotteries. That is \$1.3 billion of tax cuts promised by the Member for Fort Whyte.

Now that is the same member later on his speech that said, "Wait. By the way, I need a new high school, and I need a new underpass or overpass." Whatever. This is the same individual that is saying, "Cut, cut, cut. Oh, by the way, when my leader is not listening, can you build me a new school? Can you build me an underpass?" We get this from the members in this Chamber. We will just go through the petitions that were presented in this House, just the last couple of days.

We have got the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), and we heard the Member for Morris just a few moments ago give her budget speech. She tables the petition as she has done every day, which is her right as a member, which calls on the government to pave Highway 200, what presumably her government did not do when they were in power, asking us to pave Highway 200. It is another big expenditure. We know it is about 10 kilometres. We know that it costs about \$1 million per kilometre to pave, so there is another \$10-million promise.

We have the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) who stands up in the House and says, "By the way, why do you not consider paving Highway 355 as well while you are at it?" We have the

Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), who is asking, is standing up and saying to Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), "Well, spend more money. Spend more money." We have the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), who stands up on the issues related to his constituency, as everyone has the right to do. He is saying, "Spend more money in my riding. We need additional ambulance care to my constituents," which, again, is his right.

That is in one day we have the members of the Tory caucus, I do not know if their leader is aware of this or not, but we have them saying, "Cut \$1.3 billion out of taxes, and, by the way, can you ratchet up spending to record levels to deal with all our promises that we are making to our constituents, which we did not do when we were in government. Now we are asking you to deliver on those." That is the opposition.

Now we are waiting for the Liberal Party. We have no idea what the Liberal Party will say, we have no idea what they will say, but they usually take the same line as the Tories. On one hand, cut taxes; on the other hand, spend, spend, spend.

Mr. Speaker, these are the great fiscal managers in the province, the Conservatives. They claim to be. Look at some of the things which we have. Let us just deal with some of the issues related to the budget. We are going to pay down debt of \$110 million this year, we are the only government to begin to deal with the pension plan monster that was ignored by the Filmon government when they were in power, and we are replenishing the rainy day fund, up to \$400 million this year, with the potential to grow up to \$500 million in the next couple of years. The last time it had that amount of money in there was when the Filmon government sold the public telephone system, a jewel.

An Honourable Member: Yes, for 13 bucks a share.

Mr. Dewar: They sold it for \$13 a share. This PC Filmon government, we all remember that, they sold the telephone system at rock-bottom prices to make their friends rich. They took the money, they put it in their rainy day fund, and then they spent it.

Just two weeks ago I received a letter from Bonnie Staples-Lyon. You all remember Bonnie Staples-Lyon. Now she works for the telephone

system. She sends me a letter stating that our community is going to, once again, benefit from the sale of MTS. They are going to lay off another 24 employees in Selkirk and ship them. They are going to remove 24 employees from Selkirk. That is on top of the dozens that have already lost their jobs in Selkirk because of the MTS sale. If you recall, they promised there would be no job layoffs; they promised there would be no rate increases; and they promised there would be no reduction in service. They were wrong, wrong, wrong. That is what happened when the Tories were in government. They took the money from the rainy day fund and they spent it.

Mr. Speaker, our government is making important investments, more knee and hip surgeries. In Selkirk alone 1400 more surgeries are going to be occurring, more investment on highways, transit and water systems. My colleague from Flin Flon here will benefit from getting extra money for his transit system in Flin Flon. We are proceeding in our community to redevelop Highway 9 and Highway 27, again something which Glen Findlay promised in 1995. Ten years later we are doing it.

We are proceeding with the redevelopment of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, again an issue that was ignored. Of course, what the Conservatives did is they closed the Selkirk School of Psychiatric Nursing, and now there is a shortage of psychiatric nurses in Manitoba. We are proceeding with a new school in east Selkirk.

Mr. Speaker, we have in our community, in the broader community of Selkirk, St. Andrews, St. Clements, over \$110 million in private-public sector investment in our community in the next two to three years. We have a significant amount of retail investment recently, Wal-Mart, car dealerships. We have, as I mentioned, significant public investment. For the first time in many years, the Selkirk waterfront has been developed, again something which Filmon promised—in 1988, that was promised by the Pawley administration. The government changed. The first thing Filmon did was kill the waterfront downtown development in Selkirk.

I mentioned the mental health centre, I mentioned the school, our two new ambulances in Selkirk, the CT scanner. The steel industry in Selkirk is healthy. I recall in the mid-nineties there were layoffs in that industry. *[interjection]* There were

some problems in that particular industry. My colleague from Flin Flon mentions that the Selkirk generating station has been converted from coal to gas. It saved those 50 or 60 jobs. It saved that huge taxpayer in the R.M. of St. Clements.

So, Mr. Speaker, you see there has been significant investment in our community since our government has come into office. We have—

* (12:10)

An Honourable Member: Private investment?

Mr. Dewar: Well, for the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), as I mentioned, there are both private and public investment in the community.

But it is this government that has cut taxes. Mr. Speaker, we have cut over \$500 million in taxes since forming government, \$500 million in taxes. We are the tax cutters.

The GDP has grown by \$10 billion since we formed government, which is 30 percent. Mr. Speaker, \$10-billion growth, a 10-billion growth in GDP in this province, 30-odd percent, 33 percent.

Figures came out today on employment rate, 9000 new jobs created in this province in the last year.

We are taking action to reduce the ESL on residential property. I know that in our community basically there has been a slight increase put forward by the school division, which is offset by the reductions that we are making. Mr. Speaker, it is basically a wash.

Personal income taxes have been cut by \$30 million, 19% cut in middle-income taxes since 1999.

Business taxes have been cut by \$55 million since we formed government, Mr. Speaker, \$55 million. I am surprised that the Tories are going to stand up and vote against a budget that is bringing in \$55 million in tax cuts to the businesses in this province, both small business and corporate taxes.

Of course, they promised to eliminate every tax out there; the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) has promised to eliminate almost \$500 million in taxes. In the afternoon he is going to get rid of all the

VLTs, and then he is going to build his school, and then he is going to build his overpass, his underpass.

As I said, we are going to be depositing \$314 million into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This budget is balanced under budget balanced legislation. This budget is balanced under summary budget statements. In fact, it has a \$196-million surplus.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the Tories have run out of gas. They have no questions. Here we are third day into budget debate, and they ran out of questions to ask. They ran out of questions, but what could they ask? What could they ask? To cut taxes. Well, we have cut taxes already. I am afraid they are in a bit of a mess. We have balanced the budget. We have cut taxes. We have saved money. We have made investments. Of course, they want more. They want more spending. Every one of them stands up every day in this House and says, "Spend more."

We have got the strongest population growth in 20 years, Mr. Speaker.

Housing starts are up. Who has not, in this room, seen an appreciation of the value of their property since we formed government? Remember those days in the nineties what was happening downtown here in Winnipeg. Property values were going down. People could not get insurance on their homes, Mr. Speaker.

This is a positive budget, and we are anticipating members opposite to stand up and to support this budget. I know the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) really would like to support this.

It is easy, just stand up on budget day. Vote for the budget. We know you really want to do it. We voted for your budget.

An Honourable Member: We voted for your budget, a couple of your budgets.

Mr. Dewar: Well, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says, "We voted for a couple of your budgets."

I believe we have got them convinced, Mr. Speaker, that they are going to come our way. We would want you to do it not for us. We want you to do it for you. We want you to do it for you guys, with all those tax cuts you are promising, all those

big-spending promises that you are promising as well, the big-spending increases, schools, roads, water. What else? Overpass. Underpass. Road 200.

Mr. Speaker, every one of them wants more expenditures, but as well they want to cut \$1.3 billion out of the taxes. Clearly, they want it both ways. I guess they can do that when they are in opposition. I guess they certainly are doing that. They make it up as they go along.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this budget. I am very proud of our Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger). I ask all members to reject your motion—actually, that is what we are speaking to—to reject your motion that is before us currently. I know deep down you want to. You know, deep down you really want to do that and vote with us. So we are going to ask you to vote against your amendment. I know my colleagues will be joining with me in their speeches to ask you to vote for a budget of vision, ask you to vote for an opportunity, vote for a budget of hope. We are going to ask you now to vote for this budget. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to put some comments on the record on this sixth budget of the NDP, but before I comment on the budget I would like to extend condolences to the families and friends of the four RCMP officers slain in Alberta. I would like to extend those condolences on behalf of myself, my family, and all the people of the community of Charleswood. My stepfather is a retired RCMP officer, and several close friends are with the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement officers, whether they are members of a municipal, provincial, or national force, make an invaluable contribution to our province. The loss of an officer in any region influences police colleagues in every jurisdiction of Canada. Having spent 12 years at Child Find Manitoba, working alongside these dedicated men and women, I have gained an everlasting respect for them. While it is difficult for us to fully relate to the impact of this tragedy on their members, our prayers and sympathies are with the family members of the fallen RCMP officers and with all law enforcement.

At this time, too, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Jennifer Jones and her team on an

outstanding victory at the 2005 Scott Tournament of Hearts. I come from a family of curlers, and I also hail from Benito, Manitoba, which is home to Ed Werenich, a very well-known curler worldwide. It was an incredibly exciting game, and we look forward to hearing about their future wins as they move forward. We are very, very proud of Jennifer Jones and her team.

Mr. Speaker, we have also recently learned that the NDP government presented a misleading Health budget last year. The Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), admitted to this on December 26. Now that we are in a budget debate and we will be going into Estimates, we have to ask: How do we know if other budgets are not also fudged? How are we to have any faith or confidence in the numbers that are going to be put before us in Health, but even in other departments? The NDP have lost all credibility in their use of numbers in the accuracy of their budgets.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health, at the end of 2004, said that the Province purposely underfunded its Health budget for that year. He also said that the Province really had no intention of ever meeting the budget—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt the honourable member, but that issue is under advisement at the moment. Until I bring a ruling, members should not be commenting on the issue, which is under Speaker's advisement at the moment.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will accept your ruling on that, and I will move on to some other issues. But I do want to indicate that there certainly are some concerns in a major way about Health budgets, with Health being the biggest spender in the Manitoba budget. When we are looking at numbers, we will certainly be watching numbers with very, very careful scrutiny.

* (12:20)

Mr. Speaker, this was a budget of lost opportunities, and for a number of reasons, particularly based on the discussion we had yesterday in the House, this is definitely not a budget that anybody is going to be able to accept, or support, or vote in favour of. Besides being a budget of lost opportunities, we also look for budgets that are presented in a very straightforward manner, and it is very difficult to be looking at the budget that is

before us now and to have confidence that is where we are going.

Mr. Speaker, with a windfall of \$349 million in new money from the federal government, the NDP government had a chance to do something bold and innovative for Manitoba. This new money did give the NDP the fiscal capacity to significantly reshape the Province's finances. Instead, in true socialist form, they plan to spend almost all of it. Manitoba is in desperate need of an economic vision that would make Manitoba more competitive with other jurisdictions across the country. That needed to have been in the forefront of this budget. That should have been the long-term goal of the government in order to stimulate economic growth. That, in turn, generates more revenues needed to pay for our valued social programs, programs which, by the way, are in trouble in this province.

This seems to be one concept that the NDP struggle with understanding, to know that you can walk and chew gum at the same time. They seem to have compartmentalized their views on all of this and do not realize that in order to have the money you need for spending on social programs you need to have a strong economic plan. That certainly was not visible in this last budget. What we saw instead was the NDP government happily holding their hand out to take the federal transfers, money which came from people of the have provinces, Alberta, Ontario, and now even Saskatchewan. In fact, Manitoba is now the only have-not province in western Canada. To me, that is absolutely embarrassing. That does not make it attractive for businesses to want to move here or to stay here. Manitoba is also still one of the highest-taxed provinces in Canada, both for individual and corporate taxes.

Deeply disturbing is the fact that Manitoba's debt is at a historic high of \$16.4 billion. Manitobans should be very concerned to learn that the NDP government has increased Manitoba's debt by almost \$3 billion since they took power in 1999. Guess whose future is being mortgaged by this debt: our children's, our youth in this province, my children and my future grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, when this government had so much money flowing into this province, it was very disconcerting to see that, while this money was coming in from various sources, they still felt it necessary to borrow money, to raid the rainy day

fund, to raid Hydro, and rack up a phenomenal debt. It is a debt that our children are going to have to pay for. How many young people are going to want to stay in this province once they realize what the NDP government has done to them?

Overall provincial government spending continues to skyrocket, up 6.8 percent in this budget, more than three times the rate of inflation. It does not take a brain surgeon to know that this does not work. So what were the headlines the day after the budget? An opportunity lost, opportunity sails away, spending tempers, good news, biz ideas ignored, tinkering around edges, a tricky budget with little vision.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's spending this year will top the \$8-billion mark, up from \$6.5 billion in 1999, but, for an NDP government, that is never enough. The NDP found ways to spend it all and more, filling the gaps by raiding the Crown corporations and by tapping into the rainy day fund. With all this money rolling in, this merry band of pickpockets could have made a real difference, had they had the political will to do so, something which would have been significant in jump-starting the economy of this province.

With this federal windfall, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the archaic education funding system and take the tax burden off of property owners. The NDP had the fiscal capacity within this budget to make meaningful and responsible shifts in education funding. They chose not to do it. They chose to leave education funding in a mess. By not taking full responsibility for education funding, the NDP are forcing school boards to do their dirty work for them. They are washing their hands of the problem and blaming school boards for raising taxes. The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is offloading education funding to school boards and making them the villains.

Instead, the NDP significantly raised spending across all departments rather than doing the one thing that would have made a significant difference to this province in kick-starting our economy. Instead, they tinker around with personal income taxes. They fail to solve the province's woes, and, in typical NDP fashion, a slight tax increase costs us \$200 and a substantial tax cut saves us 13 cents. Mr.

Speaker, 13 cents a day in savings is all we see from this budget.

As the *Brandon Sun* said, "The government will label this a good news budget, but if you read between the lines it is really a story about a political party that believes it knows how to spend our money better than we do. While this budget will allow the NDP to stage a lot of nice photo ops in the weeks and months to come, it will do little to help peel away its tax-and-spend label."

Mr. Speaker, critics all over the province are saying, and bracing themselves for those days that the revenues fall flat and all this spending is no longer affordable. As the University of Manitoba economist, John McCallum, has said, "When revenue growth comes to a screeching halt, what are we going to do?" Mr. McCallum says that the NDP needs to start capping spending increases at the equivalent of inflation, or about 2 percent. For the last two years, spending growth has, however, hit 3.5 percent, almost double the rate of inflation.

Some mention needs to be made about the rainy day fund and the \$314-million deposit into that rainy day fund because that deposit is a red herring. Mr. McCallum also indicates that it is a red herring. He said that much of what actually went into that rainy day fund is a health care transfer paid ahead of time by Ottawa that must be spent over the next few years to bring down waiting lists.

So since when was the rainy day fund meant to be used for designated funds? The rainy day fund is meant to be there in cases of emergencies, in cases where the economy in Manitoba takes a dive. Instead, what we see is \$155 million for health care waiting lists put into that rainy day fund. So, indeed, what is in that fund for actual use, if this province runs into trouble, is far less than what the NDP are cushioning it up to look like. There is no cushion in there for days when it actually does start to rain in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would mention that I had earlier asked, during the discussions on the 2004 Health Accord, that all new money do go into a trust account. I do think that is important because we know that this government has a very sorry track record on lack of accountability and transparency in many of their numbers. I have said that for years in

their Health budget, and it appears to be continuing now.

Accountability and transparency are not buzzwords that are incorporated into what this government believes or how they do business. We see that it will continue. By putting the money into a trust account, we certainly could have observed whether or not it actually went into spending for bringing down waiting lists. Instead, they put it into the rainy day account so that they can run around Manitoba, have these wonderful photo ops and say, "We have got this wonderful rainy day account. It is the second biggest installation of money into that account." In fact, it is federal dollars that are flowing in to deal with waiting lists.

That is not an accurate picture. Again, they are misrepresenting themselves as, in fact, our Auditor General has pointed out about how this government is misrepresenting itself when it talks about its financial statements. So what they have done, Mr. Speaker, is pad the rainy day fund to make it look better than it actually is.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been playing with numbers for years. Even the Auditor General, Jon Singleton, agrees to that. In January, he accused the

government of misleading the public about the state of the Province's finances by trumpeting balanced budget figures arrived at through unacceptable accounting practices. Mr. Singleton said that the Province had a 2003-04 budget deficit that was \$604 million, and, in fact, that this was the third year in a row of this government running a deficit, but taxpayers would never have known that from reading all of the government news releases and spin that was put out there at the time.

Instead of reporting the actual deficit figure in its public statements, government officials emphasized an artificial operating surplus that it pegged at \$13 million. The Province is essentially keeping two sets of books, one based on generally accepted accounting principles, and the other using made-in-Manitoba rules. That is what Mr. Singleton said in his audit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) will have 16 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 11, 2005

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