

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

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.
JENNISSEN, 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.
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.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 4, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Civil Service Employees—Neepawa

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. These are the reasons for this petition:

Eleven immediate positions with Manitoba Conservation Lands Branch, as of April 1, 2006, Crown Lands and Property Special Operating Agency, are being moved out of Neepawa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy with potentially 33 adults and children leaving the community.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing the rural and surrounding communities of Neepawa.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology, as an example, Land Management Services existing satellite sub-office in Dauphin, in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

Submitted on behalf of Clinton Davie, Neil Gillies, Darlene Gillies and many, many others.

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

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

Eleven immediate positions with Manitoba Conservation Lands Branch, as of April 1, 2006, Crown Lands and Property Special Operating Agency, are being moved out of Neepawa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy with potentially 33 adults and children leaving the community.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing the rural and surrounding communities of Neepawa.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology, as an example, Land Management Services existing satellite sub-office in Dauphin, in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

Signed by Marlene Vanhove, Genie Barnaby, Robert Barnaby and many, many others.

* (13:35)

Grandparents' Access to Grandchildren

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to recognize and respect the special relationship that exists between grandparents and grandchildren.

Maintaining an existing, healthy relationship between a grandparent and a grandchild is in the best interest of the child. Grandparents play a critical role in the social and emotional development of their grandchildren. This relationship is vital to promote the intergenerational exchange of culture and heritage, fostering a well-rounded self-identity for the child.

In the event of divorce, death of a parent or other life-changing incident, a relationship can be severed without consent of the grandparent or the grandchild. It should be a priority of the provincial government to provide grandparents with the means to obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending legislation to improve the process by which grandparents can obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

This petition is signed by Wayne Fossum, Linda Cool, Beth McNabb and many, many others.

Child Welfare Services

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and these are the reasons for this petition:

The Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) have the responsibility to provide safety, care and protection to children in care in Manitoba.

Thirty-one children have died since 2001 while in care of the Province or shortly after being released from care. Last year nine children died, the highest number recorded.

Little Phoenix Sinclair died in June of 2005, but her death went unnoticed for nine months even though she had extensive involvement with Child and Family Services beginning at birth.

Manitobans want to know how the system could fail little Phoenix Sinclair and the other 31 children.

Manitobans want assurances that no other children will fall through the cracks of the child welfare system.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider calling a public inquiry into all aspects of the delivery of child welfare services throughout Manitoba.

This is signed by Wayne Benson, Ember Benson, RoJean Anstett and many, many others.

Crocus Investment Fund

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

As a direct result of the government not acting on what it knew, over 33,000 Crocus investors have lost tens of millions of dollars.

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the many red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

To urge the Premier and his government to cooperate in making public what really did happen.

This is signed by R. Friesen, M. Dyck, L. Lantoys and many, many other Manitobans.

OlyWest Hog Processing Plant

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government, along with the OlyWest consortium, promoted the development of a mega hog factory within the city of Winnipeg without proper consideration of rural alternatives for the site.

Concerns arising from the hog factory include noxious odours, traffic and road impact, water supply, waste water treatment, decline in property values, cost to taxpayers and proximity to the city's clean drinking water aqueduct.

Many Manitobans believe this decision represents poor judgment on behalf of the provincial government.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to immediately cancel its plans to support the construction of the OlyWest hog plant and rendering factory near any urban residential area.

Signed Lisa Erickson, Walt Nilson, Vanessa Rebaets and many, many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, the Auditor's Report on the Audit of the Pharmacare Program Manitoba Health.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I was honoured to have the opportunity to attend, together with many colleagues, last night's 30th anniversary YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards. The first YWCA Women of the Year event was held in 1977. Over 40 women were nominated in five categories and honoured at a reception at Government House.

Since 1977, the awards have grown. Last night's dinner at the Convention Centre was sold out and had 72 women nominated in 10 categories. This event has pioneered similar celebrations of women's achievements across the country. Now 24 YWCA and YMCA-YWCA associations across Canada celebrate women in their local events. Marjorie Bankstein, a member of the original organizing committee, was in attendance.

I was impressed by the diverse nature of the award recipients. I was struck by the energy and promise for our province's future represented by youth recipients, Emily Rose and Fauna Kingdon. The highlight of the evening was Mary Burrows, who at 100-years-young continues to serve as an inspiration to women in our community. Three of the honourees were Aboriginal women. Joining Fauna Kingdon was Susan Swan, the first Aboriginal police officer and Marileen McCormick, who have broken down barriers and serve as mentors. Educators Ellen Judd, Jennifer MacTavish and Hope McIntyre have made great contributions in women's studies, physical education and women's theatre. Patti Sullivan and Dr. Reeni Soni have made great achievements in health care, notably in midwifery and pediatric cardiology.

Congratulations to the event's sponsors and organizers. To all those who were nominated and honoured last night, please accept my sincere congratulations. Your resolve to succeed provides

inspiration for us all to make Manitoba a better place to live.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to congratulate all of the nominees and winners at last night's annual YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards. This year does mark the event's 30th anniversary, and I, along with several colleagues and our leader, had the pleasure of attending the dinner and meeting some of the truly inspirational women who were honoured last night.

Over 1,000 people from Winnipeg's business and cultural community converged at the Convention Centre to enjoy a fantastic dinner and ceremony. We would like to recognize all 72 of the nominees for these prestigious awards and also to congratulate Doris Mae Oulton, the chair of the dinner committee, who put on a fine, fine event.

All of these women are remarkable in their own right, contributing their gifts, talents and abilities to making Winnipeg a better place to live. These women serve as examples to this NDP government, a government that is not making Winnipeg or Manitoba a better place to live, and I am glad to finally see the Doer government do a ministerial statement on this particular dinner.

Mr. Speaker, this government makes promises, but they do not deliver. Where is the advocacy for Aboriginal women's health? Banning smoking on reserves would go a long way to protecting women's health. Where is the advocacy for rural women's concerns? Moving women's jobs in Neepawa and Minnedosa closer to Winnipeg just hurts the rural economy. Where is the action for mothers who are affected by crystal meth? We have called for debate on this bill, but the NDP refuse to help those women and mothers whose lives have been touched by drug abuse. Where is the protection for Pat Jacobsen, an effective and incredible leader in the government bureaucracy, a whistle-blower who lost her job?

Mr. Speaker, this government does nothing but give lip-service to women's issues, and they do not follow through in doing what is good and right for women in this province.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

* (13:45)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join the other MLAs and colleagues in providing congratulations to all 72 nominees and to the winners as well. I think the fact that people were nominated and that there were 72 nominees speaks volumes to the fact that we have some extraordinarily talented women in Manitoba and that the areas in which they are involved in our community, in health care, in media, in business is a reflection of the widespread importance of women to the functioning and to the role and the well-being of our larger community.

I want to single out, in particular, Mary Burrows, who turns 100 this year, and who walked up to the podium and who spoke and had everybody laughing and clearly is a wonderful example of a woman who has achieved a great deal over many, many years.

The event was sold out and that speaks well to Doris Mae Oulton and to the many, many others who volunteered in one capacity or another to make this event such a success. It clearly builds on what has happened over the last 30 years and signals a very strong future for our province.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw members attention to the public gallery where we have with us today Dwain Lingenfelter who is the former Agriculture minister from Saskatchewan. He is the guest of the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers).

Also we have seated in the public gallery from Minnedosa Collegiate 7 Grade 10 students under the direction of Mr. Patrick Lowen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

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

Also seated in the public gallery we have some very special guests all the way from Richmond, British Columbia and from Surrey, British Columbia.

I also welcome you here on behalf of all honourable members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Taxation Reduction Strategy

Mr. Glen Cummings (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, under the new federal budget, we have seen \$3 billion toward

paying down the debt and \$20 billion worth of tax relief.

In Manitoba, we have pretty much of a contrast. We see an increase in budgetary growth, and we see an increase of debt of \$3 billion to the people of this province. Our debt has actually grown, Mr. Speaker, at a time of unprecedented revenues coming in to this government. Truly meaningful tax relief and sound management of our expenditures, Mr. Premier, would change the way the direction of this province is going.

How could he possibly say that there is a parallel between federal budget process and his budget? His legacy to our children, Mr. Speaker, will be more debt, less growth and depopulation of rural Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, and let me go through the list of tax reductions that were made in our budget. I know members opposite have not read the provincial budget yet. They were opposed to it even before they had a chance to read it. Like Pavlov's dog, they were just out barking their opposition to the budget immediately.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The small business tax when we came into office was 8 percent and the threshold was \$200,000. The federal Conservative government now has made a major reduction in small business tax. They are going from 12 percent to 11.5 percent. The threshold that they are going to raise from \$200,000 to \$400,000 is going to take place over the next couple of years. We did it three years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the small business tax in Manitoba was the second highest in Canada under the dark days of the Conservatives. It has now gone from 8 percent to 7 percent to 6 percent to 5 percent to 4.5 percent, and it is scheduled to go down to be tied with Alberta at 3 percent effective January 1, 2007. How dare they vote against the tax reductions.

* (13:50)

Mr. Cummings: Speaking of Pavlov's dogs, tax and spend, that is this government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cummings: Not long ago, this Premier was talking about his new best friend, the Prime Minister of Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, not that long ago the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was talking about that same person being out of touch with Canadians. When is it being out of touch when the income tax level of middle-income people in this province is uncompetitive? At a time of revenue windfall, this government should be moving to reduce taxes, to control our debt, to prioritize and protect taxpayers from the brunt of uncompetitive income tax across western Manitoba.

Why will he not think about our future and deal with the tax load in this province?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, here is an example where the NDP budget is actually going to help middle-income tax earners because the middle-income tax bracket was—*[interjection]* Well, they are big people now, but when they were in government—*[interjection]* They love to heckle now but the middle-income tax rate was 16.6 percent when they were thrown out of office. The federal government is going to take in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The federal government is going to take a tax rate of 15 percent for middle-income Canadians and raise it to 15.5 percent. Where I come from that is a tax increase in the middle and lower-income brackets. However, thanks to this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the tax rate is going from 13.5 percent for the middle-income tax bracket. It is already at 10.9, by the way, for lower-income tax rates. At the middle-income rate, the tax rate is going from 13.5 percent to 13 percent. The half-percent increase that the Tories are making in Ottawa, we are going to have to backfill that with a tax reduction here in Manitoba.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, it is about relevance. The Premier can shout and pound the table as much as he likes. The fact is that we are becoming increasingly uncompetitive across this country.

I do not know where he classifies middle income, but if you are a family of four with a two-income family of \$60,000, the relief that they saw from the federal budget was \$981. The relief they saw from this Premier was \$44. Mr. Speaker, he likes to talk about the parallels. I want him to explain this one to that middle-income family.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, let me explain. Members opposite, you know, they swagger into the coffee shops in rural Manitoba and say, you know, we are farmers just like you.

The Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) raised the tax rate by raising the portioning for farmland. They raised farm taxes in Manitoba, and the Manitoba NDP has now reduced not only the portioning that farmers pay on their farms, but we had a situation where the members opposite did not take a nickel, not a dime, not a penny off the education tax on farmland. This government has taken 60 percent of the education tax off farmlands.

I applaud the federal government for adding extra resources to the RCMP, but this Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) has added \$18 million in two years to the RCMP and police forces. We are not perfect, but when we stand beside the Tories in Ottawa, our funding to police officers on a per capita basis is three times greater than the great crime fighters across the way.

* (13:55)

Manitoba Economy Opportunities for Young Manitobans

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): In a recent study, the Canada West Foundation stated that the most significant challenge facing this NDP government is stopping young educated Manitobans from leaving. Young Manitobans leave our province seeking hope and opportunity elsewhere because this government, this NDP government, has failed to provide it.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he not created opportunities for young Manitobans to stay and work in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the challenge of providing exciting opportunities for youth is a real one. The facts, however, are that in the last five years we have had an average of 506 more youth per year come to Manitoba, net, versus the five years previous to that when we were losing a net of over 400 a year. We have actually gone from 400 loss to 500 gain, a swing of over 900 young people.

Those are the facts during the period that we have been in office. The member opposite always has an exciting question without any foundation, without any evidence, without anything really to support his contentions.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the facts and the evidence that support my allegations are from Stats Canada, not from this minister. Stats Canada reported that in 2005 more than 22,000 Manitobans pulled up stakes and moved elsewhere, moved to more prosperous provinces like Alberta and British Columbia. Young Manitobans are leaving our province like never before, leaving our potholes behind and taking our hope and our opportunity and our future with them.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he failed to create a Manitoba economy with hope and opportunity for young Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the newly elected Leader of the Opposition party (Mr. McFadyen) made the same allegation on a radio station as early as Monday morning this week. Then the head of the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics came on, a person who operates without fear or favour and bases his analysis on the evidence, and he said that the new Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Lac du Bonnet are just dead wrong. We actually have an increase of young in the province.

So the member may want to table the Statistics Canada study that he allegedly is quoting from, because I can tell you right now that he has no evidence to support his allegation.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, recognizing that young people leaving Winnipeg and Manitoba is a serious problem, the mayor of Winnipeg, Sam Katz, organized the Winnipeg City Summit. He recognized the problem; this Finance Minister has not. Participants at these town hall meetings held prior to the summit described the dismal performance of this NDP government by saying, we educate our young people and then we export them.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he wait until the mayor took the initiative? Why has he failed to develop a plan for himself to keep our young people in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member is interested in seeing what is happening in Winnipeg with respect to a Winnipeg summit, I invite him to drive over to the new Red River campus in downtown Winnipeg, an investment of over \$35 million in the downtown of Winnipeg, in the province of Manitoba where, and the member should pay close attention to this, over 93 percent of the graduates graduate, find work in Manitoba, stay in Manitoba and make Manitoba a better place to live

and work and, in fact, support the salary for the member to put misinformation on the record.

* (14:00)

Justice System Escalating Crime Rate

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, Rudy Giuliani, from New York, who is in Winnipeg today, instituted in that city a broken windows crime approach that said you had to pay attention to the small crimes to get to the big crimes. In Manitoba this government allows individuals to continually commit smaller crimes and graduate to those larger crimes. We see the results with an increase by 26 percent in car theft in the last three months.

Will the Minister of Justice explain why, when other jurisdictions have bold and creative solutions of crime, here in Manitoba we have one of the highest crime rates in all of Canada?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I recall, the highest violent crime rate ever recorded by a province was under their administration, Mr. Speaker. Not only that, but as I recall, it was around that time when members opposite made a cut to RCMP policing. Their record speaks for itself. We do not need lessons from members opposite. Under their watch there were too many challenges with regard to the rise of street gangs and the incidence of auto theft.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has brought in innovation. It is being looked to by other provinces and other jurisdictions, and when it comes to models that can go to work in terms of the broken windows theory, I remind members opposite that it was Manitoba that brought in Canada's first community prosecutor.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister needs a lesson in terms of what the broken theory is, and I would be glad to give him one very soon, Mr. Speaker.

While the NDP government is unwilling to send a message on smaller crimes, it is also unwilling to send a message on the larger crimes. Recently in Winnipeg a judge expressed shock that the provincial Department of Justice was only asking for 10 years' jail time for a man found guilty of six armed robberies. The judge said the recommendation should have been at least five years longer.

The Minister of Justice here in Manitoba does not care about small crimes. Why does he not even care about the larger crimes, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member misspoke something and I will reiterate. The broken windows theory has a lot to offer, but members opposite have nothing to offer with their broken theory.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite asked a question, and I am more than happy to respond if they provide the opportunity. Today in Canada we recognize that the federal government has taken some steps to move towards strengthening the justice system. We are very pleased as a government to have been one of the leaders in Canada asking for a tightening of conditional sentences and mandatory minimums, and we were pleased to work with the federal government for these changes.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister is right about one thing. We see in Ottawa today a Conservative government that is willing to take real action on crime. Manitobans and Canadians are now learning that if you really want to take a bite out of crime you need a Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have a Conservative government here in Manitoba to do the same thing. I will ask this Minister of Justice: If he just wants to be a lobbyist, if he just wants to be a surrogate, if he does not believe he has any power to do anything on his own here in Manitoba after six years, then tell him to get out of the way because the Tories are coming and there is going to be real time for real crime.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed, we were pleased to see the changes that are coming from Ottawa were responses in large part to what Manitoba and some other jurisdictions have been asking for, and we will continue to work with the federal government. I think some of these changes are long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite believe that they are one and the same with the federal government, I, as well, would ask that they reiterate and back up our call for the abolition of that silly gun registry. I will also ask, as we have always, to recognize that an effective strategy against crime requires stronger sentencing, yes, but it also requires more investments in law enforcement and it also means something lost in members opposite will—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable Member for Southdale.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind members that we have guests in the gallery, we have the viewing public and I am sure they would like to be able to hear the questions and the answers. So I ask the co-operation of all members, please.

The honourable Member for Southdale has the floor.

Branding Manitoba Project Update

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, in December of 2004, a Web site was launched for a Branding Manitoba project at a cost of half a million dollars. The Web site indicated that this is a five-phase project, but when I checked the Web site earlier today there were only results available for the first phase.

An Honourable Member: Still?

Mr. Reimer: Yes. The results are still buffalos and big blue sky. Can the minister please update the House as to the status of the Branding Manitoba project?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to let all members know that this is the project that is led by the Premier's Economic Advisory Committee. A number of business leaders who are working—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear.

I remind members that I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule or departure from our practices. If I have to make a ruling, I have to be able to hear the member that has the floor. So I ask members once again, please.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, this group of business-people are working volunteer to co-operate to brand our community to make a better image, and the business leaders, the labour leaders, the local organizations are all taking part in order to portray our province in a good view. It is interesting to note that the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce said in a recent proposal that we should be more aggressively marketing what attributes our province has. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the Manitoba

Chamber of Commerce believe we should be working together to promote and grow our economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is working in partnership with business—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, we know the City of Winnipeg has put forth an aggressive plan to promote the city as a destination to keep and to attract people in the city. In fact, Destination Winnipeg just released a brochure called *Boom! Winnipeg Making Noise*. But where is the Premier's plan? Maybe it should be called zoom; zoom for all the high debt, zoom for \$60 million of investors' money in Crocus and zoom for the young people leaving this province.

The project is overdue, it is over budget. In fact, does the project still exist for presentation to the people of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite may have been zoomed off to Hawaii when we had an announcement that was made with the mayor, Mr. Silver and others from Destination Winnipeg. We announced funding for Destination Winnipeg. We are participating together with Destination Winnipeg. There is a new proposal in from Brandon for a similar proposal. We prefer to work with communities and so the zoom that you hear is from both the provincial and civic government in Winnipeg.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, through the magic of e-mail and the Internet, you keep in touch with your constituents and e-mail wherever you go in this province and anywhere in the world, in fact. So if the Premier is saying just because I was not here does not mean I was not available.

So, Mr. Speaker, now they are starting to blame me for the thing. Yes, the project was supposed to be presented, we were told earlier, within 45 to 60 days back in February. My calculation is that the project should have been presented. It is not here.

The minister and the Premier can stand up and pontificate all they want, but where is the project? Where is Branding Manitoba? Why are we still spending money? It is over budget, they approved more money for it. In fact, it even says they are going to need more money for its presentation. So he can stand here and pontificate, but we do not see it. It is not here.

* (14:10)

Mr. Doer: I apologize that the member is touchy about Hawaii. I understand he likes it there. I would recommend Birds Hill Park. It is a beautiful place, Mr. Speaker. It is sunny in February. It is a little colder—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I think there are 10 business representatives dealing with this issue all on volunteer time, I might add, and have stated that it will be ready before July 1. They are reworking some very, very important parts of it and they are doing it in consultation with other businesses. We have the volunteer leadership from the business community and they will complete their task by Canada Day.

We've Got It All Brochure Availability

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am worried that my 20-year-old son is going to follow several of his friends to Alberta who have recently left for better opportunity. A Charleswood dad is also worried that his kids are going to flee this province. So when he saw some government information advertising a brochure called, *We've Got It All*, a brochure that starts out saying, "If you are a young Manitoban who is thinking about where you want to put down roots or start a career," he got excited. He thought he might have some information from that brochure that he would be able to give to his kids that would keep them here in Manitoba.

So he phoned the government, and he has phoned them three times over a two-month period asking for this brochure. He is desperate to keep his kids here in Manitoba and after two months and three calls, he did not get a brochure.

Can somebody in the government tell me how he could go about getting his hands on this brochure?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, one of the things, we are doing so much for youth—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members that when the Speaker is standing that all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence.

The honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines has the floor.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that I was able to answer this question because what our government is doing is we are doing things in every department to keep young people here.

We are doing things in Industry where we are working with young people to set up new businesses. We are doing things in Education. We are doing things in advanced Science and Technology. We are bringing new businesses here. We bring in industry such as the film industry, new media. We are bringing life sciences.

So it is an organization where we have changed the pattern. Under the former pattern, 400 people left per year. Under our government, people 15 to 24 are staying, and where 502 more people are staying per year under our government, 400 left under yours.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I am in disbelief that this government does not even know which department is promoting this brochure, but it tells you what a hard time people are having trying to find it.

Young people are fleeing this province for opportunities elsewhere. In fact, Manitoba lost more people to other provinces in 2005 than in any other year since 1990. Can somebody in the Doer government tell us: Do they take this issue seriously or not?

Why does a parent have to try over a two-month period, calling three times to try to track down this brochure? The government tells them: We will send it, we will send it, and he is still waiting.

Where in this government is this brochure kept, so that I can get it to give to this dad so he can try to keep his kids in Manitoba, if, indeed, there is anything in that brochure of any use?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): The member did not inform us as to which department she was calling.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been saying order for I do not know how many times. I am going to once again ask co-operation here. I cannot hear a thing in here.

Ms. McGifford: However, Mr. Speaker, earlier the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) alluded to the Princess Street Campus. The member wishes to know some of the measures government is taking to keep young people in Manitoba.

A couple of weeks ago I announced the 3-D animation digital program at Princess Street Campus, which involved several hundreds of thousands of dollars of government's money. I was joined by members from the community, from the business sector, who in their address to those assembled, specifically said: This is a great way to keep young Manitobans here in Manitoba working in a—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that this government does not take this issue seriously.

I would like to tell them that their Web site has a brochure on it, and it says: Young people should stay here because Manitobans have big hearts. Well, nothing that addresses our pathetic job growth in this province, nothing that addresses the high tech or new age jobs that young people are looking for, nothing that effectively deals with our brain drain. Our young people are leaving for better opportunities. My 20-year-old might leave and join his friends in Alberta.

When are we going to have to turn off the lights in this province because the young people are leaving for Alberta and everywhere else where there are better opportunities?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the young people left, on average, net 400 minus every year that they were in office in the 1990s; 400 down under the Tories. Since we have been elected, the net situation from in-and-out migration is over 550 a year young people more per year: 400 down, 500 up.

Mr. Speaker, they can talk about anything they want. The bottom line is young people left Manitoba under the Tories, the lights went on when the NDP got elected and more people are staying here.

Child Care System Review Report Conclusion

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): A month ago the four child welfare authorities called for a review of all children in care and those who recently left care. This was to be completed by May 5, which is tomorrow.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell us if these meetings are completed or how many face-to-face meetings are yet to take place by tomorrow's deadline, and when she expects a report from the authorities?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that members opposite are showing some respect for the work that is being done by the authorities and the agencies now. Unfortunately, it has been sadly lacking.

My understanding is that the review of the open cases is on track, that the professionals on the front lines are taking this very seriously and that I will hear from the authorities in the very near future as to the results. I am aware that any concerns that were raised during this were dealt with immediately.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, I stood here two weeks ago and asked midway what updates the minister could give us and she raised no concerns at that point.

I wonder if she can tell me what concerns have been raised to her.

* (14:20)

Ms. Melnick: No concerns have been raised to me, Mr. Speaker. We are on track. They are being dealt with by the professionals.

What I am sharing with the House is that members opposite have continually attempted to undermine the work of the professionals. They have continually tried to disrespect the people who are doing the work in the child welfare system. I am letting them know that these people are taking their work very seriously, they are working according to what was announced a month ago and the authorities are working very closely with the agencies to take care of the children in care in Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we know the facts here. First, the minister says there are concerns that are addressed, and then she stands and says there are no concerns. So Manitobans are wanting to know exactly what has happened. We have heard nothing from the minister in this month-long review, and now we hear that there may be some concerns or may be not some concerns. So what are they?

I would like to ask the minister to provide, when she receives the report from the authorities, will she table that report? Will she make it public?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, again what I was referring to are the actions of members opposite who have continually attempted to undermine the work of the professionals, the child welfare system of Manitoba, which takes care of vulnerable families

and vulnerable individuals. The open-case review—
[interjection]

Mr. Speaker, the open-case review is on track. The authorities are working with the agencies. It is being run by professionals, and we respect the work that is being done. It is my hope that members opposite will begin to show these professionals the respect they deserve.

OlyWest Hog Processing Plant Ministerial Support

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): The City Summit 2006 is going on right now, and we have 200 Manitobans giving ideas to make our city that much better. Our Premier (Mr. Doer) had an idea. He had an idea in which he reached into his pocket, and he pulled in somewhere around like 26 million, 27 million, 28 million tax dollars for OlyWest, took his idea to the City of Winnipeg and said, hey, look, we have an idea. We want this to come to the city of Winnipeg. City Council accepts what the Premier, on face value, is talking about, Mr. Speaker, only to be bushwhacked by members of his own caucus. City Council members feel as if they have been stabbed in the back from this government on this issue.

My question is: How does the Premier look City Council in the face collectively when he is the person that bushwhacked City Council on OlyWest?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable minister.

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is very loud over there today. It must be very difficult for you to hear.

Certainly working with the City of Winnipeg and working with all the province of Manitoba and with our municipalities has been very, very successful since 1999. Speaking with Mayor Katz certainly just a short time ago and speaking with City Council, we actually exceeded the amount of dollars that they were looking for in their budget this year.

I can tell you, city summits are absolutely fantastic. They balance best practices of many other communities. They bring things forward to the Province of Manitoba. They work with us in a way that is good for all of Manitoba, and I can tell you there will be good ideas come out of this summit. We

will listen, and we always go with the priorities of the City.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the government used \$27.5 million, tax dollars, in order to lure OlyWest to the city of Winnipeg. Then you have the legislative assistant, the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), you have the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who attended a public meeting just last week where there were hundreds of local residents, and they tore to shreds the government policy. What hypocrisy.

This government is an embarrassment. You cannot have it both ways. It is either you support it or you do not support it. The Member for Radisson and the Member for Transcona are doing a disservice to those individuals who are calling this government into account.

Why, Mr. Premier (Mr. Doer), can you not even convince your own caucus members that this a good idea? Because if you cannot do that why should the people of Radisson and Transcona buy in?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite again, you know, confuses accuracy with volume. He yells and he rants and he raves, and he does not get the facts straight.

The facts are that the members from, certainly, the Liberal Party flip like bass in a boat. It is just like the MTS Centre. One day they are for a project, the next day they are against the project. It continually depends on the day, who they are talking to, whether they are agreeing or disagreeing. They have no credibility.

Our credibility, working with the City of Winnipeg, working with all municipalities in the province of Manitoba on good economic development, is a fine one.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this minister and this government does not have to talk about my credibility. The fact is the legislative assistant to the Premier, who is the NDP MLA for Radisson, the NDP MLA from Transcona, are both saying no, it is a bad policy. They are saying this to hundreds of Manitobans. That is what they are saying.

If the Premier cannot convince his own caucus colleagues, his own legislative assistant and the Member for Transcona that this is a good idea, why should the people in Radisson and the people of Transcona have to accept what this Premier is doing in their communities?

It is a simple question. I ask the Premier to have the courage to answer it. Either get behind his caucus colleagues and do the right thing or, Mr. Speaker, give indication.

You want to know what the right thing is? There is rural Manitoba, too. There are alternatives. This government needs to be responsible on this issue, and it is not good enough for the Premier to accept what the City Council did only to get sliced in the back. Shame on the Premier.

Mr. Smith: If it was not so sad, it would be amusing, watching the member. If only his constituents could actually see as he runs into this legislative room carrying fudge, carrying Big Macs.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what the reality is. All across Manitoba we are seeing far more youth retention in Manitoba. We are seeing a reduction in rates for our students to stay here; 92 percent of our students graduating from Red River are staying here in the province. MTS Centre is up, built and doing fine for the city of Winnipeg. In Brandon we have the Keystone Centre doing extremely well. We are seeing reductions in taxation right across the board here in Manitoba.

We do not run around with fudge and Big Macs; we take action. He should get on board.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (14:30)

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Following the daily prayer on April 26, 2006, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) raised a matter of privilege regarding the comments of the First Minister (Mr. Doer) during a radio program that morning on CJOB.

The Official Opposition House Leader contended that the Premier's response, when asked if the budget will pass, was "Don't know, don't know, bells are ringing," was a reflection on the House and were misleading. He concluded his comments by moving, "that the Premier do apologize publicly to Manitobans for the incorrect comments he has put on the record, both here and outside the Chamber with regard to the standing order and with regard to what the intention of that is."

The honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable First Minister also offered contributions to the Chair.

I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities. I thank all members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader asserted that he was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second issue of whether a prima facie case was demonstrated, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the actions complained of. *Beauchesne* Citation 31(1) advises that statements made outside the House by a member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege. Marleau and Montpetit, on page 522 of *House of Commons Practice and Procedure* state that the Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside of the House by one member against another.

Rulings from Manitoba Speakers support these findings. It has been ruled a number of times by Manitoba Speakers that comments made outside the Assembly Chamber cannot form the basis for a prima facie case of privilege. Speaker Walding ruled so in 1983, while Speaker Phillips in 1986 and 1987. Speaker Rocan ruled six times between 1988 and 1995 that statements made outside the House cannot form the basis of privilege, while Speaker Dacquay ruled the same way in 1995. I myself have made similar rulings twice in 2004, three times in 2005 and again just recently.

Regarding the comments that were made inside the Chamber, what we have is a situation of a dispute over facts. As all honourable members should be aware of by now, *Beauchesne* Citation 31(1) advises that a dispute arising between two members as to allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege. Joseph Maingot, on page 223 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* states, "A dispute between two members about questions of fact said in debate does not

constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate." This is supported by two rulings from Speaker Walding, by three rulings from Speaker Phillips, by eight rulings from Speaker Rocan, by two rulings from Speaker Dacquay and by nine rulings from myself, the current Speaker.

I would therefore rule, with the greatest of respect, that there is no prima facie case of privilege.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Take Flight Education Program

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a new educational program being offered at the Western Canada Aviation Museum. The Take Flight Education Program was officially launched in November of 2005 and is offered year round to children in kindergarten to Grade 6.

Using a unique museum environment, students are given the opportunity to interact and experience aviation first-hand. The program was developed in collaboration with school teachers, and activities are linked directly to the education curriculum for science and social studies, geography, history and language arts. Through fun and interactive activities, kids learn about wind and weather, basic aviation and mechanical principles and also become acquainted with specific aircraft. The goal is to inspire and engage young minds in the fields of aviation and aerospace.

As the programs are led mostly by volunteer hosts, the museum is currently looking for volunteers to come and participate in this exciting endeavour. The Take Flight program is expected to welcome about 3,000 students this year from all across the province. Through a generous grant from Great-West Life, special access has been provided for students from 15 inner-city schools. Also, many schools from rural areas have signed up for the program.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to applaud the Western Canada Aviation Museum and especially recognize the efforts of Shirley Render, Chris Allen and Joanne Troniak for developing the Take Flight program.

I would also like to mention an upcoming fundraiser being held at the museum on May 15. Wings of Hope will be a fashion show and luncheon with all proceeds dedicated to the Guardian Angel Benefit for women's cancer and the Western Canada Aviation Museum. Mr. Speaker, I continue to be

impressed by the enthusiasm for community collaboration that the Western Canada Aviation Museum has demonstrated over the years and wish them great success with their new Take Flight program and great fortunes through their Wings of Hope fundraiser. Thank you.

Ruth Schroeder

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an amazing woman and the immense struggles that she and her family have had to endure, all the while maintaining a fighting spirit and amazing resilience in the face of tragedy and the loss of a loved one.

Ruth Schroeder always lived a happy, healthy and active life which included a loving family and a rewarding career as a teaching assistant in Souris School. Unfortunately, in August of 2004 her life changed forever as she was diagnosed with breast cancer and was forced to undergo a punishing series of treatments in an attempt to defeat this menacing disease. Her husband, Erwin, who was always at her side, was later diagnosed with cancer himself in February 2005. While Ruth was eventually able to overcome her cancer, Erwin eventually succumbed to his affliction and passed away last July. Despite this loss, Ruth has been able to carry on and even started working at Souris School again this past September.

When Ruth's friend Connie Moffat learned that she could make a nomination for the chairperson for the Relay for Life, there was no question that she should nominate her dear and close friend for the spirit with which she continued to live her life despite the hardship she had faced. Ruth's nomination was eventually chosen among countless other nominees and Ruth was named honorary chairperson for this year's Relay for Life. Ever modest, Ruth was greatly humbled by this great honour and dutifully accepted her position.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my greatest congratulations to the naming of Ruth Schroeder, my friend, as the honorary chairperson for the 2006 Relay for Life and also bring to light her great commitment to life and her indomitable spirit as an example to all my fellow members. Thank you.

Bobbies and Bandits Gala

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, I recently attended, together with the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), the ninth annual Bobbies and Bandits Gala fundraiser for Winnipeg Crime

Stoppers, a charitable community-based organization.

Crime Stoppers has been a Winnipeg institution since its inception in 1984. In its 20-year history it has received 30 international awards, it has helped solve 20 homicides, cleared over 10,500 cases from Winnipeg Police files and recovered goods totalling over \$75 million in value.

Last year Winnipeg Crime Stoppers received six awards at an international Crime Stoppers conference held in Calgary, Alberta. Among other things, Winnipeg Crime Stoppers was recognized for having achieved the greatest percentage increase in stolen property recovered, in cases cleared and in drugs recovered.

Winnipeg Crime Stoppers has also been successful in fostering partnerships with other Crime Stoppers organizations across Canada and internationally to solve crime. At the Calgary conference it received the media award for best newspaper crime of the week feature, which was created through its partnership with *The Winnipeg Sun*.

Recently discussions between the government of Manitoba, law enforcement and Winnipeg, Brandon and Manitoba Crime Stoppers produced an historic partnership among Manitoba's three Crime Stoppers organizations. In January these organizations offered double your money month across the province for tips leading to the arrest of crystal meth producers and traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the organizers and sponsors of the ninth annual Bobbies and Bandits Gala. I would also like to thank all of the individuals that make up the Winnipeg Crime Stoppers program for their continued commitment to fighting crime across province. Their efforts are an important part of crime prevention and suppression in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Citizens on Patrol

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind all members of the House that this week, May 1 through 7, has officially been declared as Citizens on Patrol Week.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this program, not only as a former member of the Portage la Prairie Citizens on Patrol but as a thankful Manitoban. Inspector Ken Turner of the RCMP has declared this program a major success in providing

the RCMP with valuable information which has contributed significant support in assisting them with their duties.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, for more than 15 years the Citizens on Patrol Program has provided organization to interested volunteers who would like to assist police services with information about suspicious activities which they have noted. The COPP volunteers also conduct home inspections while residents are on vacation and conduct the MPI Speedwatch program, which promotes road safety.

I am very pleased to recognize the 40 Portage la Prairie residents that are currently serving as volunteers with countless hours to the Citizens on Patrol Program in Portage la Prairie. Might I also commend the Portage la Prairie city council and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for their continued support of this valued program, which is making Portage la Prairie a much safer community. In celebration of this program the Portage Citizens on Patrol held a fundraiser barbeque at the Portage la Prairie Mall on May 3. I would like to thank Jean Zimmerman and Rosemarie Carriere, the current president and secretary, for their tireless efforts in organizing and co-ordinating the COPP in Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to, on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly, offer our thanks to all of the hundreds of volunteers engaged in the Citizens on Patrol Program for their dedication and commitment to making Manitoba a safer place to live, work and raise a family. Thank you.

Seven Oaks Hospital 25th Anniversary

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it was with great pleasure that I attended a gala dinner this past March 25 honouring Seven Oaks Hospital's 25th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the Wellness Institute in my constituency of The Maples. A cornerstone of the neighbourhood for a quarter century, the hospital and its staff have played an important and lasting role in the community.

Seven Oaks Hospital has a storied past, Mr. Speaker. The drive to build Seven Oaks was led by Charlie Bachman, a local resident and councillor for the West Kildonan ward from the late 1960s on. Joined by such north Winnipeg notables as Abe Yanofsky, Saul Miller and Joe Zuken, this community-driven team was determined that a

community hospital for Winnipeg's North End should become a reality.

Once their idea and perseverance paid off, Mr. Speaker, the hospital did not forget its roots. Seven Oaks very much remains a community hospital, serving the needs of its residents when ill, and ensuring that the benefits of a healthy lifestyle are instilled in the community through the Wellness Institute. While Seven Oaks has seen many changes over the years, it remains a vibrant institution. With innovative development such as the Wellness Institute and its unique and nationally recognized employee-employer relationship programs, the hospital richly deserves the title as one of the busiest and best community hospitals in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Seven Oaks and all of its staff on 25 years of exceptional community service. Their example demonstrates the outstanding achievements that can be made by the work of dedicated people in a community hospital. For this they are to be commended. Thank you.

House Business

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): This is on House business, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce, in accordance with Rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution to be called for debate next Thursday will be the private member's resolution on rural health care brought forward by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

Mr. Speaker: On House business, it has been announced by the Official Opposition House Leader that, in accordance with Rule 31(9), the private member's resolution to be called for debate next Thursday will be the private member's resolution on rural health care brought forward by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

in subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Rondeau), who has 30 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): I am very pleased to speak in favour of this very progressive budget.

I look at the budget as having some themes. First one is the theme of being green, environmentally friendly. The second one is growing, where our economy is growing. We are growing the numbers of jobs. We are expanding the province, and the economic pie is definitely growing. The last theme is it is a great place to live in and raise a family. By talking about each of these themes, I hope I will convince the members opposite to vote for a very progressive, positive budget that does well for all Manitobans.

I look at it this way. When we are talking about the first one, green, and talking about environmental, first, it is the first time we are building hydro-electric generating power. We are working in co-operation with others to do this. If you look at the wind energy, where what we are doing is we are working out a private-public partnership to build an environmentally friendly capacity for wind energy, this is very positive. It is good for farmers. It is good for the economics, as far as getting land rental. It is good as far as the energy usage because it is a renewable energy. It is also very, very good because we do it in partnership with industry. So that is very positive.

It is also very positive where we are also working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to develop our hydro-electric generation capacity. So what we are doing is we are working in a partnership with not only the industry, but also with Aboriginal communities. I think this is where we are able to excel over the former government, the Conservative government. Where they thought there was only one answer, we know that by working together and collaborating we can develop this province with multiple partners, with multiple co-operative ventures to grow the economy.

I think that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) should be commended for having unprecedented growth in our GDP, where we have in excess of \$12-billion growth in six years, \$12-billion growth. That is unprecedented. I know that members opposite really question numbers, but I hope that they can learn how to read because that is a big

number. It has so many zeros I know the members opposite would not be able to just look at it quickly and understand such a huge growth in such a short period of time.

But I think the way it works is by looking at where we can develop win, win, win situations for all Manitobans and all the rest. I look at when we are talking about green. We are talking about working with industry to develop the biodiesel capacity. This is something that has never existed and we are building the biodiesel capacity.

I look at just other examples of where we want to work in co-operation with people. So, when you talk about the Hydro Power Smart initiative, this is really good because what we are doing is Hydro is providing the people of Manitoba opportunity to save. Often they sit there and they say, oh, we should hand money out. What we have done is we have handed out an opportunity, an opportunity for Manitobans, not just to save for one year or get cash for one year, but to get cash on an ongoing basis. So, if they replace their old furnace, which is 60 percent efficient, and they then get a 90 percent efficient furnace, they will save money this year, next year and they will save money in the future. That is the type of win, win we are going to do. We are not only planning for the short term, but the short term and the long term, so we have triple wins here.

Let us talk about population. The members opposite today in Question Period talked about all the people leaving. Well, according to Statistics Canada, and I refer the members to Statistics Canada, we have had a population growth, that is a population growth of over 30,000 people in the last six years. This is reflective of three communities. If we brought Flin Flon, The Pas and Thompson into the province, that is the type of growth that we have had in this province in the last six years. This is a change from the 1990s where we had population decreases. So what we have is we have changed the trend.

I want the members to pay close attention to the statistics from StatsCan. In the youth, ages 15 to 14, over the last six years, from 2000-2005, the population labour force for this group has grown by a total of 7,800 or 1,300 per year. So that is under the NDP. It has grown an average of 1,300 a year, and 506 in the last two years alone, 506 per year in the last two years alone.

*(14:50)

Under the Conservative government, from 1989 to 1999, youth population fell by a total of 18,000 people or 1,600 per year. So the last six years of our performance is a 79 percent improvement over the Tory government. The labour force, the youth, has grown by about 6,100 or 1,000 per year under ours, where it fell by 17,800 or 1,600 per year under the Tories. So the labour force has increased; the population has increased under our government that fell under the Conservative government. Please refer to Statistics Canada because they have information that you should probably make yourself availed of.

Also, youth employment. So this is not only the labour force, but the employment. The employment for youth from 2000 to 2005 has grown by 6,000 people, or approximately 1,000 a year. From 1989 to 1999, youth employment fell by a total of 13,300 or 1,200 per year. So last year's, our record, is an 83 percent improvement over the previous period.

So let us make it simple for the members opposite: We have more young people here; more young people are entering the labour force; and the amount of people who are unemployed that are young has fallen, and it has fallen because more young people are working. So please pay attention. I would be pleased to provide that information, those statistics to the members opposite if they do not know how to use the Web site.

Next: So our population is growing and, just for specific numbers, under the former government there were 157,005 people from 15 to 24 under their former government, and under our government right now 168,654. Those are numbers provided by the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics and StatsCan. So please take note, there are more people. And they often wonder why there are more people here and more young people.

Well, I would like to take note of some of the industries that have grown and have been very positive as far as our economy. One is the film industry. The film industry has grown by leaps and bounds. This is where people make good money with their high skills, high talent, and it is an exciting industry. It has grown multiple times under our government's watch. And I know that it was a small industry under the former government, under the Conservative government, but that has grown by leaps and bounds under our government, under our stewardship.

We have new media. We have all sorts of new media, exercises going on here. The Minister of

Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) talked about the new training course we are trying to devise, but we are working with industry to create educational opportunity and then good-paying jobs, and, in the case of new media, you are talking between \$40,000 and \$80,000 a year. It is exciting, and we want to continue to do that.

If you look at life sciences, the life sciences industry has just been going gangbusters. We are one of the country's leaders, and what is interesting about the life sciences is that we have been growing that program at about 10 percent. So, while Canada's life sciences have increased, while Manitoba has 4 percent of the population, it holds 10 percent of the national biotech activity. The annual revenues exceed \$440 million and the average life science sector income is between \$50,000 and \$60,000, and R&D, research and development, jobs incomes are about \$80,000. To tell you how this works, the Province directly spent \$26.9 million on R&D, and that has been up 62 percent since the 1999 budget. In Budget 2005, we boosted the value of the R&D tax credit by 33 percent to encourage private sector research and development activity.

So what we are trying to do is by increasing the tax credit in the budget that the members opposite held up, what we are doing is allowing new companies to invest in new processes in research, in development of their products, and that is good. Manitoba is now home to 41 biotech companies. That is a 10 percent growth in two years, operating in the life science sector. There are now over 2,300 employees, which is a growth of 35 percent in two years, and there are also 30 research and development companies representing approximately 1,900 employees.

The interesting part about this is when the members say, what is your vision. Ernst & Young's Global Biotechnology Report in 2004 ranked Manitoba as the fastest-growing biotech sector in Canada. This has been confirmed by a third party, Industry Canada, and it said that Manitoba's biotech sector has grown by 40 percent in the last three years. The report went on further to note Manitoba's boom is partially explained by the provincial government's effort to grow biotechnology sector within the province. So it shows that we can work with industry to create high-value jobs, high-skill jobs and develop it in partnership with the private sector. I think that is very, very positive, Mr. Speaker.

When we start talking about other investments, again, you look at a plan, and you look at how we can carry through a plan. Working with a number of organizations such as the manufacturers, we have listened. What we did, for the first time, we started to look at the PST on equipment, on investment. We listened to what the companies said. They had said for years they have been asking the former Conservative government about eliminating this, to get rid of it so that people who are going to make an investment in their company, that they get some up-front capital in order to be able to do that. So we listened to the manufacturers.

I am pleased to say that what we did was we started to make part of the retail sales tax refundable to manufacturers. We started out at 20 percent, and this year we moved to 35 percent. The interesting part is the members opposite delayed that. They pushed against our manufacturers. They pushed against the industries in Manitoba. So what they have done is they have hurt the industries in Manitoba. So, when they are talking about being friends of business, they delayed, they pushed back against the industries. So, while the Canadian dollar is going up above the 90 cents and manufacturers would come and say what can you do for us, our government had a plan and moved it forward to make sure that 35 percent of the PST was refundable.

What did the members opposite do? They delayed it. They slowed down and they said, no, manufacturers, we do not want to help you. We do not want to help to create jobs. We do not want to keep you competitive. Go away. We want to do the old Tory thing, which is do nothing. They do not want to work with industry, work with business and make us competitive.

So I am pleased that we have changed the policies. I am pleased that the change done by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and our government will lead to a huge change. So StatsCan, again, an independent third party, has said that Manitoba will lead the country in capital investment in 2006, with a 14 percent growth, more than double the national growth rate of 6 percent.

The private sector is booming with an investment forecast to grow by 10.4 percent, double the national growth rate of 5.1 percent. It also says that the value of building permits was up 78.6 percent, a growth rate higher than cities like Regina, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto. We are

growing. Companies are talking about making more capital investment.

I want to correct the members opposite. I know that they do not want facts to get in the way of questions during Question Period, but I would like to make sure that the members opposite know the information from Statistics Canada. In the last 12 months, and I quote, an additional 13,400 new private-sector jobs have been created. Again, in the last 12 months, an additional 13,400 private-sector jobs have been created, a 3.1 percent growth that far exceeds the national growth rate of 1.8 percent, and third best among provinces.

*(15:00)

Now, this is interesting because another factor that the members opposite seem to confuse is that since 1999, 64 percent of the jobs created were in the private sector, 64 percent. The interesting part is if you read *The Globe and Mail*—I would encourage you to start doing that—on March 31, 2006, the report said that according to StatsCan, Manitoba families had the fourth highest median income among the provinces behind Alberta, Ontario and B.C. So they have been moved very, very far ahead, and we continue to grow.

Now, not to confuse the members opposite, but I will explain again on the labour force. In 1995, the labour force, that is the amount of people who are involved in the labour force, there were 556,900 people under their watch, so 556,900 people. If you talk about the private sector, it was 391,100, almost 400,000. The public sector was 125,400.

The interesting part is in 2005 there were some changes. The amount of people employed was 609,400 people. That is more. That is about 50,000 people more. If you look at the private sector/public sector breakdown, there were 434,700 in private sector, and the public sector had grown to 145,000.

So the interesting part about the changes is under the former government the amount of public sector employees was higher than under our government. So the amount, the size of the public sector has gone down. The size of the private sector has gone up. The amount of people who are employed in the private sector has gone up. The amount of young people has gone up. The amount of young people employed in the province has gone up.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So I hope the members opposite will take the time to look at Statistics Canada, avail themselves of the statistics from the Manitoba government and read.

So we have better youth retention. Part of that is by having a plan where we are getting jobs that are exciting and having Manitoba moving forward.

I think it is interesting to note some of the programs that our government has worked with industry to put in. The first one is the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative. What this is, it is a federal-, provincial- and industry-led coalition where all partners are financially contributing, and what it is doing is it is working with industries and businesses to make sure that they are using the latest technology, latest systems to make sure that they are competitive around the world.

This is a program that our government has initiated and has grown. Companies I have talked to have said they have 8, 10, 12 percent savings on it. It is helping with the amount of inventory. It is helping with processes. This is wonderful, and it shows how our government can work with all groups in a co-operative fashion. It can work with federal government, the provincial government and industry. We have done that and we have had wonderful reviews from organizations like the Canadian Manufacturers' Association.

Other groups are the Composites Innovation Centre. What this is doing is it is again working with the federal, provincial and industry. What we are doing is working with companies like Boeing and others where they are using advanced composites to improve the products Manitoba is putting to market. So they are working with planes; they are working with buses; they are working with multiple vehicle companies and different products to make sure that we are not just producing some products or average products but state-of-the-art products designed for the world.

I have heard time and time again how this wonderful investment and co-operative effort from our government and industry has led to job creation, to new opportunities for Manitoba. It is, again, something that our government helped put in that did not exist prior to 1999. I am pleased to say it is creating and growing the economy.

The other one is the vehicle technology centre. Again, working with farm implement dealers, with different organizations, what we are doing is we are

showing how to use and incorporate lean techniques in order to save money and better produce manufacturers, because most people do not realize we produce 75, 78 percent of all the buses in North America, both highway and coach buses and city buses. That is a huge opportunity now and in the future.

We are also working in technology where we are trying to use the best of the vehicles, the lighter vehicles, vehicles that run on different fuels, and we will continue to do that. I am pleased to see that we can do that and continue to grow our province in co-operation with many industries.

You look again at our record versus the members opposite who often talk about tax relief, who often talk about what they should do about business, but what it is is a lot of air and talk, but it is no action. I am pleased to be part of a government that acts and acts on all benefits.

So the other members crowed about how the Conservative government, the federal Conservative government, dropped the small business tax rate from 12 to 11.5 percent. They were so excited about this 0.5 percent change. I am surprised that the members opposite voted against budgets that dropped the small tax rate from 8 percent, and what we are moving to now is 3 percent. So we are not dropping it by 0.5 percent, we are dropping it 16 times that much, where we are dropping it to 3 percent from 8 percent. So I am very, very pleased that we continue to move forward in helping small businesses, which is 93 percent.

We are also moving the corporate income tax rate down, and, in just this budget alone, moved the tax rate down for business \$17 million. That makes it \$146 million annually. We are also working to reduce the red tape.

We are working to increase the Provincial Nominee Program for people and for businesses and people who want to establish businesses in Manitoba. Although we have the second lowest unemployment rate with the growing economy, we expect to do well in the future.

I also wanted to explain some of the new programs that we are introducing. One is BizCoach which is, again, another wonderful co-operative program between business and government. What it is doing is it is taking successful business leaders, linking them to new entrepreneurs and what it is doing is it is developing those skills. This was a

suggestion from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and from the Chambers of Commerce, and we are working with them to develop these programs.

So I am pleased that the members opposite continue to vote against the businesses. I am pleased that the members opposite do not lower taxes, and I am pleased that you did not put in good innovative programs, because I think that by us being in government for many, many, many more years, we will continue to make it brighter for all Manitobans.

I will talk briefly about some of the programs with seniors. Again, we are going to increase the shelter benefits to seniors and those who are on low income. That is going to increase by \$7.8 million, and that will help deal with the increasing shelter costs. One of the problems with the growth is because we are growing so fast the prices of houses are going up. I know the former government, the Conservative government, did not have that problem. House prices were not going up because people were leaving the province under the former government, as I explained earlier in my speech. We are growing the province, hence house prices go up. Because of that we have to deal with the people who are not able to look after themselves fully, so the shelter benefit is going to kick in with the \$7.8-million increase.

We are also increasing \$13.6 million for supported living for people living with mental disabilities. We also have a four-year, \$98-million, Aging in Place, long-term program for seniors, which is increasing supports for those living in their homes without going into institutions.

I know that the members opposite would not vote against increasing the shelter benefit, would not vote against helping those people living with mental disabilities and would not vote against the seniors who are aging within their own homes and living in their own homes. I would be surprised at the Conservatives and the two independent members. I know that the Liberals often talk a good talk, but they do not vote with people. They do not vote with their heart. What they do is they vote with the Conservatives. They vote with the opposition. I wonder whether there is truly a difference between the Liberals and the Conservative Party. They will vote against people living with mental disabilities, those in shelters and the seniors. We support those groups and we will continue to support those groups.

Finally, I am pleased that, as Minister of Mines, we have changed the mining regulations so now we

are third best in the country, according to the Fraser Institute. I know the Fraser Institute is seemingly a left-leaning organization; however, they have said that we are the third best jurisdiction in the world in mines. That is probably why we are at record levels of exploration.

* (15:10)

We have also worked to develop an Aboriginal hiring program in the Aboriginal prospectors course. We opened a new mine in Bissett. There is a new mine in Bissett that is going to be pouring the first gold bars shortly. I am pleased to let the members opposite know that about 65 percent of the population are local Aboriginal people working in the mine. That is wonderful.

I think that it is really important to tie education and training, which has expanded under our government, into employment. When the crunch comes, people are talking about workforce. Often what we talk about is we talk about the biggest cost of doing business. We want an educated, skilled workforce. You do that by tying the education plan to employment. We do that. We make it affordable. We make it accessible. The members opposite have not. They have shown that they want to crank the cost. They want to make education very, very exclusive. We want to include all people.

Just to show some of the simple things, the change between the rhetoric and the practicality. Under the former government, people living in homes had their education tax go up from 1990 to 1999, in Winnipeg. The change was about 58.7 percent in Winnipeg in my area. Under 1999 to 2006, it has gone down 13.5 percent. I know it is not tons, but under theirs up almost 60 percent, under ours down. I know the members opposite have confusion over certain math, but up and down should be easy.

Finally, we have cut personal income tax, and property tax cuts gone to about \$472 million annually. The middle income tax rate has gone down to 13 percent as of January 1, 2007. The \$100 personal exemption has gone up. There has been \$80 million in personal income tax cuts, property tax cuts, business tax cuts, support for the seniors, support for youth and new programs. Just to let you know why there may have been a little bit of confusion over what we were doing with youth, it was simple. Why we were confused is because there were over 200 programs for youth in this government, so many that are doing such good work

to keep youth here that we want to talk about them and all want to brag.

In conclusion, I think we have done wonderful. I will support this budget for an innovative, growing province. I would hope that you support all people in the province and vote for it.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Before I begin my brief comments, I would like to welcome a good friend and a great Manitoban to this Chamber, Steve Loney. Great to see you here. I think it is one of his first times here, so I will try to keep him awake with my speech.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Springfield and East St. Paul for being great constituents and for inviting me to a lot of events. I always enjoy standing in this House, in this Chamber representing the good people of Springfield and East St. Paul.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin my comments by saying it is a great time to be a Progressive Conservative in Manitoba. Before the applause gets too out of control, I want to make sure that I quantify that comment. For those of you in this House who may not know, we had two successful dinners in one week. We had one in Winnipeg that was sold out and one in Brandon. They were terrific. The only thing that could even top them was the fact that there were some great speeches. I know, I was there. They were very well done. Anyway, congratulations to the party for having put on two great dinners, to all the volunteers, to the chairs. It was a great, great celebration for our party.

We also had two successful conventions in one month. We had a delegated convention where we had some rules we had to change insofar as the constitution with mail-in ballot. There was some concern that we may not get the 200 delegates out. It was on a Friday evening and the concern was we would not get enough people out to make quorum. In fact, there were over 325 people who showed up. It was a great convention. Then, of course, we had our leadership convention, which was a great success. Again, I would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who helped to make it a great occasion.

The news gets even better for the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba. I would like to report to this House, and I know each and every member will take great interest in this, that the membership of the Progressive Conservative Party went up by 100 percent. It shows a party that has

momentum. As they say in politics, "You gotta have the big mo," and, certainly, the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has great momentum coming out of two fantastic dinners and two fantastic conventions.

But the news gets even better. There was a second poll that came out that showed the NDP had dropped to a statistical dead heat with the Progressive Conservative Party. We are now tied 41 percent to 41 percent, and that is before some of the worst scandals to have hit this province broke. We look forward to bright things and better things when the next poll comes out.

We can attribute a lot of it to the fact that this party, the Progressive Conservative Party—which, by the way, should change its name to be the Progressive Democratic Conservative Party, and the members opposite should drop "Democratic" out of their party name because there is nothing democratic about their party anymore until they accept one member, one vote, which is a true democratic way of picking a leader. It was a great system. It took out the animosity of the delegated system. It would also strip out of the New Democratic Party the fact that the union bosses automatically control one third of all votes. They would actually have to have a democratic process. But we will leave it to them and we will see what they do with it. One member, one vote, brought on a lot of party renewal. It was a great system.

I know that our party is now prepared to move on and face the New Democrats under the Doer government leadership in the next coming election which, I suspect, will be next spring because this Premier did say there would be no election in 2006 because he said, no, no, no, Manitobans do not want an election in 2006. They are electioned out, he said. So we know there will not be one until next spring, which follows his word, and we want to stick with his word.

Now, we know it is a great time to be a Progressive Conservative in Manitoba, but, in contrast, it is a terrible time to be a Doer government New Democrat in Manitoba. Let me quantify that. Let me tell you what the Doer government's status quo has gotten us. It has gotten us a have-not province where we are not the best in the West, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are now the last in the West. That is where it has gotten us.

On the next statement, please do not take my words for it; do not take me on my word for this.

Take it from the Conference Board of Canada that has rated our health care system the worst in the nation. I mean, not in the middle, not in the last, but as the worst, the worst health care system in the nation.

Agriculture: I can remember when BSE hit, and the Premier sat and for 74 days did nothing. He would not meet with a farmer; he would not meet with a rancher; he would not meet with a cattle producer. The closest he came was on a highway once, he almost hit a cow, but that he avoided, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The only thing that we ever did get out of this Premier and his minister is hot air. We got nothing out of them. We have not got a slaughtering plant, nothing. The farmers had to struggle, and they have suffered under this government, under CAIS. This government still has not got a position on CAIS, and the federal government has said they are willing to talk, and this government has not said anything. The farmers have suffered.

One of the things that I have noticed as I travelled this province, and had the opportunity to speak to a lot of Manitobans, is how dire a lot of our agriculture is in this province. I would suggest to some of these members who evidently represent rural constituencies that they step out of their Winnipeg-bought houses, actually visit their own constituencies, and they would find out how tough things are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I sat in farmyards; I sat in farmhouses. I visited individuals who are suffering terribly while NDP Cabinet ministers sit in their posh Winnipeg houses supposedly representing rural constituencies. Shame on them for that. Shame on them.

* (15:20)

Oh, while they travel out of their posh city of Winnipeg houses and get on to the streets and highways and byways of this province where the most obscure, bizarre things happen, where semi trucks rattle the gas tanks off their trucks because the roads are so bad under this Doer NDP government.

In fact, they came up with a new infrastructure program, and that is when the highways get so bad they get one of these huge lit signs and it says "Caution, reduce speed, careful." That is their idea of investing in highways and roads. They were so bad sometimes you had to come down to a crawl to be able to get through some of the bumps and roads on our supposed highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is what has happened to infrastructure under the Doer government.

Post-secondary education: For all the blowhard we get from across the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Maclean's* magazine consistently ranks post-secondary education in this province if not last, amongst the least. That is a standard that they find that they can live with. It is a standard that they have no problem with, but is a standard that scares Manitobans and scares them out of the province.

The news gets worse. This Doer government has foisted upon us a \$21-billion debt, a debt that grows and grows and grows in a time when they have the second highest increase in revenue in the history of this province. Yet we are going to foist on future generations more debt that they are one day going to wake up and find they are going to have to pay.

Our young people: We know we are losing our young people. Our educated are leaving. I heard the minister going through numbers, obviously prepared by staffers because he had no heart in reading them, and he got himself all befuddled and confused on his numbers. The fact is that our youth are leaving.

The question is, Mr. Speaker, why is that the case? Why is it? I know this from having travelled this great province. We have a province which is incredibly wealthy in human resources, incredibly rich in natural resources. Yet, as stated, we are the last have-not in western Canada. As I have stated before, we do not even strive any more to compete with Saskatchewan. I can remember when there was a time when, as a Manitoban, you could compare yourself with Saskatchewan and you would win every time including football. The only thing we have left now that we can maybe beat them on is football, and, at the rate this government is going, chances are we will not even be able to do that. This government has stripped Manitoba of its competitiveness that we cannot even stand up to Saskatchewan.

When we look through history, we see that people came to this country, immigrants, my family, my parents came here. My mother came in 1949 on a displaced person's pass. That is basically a pass where you are issued it, you were a person without a country. She went to Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, and had to work for two years for nothing to work off her fare to get to Canada. The reason why they did that, the reason why people come here is because of hope and opportunity. That is why they come to Manitoba. That is why they come to Canada.

In fact, the Russian Germans who are now starting to settle in larger numbers in the southeast

have a great saying, Mr. Speaker. It goes: No money, no problem; no hope, big problem. What we are facing as a province is our youth and our educated are losing hope because our young people do use our education system and our young people do travel our roads and our young people do access health care. Under the Doer government they see no future. They see no hope. The Doer government is stripping them of any reason to stay in this province because they are stripping them of hope and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I touched on the \$21-billion debt. I say to this House: I know many of my colleagues have younger children. One day our children are going to come to us, and they are going to say: Dad, let me get this straight; we have roads that you can barely drive on, the worst health care system in the country, post-secondary education ranked amongst the lowest, agriculture that is devastated, and for a \$21-billion mortgage? You are going to foist on us as the next generation a \$21-billion plus mortgage? That is the best you could do?

It is an absolute condemnation of this government, of the Doer government, for what they are foisting, for what they are going to have our young people inherit someday, and they look at all this and they say, we are not going to stick with this. We are not happy with last place. We are not happy with second-last place. We want to be the best. We do not want to be the last in the West. We want to be the first in the West. We want to be the best in the West. We want to be able to compete with every region in the country and every region in the world. We wish to be competitive. The Doer government is stripping them of that ability. Then we read in the paper of people saying, why do our young people leave? Why do our bright leave? Why do our educated leave? They should look in the mirror. That is the reason why, because they have stripped them of hope and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, unless they come to their senses, and unless they present a budget that is worthy to vote on, that is worthy to stand up for and say a yea to, I, as the member for Springfield-East St. Paul, I, as one MLA in this House, say that I cannot vote for this legislation when the very Premier (Mr. Doer) who is responsible for this budget yawned three times during the presentation of the budget. It speaks badly for this province. It speaks ill of our province, and it shows that this province is losing hope; it is losing opportunity, and I call them to come to their senses and produce a budget that we can actually vote for. Thank you very much.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an exciting time for Manitobans when they see a budget that is proposed that a citizen helps each and every Manitoban right across our entire province. It is a pleasure that the opposition is finally getting up to speak on our budget. I think it is critical for Manitobans to know that the delay tactics that the members opposite have displayed is quite shameless. I will tell you what. It is a disservice to Manitoba; it is a disservice to every one of their constituents; and it is certainly a disservice to my community in Brandon West. Finally, getting up to debate the budget, I welcome, certainly, from my constituents in Brandon West.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, previous speakers who have prattled on with information that is less than accurate are not what Manitobans want to hear. They want to hear information that is knowledgeable; they want to hear information that is accurate; and they want to hear information that is certainly relevant to their everyday family life, their communities and their neighbourhoods right across our entire province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you consider members opposite, I guess normally a birthday is a happy time. It is a time when everyone celebrates that birthday. But it is a sad celebration that we had two days ago, truly a sad, sad day for Manitobans. Two days ago, there was a celebration, the 10th anniversary of the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System out of our province. As we look at the sad and tired members opposite—not my words, those are the words from one of the candidates who was running for their leadership, from Springfield—now he said that they are tired, they are out of ideas, they did not want, you know, to pursue, with the party that they actually have, the way that they were, but they are back to it. They are back to the old Tory party; they are back to the dark days of the nineties; they are back to the days when they were selling off our Crown corporations, owned by people in Brandon West, owned by people in Turtle Mountain, owned by people in Minnedosa and Souris and Carberry.

* (15:30)

They talk about economic development. Economic development is not selling off Crown corporations that support every individual in Manitoba, that they paid for over 70-some years. When you go out to Virden and when you go out to Minnedosa and you go out to Souris and you ask

people in the communities what they think of the previous government selling off their phone company—now it is being charged, every household, over \$25 per month more now than when they sold our phone company.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they can rattle and prattle and tuck their fingers into their pockets, walk in with their toothpicks in their mouths into the constituencies that they are at and rant and rave about the economic development and the great vision that they have. This side of the House opposed and fought back; then they sell it off because they are out of money and out of ideas. I believe the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) got it right. I believe that the Member for Springfield truly got it right when he said that they are tired, they are out of ideas, and it is an old club that is driving the force in their party. Manitobans know that.

Manitobans know that, when they look at this budget, one of the best budgets for Manitobans in over a decade. They know the difference between members opposite talking about youth retention in Manitoba, using false information, false information, and putting it on the record. They can get away with it in the House, but they will not do it out in the hallway. They will not walk outside and actually use numbers—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order being raised. State the point of order, please.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I would be quite glad to debate MTS in the hallway with this member anytime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no point of order. This is a dispute of the facts.

* * *

Mr. Smith: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not me that he needs to debate MTS with; it is every Manitoban that he sold their company on. I think MTS was debated in the election in 1999. Manitobans spoke pretty loudly, pretty clearly. Given a chance, if ever given a chance, the dark, dark day that that may happen, as we develop Manitoba Hydro, as we develop our economy to a new future economy with wind power, with, certainly, biodiesel. We are developing Manitoba, building on a new age economy and developing our hydro.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they never built or generated or invested in a 100-watt light bulb in this

province. They did not develop enough power in any term in any time that they were in office to actually build 100 watts of light bulb to turn on the lights to walk into their constituency office.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are builders of Hydro. They are sellers of Hydro. If they ever had a chance, I have zero doubt that that would be next on the chopping block. They would be out like they were with MTS, painting "For Sale" signs and telling Manitobans, oh, no, we will not sell it like they did with MTS, and turning around and selling that asset.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they battled and fought against the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. Today, they say, well, we would not touch that. But they are a party of privatization.

In some cases, it makes sense, but not with good Crown corporations, well-run corporations that assist and help Manitobans. Manitobans know the difference.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they can get up and they can rattle away about youth and youth leaving the province. The reality is, honestly, the reality is that our record on youth is now better, certainly, than it has been in well over 20 years. It is better than it has been since the early eighties. Through their period of time, the five years prior to us coming into government, they were losing over 400 youth per year out of the province. Gone, out of the province.

It could have had something to do with the massive increases that they had in education, the low investment that they had in post-secondary education and the rising, skyrocketing prices of tuition for students to go. But it was more than that; it was far more than that. Students were leaving in droves in the nineties, certainly from '95 to '99, 400 a year. The reality is there have been 500 per year in the last five years coming into Manitoba, more, coming into Manitoba. That is a stretch of 900 a year. They were losing 400. We have gained over 500. So that is 900 youth retention, if you look at it that way.

They had a dismal record, an absolutely brutal record of retention of youth in this province. They had no opportunities for youth. They were driving them out of post-secondary education. They were actually decreasing enrolments through the nineties in post-secondary education, which, we believe, is one of the best economic tools you can possibly have, the advancement of secondary education for youth. It develops a new age economy. It puts us on a competitive edge with others across the world. It

should be a no-brainer for these members opposite. Instead of razing post-secondary education, they should have been looking at how they could assist youth to stay in school, how we could retain that knowledge and have those people working in our province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the biotech industry has been so active in the last few years, in part, certainly, because of the brilliant minds that we have coming out of our universities and those people staying in our province. Ninety-two percent of the students that graduate from Red River College stay in our province; now well-trained Manitobans staying in our province, working.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not saying we do not have any problem. The problem we have right now is that there are so many construction jobs in Manitoba right now, there are so many jobs for every trade in Manitoba. Businesses are doing better than they ever have done. A lot of the businesses are growing in Manitoba. House sales are absolutely booming; they are setting records year after year after year. It is a simple indicator of confidence that young families, people have in a province when one of their largest investments is their home, and there are record sales. There is record capitalization of businesses in Manitoba investing in what they know is a bright future.

The unemployment rate is about 4.8 percent, the second lowest right across Canada. Businesses are telling us, and they have been for some time, that we do need to attract more people into Manitoba, and we have done that. We have done that year over year over year, far better record than members opposite ever had. I can tell you it is a good problem to have when there are far more jobs than there are people.

That is not something that members opposite can talk about, as they tuck their fingers into their pockets and waddle into the restaurants and sit down and want to talk over coffee, the long, long coffee breaks that they had. But there are many members from rural Manitoba talking about, well, you know what, we will help the producers, we will help the farmers in Manitoba. Yes, they helped them all right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They increased their taxes. They increased the taxes for our producers and our farmers in Manitoba. Now, they can get up, and, if anyone would like to get up right now and dispute that fact, the reality and the truth is that they did raise the assessment rate from 27 to 30 percent. Now, as they skyrocketed the costs for the producers, for

those landowners, for each and every Manitoban on school education taxes, some 68 percent skyrocketing rates through the nineties, we brought those rates down. We reinvested in our educational facilities, and we continue in this budget to reinvest in our schools, capital, the largest capital investments in post-secondary education and in primary education, our capital investments.

Now, they can say they invested. They can say they helped farmers. The reality is they talk about a lot of things. They talked about reducing education taxes. Manitobans know that the ESL, this government has completely eliminated off their taxes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have eliminated 100 percent of the ESL. Members opposite did not eliminate 1 percent. It is absolutely amazing. They were so busy firing nurses, firing teachers, selling off Crown corporations and sticking their fingers into their pockets and waddling in and telling people what a good job they were doing to actually perform and do anything. No wonder the youth were leaving the province.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these members opposite, it is sad; it is the same old crowd with their new leader. He was working for their party. The new leader of their party was advising Premier Filmon at the time. Now, they can say they have got a new view of Manitoba. Their new leader was the guy advising them to sell MTS. Their new leader was the guy advising Mike Harris to sell the Hydro in Ontario. It is the same old party all along the line, and you know what? I do not like to give too much credit to the Member for Springfield, but he got it right. They are tired. It is the old club. They are now back wandering in with their buddies with previous Minister Stefanson that put this whole deal together with the new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) that we have and telling Manitobans we will not sell it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are the selling party of Manitoba. They do sell well. They are good marketers. They sell low and get Manitobans to buy high. Now, I am not sure Manitobans like that. I am not sure they like selling off our phone company. I am not sure they like hollow promises.

Now, I can talk from my constituency on a hospital that—at that time, a Tory MLA that I ran against in 1999 was part of a Cabinet from these members opposite that said, fear not, Manitobans; fear not, Brandon, we are going to build that

hospital. But they did not do it once. No, they promised it seven times. Seven times they promised it, usually just before an election. Then, after the election it was, oh, well, we did not say what year; we did not say when we would build it. That was a hollow promise. It took this government to get into power to sit down with the RHA and say, let us get this built. Let us get this built for the citizens of not only Brandon, but, in fact, let us build a hospital that we can be proud of in southwestern Manitoba so we can have people come from Carberry, we can have people come from Minnedosa and Souris and Virden, come to a facility that is one of the best in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Regional Health Centre funded completely and with new equipment, excellent staff there, but now they have the tools, now they have the hospital, and it is built. It is there. Now, members can say, well, you know what? Health care, there is this area or that area. The reality is that people in Minnedosa now do not have to go to Winnipeg for a lot of the surgical things that they used to have to. Their families can come to Brandon. We have a regional centre of excellence in health. That was built. That was promised. That was done. Members opposite promised it, did not do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Keystone Centre in Brandon, members opposite talked about helping, and they were going to help the Keystone Centre, one of the economic engines of the entire region and supporting agriculture and supporting farming. They backed out of the Keystone Centre. They backed out of the Keystone Centre funding completely, cut the Keystone off. They said, you know what? It is not important enough for us to put one dime into the Keystone Centre. We are going to have it on a declining scale. What we are going to do as you get deeper in debt and in trouble, we are not going to help you. What we are going to do is we are going to bring down your funding and let your debt ride up and become unmanageable. City of Brandon was fighting for it at the time, citizens in Brandon.

The former Filmon government walked away from one of the largest economic engines in the entire southwestern region of Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you, people have not forgotten that. They have not forgotten them walking away from the Keystone Centre and now us coming in with \$15 million for the Keystone Centre, building the agricultural centre of excellence. These members, I know, will say: We support agriculture. We support raising your taxes or, I guess they do not say that, but

they did it. The reality is they talk about doing a lot of things and then they do nothing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people recognize that. People recognize in this budget true tax cuts for Manitobans. Small business recognizes a gain in this budget, tax cuts for small business. Large businesses recognize that, since the Second World War, corporate income tax rate is 17 percent. Members opposite, they like to cozy up to business and they like to cozy up to farmers and, you know what? The pat on the back and telling people what they are going to do, but the reality is they raised taxes for every Manitoban on educational tax, all farmers and all rural members sitting across, every one of their constituents, 68 percent. They raised producers' farm taxes on their land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a sad, sad case of these members coming into this House and telling people what they will do because, you know what? Right after they get elected, which Manitobans know, the only promise that they make is to themselves and their caucus and say, well, which Crown corporation should we sell now, which one should we get out to the private industry? Which one should we throw out there so we do not have to do anything really other than throw that money in the bank and then spend too much money and then use it, what they call the rainy day fund, that they spent down horribly?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the land taxes on farming we have now in this budget said we will reduce 60 percent for producers. We had promised far less than that, and, listening to our producers in Manitoba, have now exceeded what we had said we would do. Producers recognize this. They know they raised taxes. We are looking at reducing their taxes considerably in this budget. I can tell you they can come in here day after day and put information on the record that, quite frankly, is inaccurate. They can spin. There are spin doctors all around them. They are spinning what they are going to do, what is not in the budget.

The reality is we have had more reduction in small business taxes in the last five years than members did in 50. That is the reality. Small business friends of mine have said to me many times, I cannot believe the hollow promises we had from the former Filmon government, because they used to talk all the time about what they were going to do for the small business, what they were going to do for the large business. The Conservative government did nothing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is sad that they actually think that small business are their friends. Small business are not their friends. Small business are intelligent people that see action because, you know what, that is the way they run their businesses: they see results. With us, reducing the taxes in small business is recognized because, you know what? Those people do their own books. Those people look at the real savings that they see, bottom line, end of the day. They see it going down to 3.5 percent.

Canada, they rant about Stephen Harper and the new Conservative government and what they are doing. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the small business tax is well over 11 percent. They are reducing it to somewhere around 10 percent, which is three times higher than ours. They think that is great. They think, oh, this new government that has formed, that is in there—

An Honourable Member: They are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Smith: You know what? I hear a member opposite talking about moving in the right direction. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that type of mentality is what got them in trouble. That type of mentality is why people do not believe a thing they say. The reality is their vision of this new Canadian government that is now, lo and behold, going to reduce small business tax to 10 percent, the member opposite thinks we are going in the right direction. The right direction would bring it down to 3.5 percent just like it is in Manitoba. That would be the right direction.

I can tell you as we have reduced the debt in this province and brought the debt down in Manitoba, put everything in the books, put Hydro on, put all the government debt on the books, put it out transparent for people to see, actually put on the books all education, Manitobans can see a clear picture. They can see the clear picture of bite-sized pieces year after year after year, just like a home, just like a small business, just like a producer, that year after year it becomes slowly, but surely on sure footing, walking, seeing a decrease in their debt, the GDP, one of the best, no doubt about it, our ratios.

* (15:50)

Members opposite are so arrogant that they can actually sit and they can actually laugh about their misinformation and try to hoodwink their constituents. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not the way this side of the House operates. This side of the House

are ones that actually put it out to Manitoba. Manitobans have seen our economy skyrocket since 1999. The confidence in our economy is so evident with a building on every street corner, the cranes in Winnipeg, the cranes in Brandon, the building in new construction and housing, the large, large scale building that we are seeing in Manitoba, that redevelopment of Hydro, the reduction in post-secondary education, Red River College development, skyrocketing enrolment in post-secondary education, more youth retention coming into the province, more people coming into the province. They are not fooled by the nonsense of members opposite that come out with this black cloud hanging over them and talk about gloom and doom when Manitobans recognize and are confident in a government and the economy and the surefootedness that we have.

Now, this budget that they have finally, finally gotten around to debating, finally, after delaying this for the amount of time that they have, they have absolutely not a leg to stand on. Manitobans do recognize the nonsense that was going on. The *Free Press* recognized the nonsense that was going on and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will go back this weekend, and they will take their Hansard and their hollow words, and they will hand it out in the coffee shops and they will tell the producers: Well, if we get in, we will reduce your tax; if we get in, we will cut the property taxes and education taxes. But people are not fooled by that. What they know is history, clear history.

We are builders. We are investors. We brought the economy up. We believe in a fair and equitable distribution for all Manitobans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can go point to point with the members opposite on anything they want, but all they have to do is look at the economy, look at the confidence in people, look at the amount of people that we have coming into Manitoba, look at the true investment of long-term strategies in post-secondary education and education. Members opposite do not have a leg to stand on.

Members opposite now have a leader of their party that was the person that was in the back room advising Filmon, advising the members on the front row, the Cabinet ministers at that time on what Manitoba should do. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is back, but this time he is not advising in the back room. Their new leader is now in this House. Now, I can hardly wait for that member to begin to talk about his history and his policies because

Manitobans know he advised on selling Crown corporations. Manitobans want the lazy Conservatives opposite to get into this House, debate a budget that they know is good for Manitobans, good for their families, and go to work, and so do I.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a good budget for Manitobans. This is a budget that we have put together to see reductions in taxation for Manitobans. This is a budget that we put in for long-term investment in education systems in the province. This is a budget that invests in health care. This is a budget that invests in our infrastructure in our province, and this is a budget that invests in municipalities all across Manitoba at set rates now that exceed by double the rate of inflation. Every community, 198 municipalities plus Winnipeg being 199, is seeing a record investment by this government back to their municipalities on their priorities. They recognize it; too bad members opposite did not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I would love to hear a member opposite get up, maybe the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and talk about highways, because the highways in Manitoba, the 19,000 kilometres of highways that we have in our province, 12,000 of them paved, were put into such poor shape through the nineties, no investment, decreasing investment, and the massive amounts, over 20 percent increase into our capital, in investment in our highways.

The member opposite, when he drives home, must recognize when he is seeing the two-lane highway being paved right from Virden—which they stopped, they stopped that project—in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are finishing. We are going to meet the Saskatchewan border at about the same time Saskatchewan is, another New Democratic government, and now have something we can be all proud of in Manitoba. It is our No. 1 highway across this province being twinned, double-laned, a massive investment.

I know the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), when she drives back out, goes out to Minnedosa and drives along the \$16-million investment along the Yellowhead Highway between Neepawa and Minnedosa, recognizes the investment in her area on highways, and many, many others, Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe when she is driving out to Minnedosa to the library that we have just invested over \$100,000 in—

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, Manitobans are not fooled by the nonsense of members opposite. Get on with the budget. Let us debate it; let us hear what they have to say. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in the House today and put some comments on the record in regard to this '06-07 budget and, particularly, to follow the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), because there has been a considerable amount of rhetoric put on the table there and on the record here today that needs to be straightened out. He will undoubtedly pay for some of those comments in the polls in the next election.

First of all, I want to say that it has been my privilege to be a member of the Legislature in Manitoba here for the past seven years, and it is my pleasure to have represented the fine, dexterous people of Arthur-Virden. They have had to overcome a great deal of circumstance in the course of the last seven years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, particularly in the field of agriculture in southwest Manitoba, as a great many farmers in Manitoba have.

I want to first begin by saying that we have a real outpouring of energy in that area. I want to talk about the individual communities for just a few moments. I want to say that there are expansions going on in the Peace Gardens. I want to talk about the bright things in Arthur-Virden, and the expansion of the Peace Gardens is only one instance.

I want to talk about the opportunities that there are in the communities. I know Boissevain is celebrating their 100th anniversary this year, combined with the R.M. of Morton's 125th celebration as well. The neighbouring community that I used to be raised in, the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) represents the town of Souris, I want to congratulate all of the fine people there for their centennial celebration and 125 that will take place, rather, here in July. I look forward to some of the events taking place there as well.

I know that Deloraine is hosting an event. They are combining their fair and horse races, harness racing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to get into that later, in the mid-July weekend, the 15th, 16th, in that area.

Of course, the rodeo takes place in Virden again in August, and we will be hosting their Miss Rodeo Canada, Aleaha More, who is from Virden

originally, and a shirt-tail relative of mine, with her folks having been raised in the Hathaway-Dand area of Manitoba. You would have to look on a map to find out where some of those communities are now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am very proud to say that my relatives came from that area of Manitoba and the constituency of Arthur-Virden. I look forward to all of the fine events that are taking place throughout all of the communities.

I want to say, as well, in spite of the economic climate, negative economic climate, that has been set by this government in Manitoba, that there are people in rural Manitoba who have come forward to this government seeking support for ventures that they want to move forward with.

* (16:00)

I want to back off to a personal one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a young family of outstanding young farmers in Manitoba, in 2005 I believe it was, Todd and Julie Racher and their family, they are fine examples of where the future of agriculture is going in Manitoba. The Rimkes from Oak Lake, who are this year's winners as well, will make great representation for Manitoba, northwestern Ontario, in Saskatoon this fall.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to having the opportunity, perhaps, of attending that Saskatoon event as it will be the 25th anniversary since my wife and I had the opportunity of representing Manitoba and northwestern Ontario in that field as well. It would be quite a considerable event to be at, to honour such fine young Manitobans, never mind the fact that they are from Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people in Arthur-Virden who have come forward with many opportunities in industry. I will say that there have been some areas of important decisions made in reducing the taxation so that biodiesel could be expanded in Manitoba. There are many players in the rural areas that are looking at opportunities in that area. We know that the ethanol plant is being expanded in Minnedosa due to the fine work, for sure, and the caring of the community of the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) as well.

I want to say that folks from the area of Arthur-Virden in the southwest are also looking at an ethanol facility. I have been there where they made a fine presentation to the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak). These folks, all they really want from this

government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you talk about how you could help rural development, is maybe a little bit of a road improvement here, a bridge there, maybe some power linkages to get to a facility. But, nope, not this government. They cannot help with those things. It either has to be a huge mega project or they cannot even facilitate some of these opportunities which private individuals are coming forth in Manitoba with themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want you to know that the latest couple of private sector initiatives that have come forward to two particular ministers, as an example, are to the Minister of Energy and the minister of highways. Once they saw the presentations, I am sure they were impressed with the presentations that were presented to them, basically a feasibility study that was outlined to them for both projects. Their only reaction was, well, you know, people come and ask us for these things, but then in the final analysis, the bottom line is they ask us for tens of millions of dollars. So how much are you asking us for?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to both of these ministers' chagrin, they never asked for a cent. These people really did not ask for any money from this government. One is a \$75- to \$80-million project. They did not want any money from the government, just a little infrastructure help. So I am encouraging the government to make sure that that happens. If they really want to ever see any opportunities for rural development outside the Perimeter Highway in Manitoba, these are the kinds of initiatives that they need to look at. It is not going to cost the taxpayers of Manitoba anything more than what they would normally put forward for that kind of infrastructure, and then only a fraction of what they would do in many other areas of the province.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to take my hat off to one particular group, and that is the Four Seasons group that has purchased the Oak Lake facility, the park there and put in a development. There is always change when these things take place, and it is difficult to make 100 percent of the people happy, but there is an initiative there where there is a golf course going to be designed. I am proud to look at the fact that I am sure these people are going ahead with the first 18 hole course west of No. 10 highway and south of No. 1 in southwest Manitoba. They did not ask the government for a cent. They have done a great deal of work in making sure that the design of this course will be perfect in a historic park area. I look forward to being able to be in

attendance when this course opens and move forward as a private initiative for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the tough areas that I have to talk about today is health care in rural Manitoba. This is a government that continues to close down emergency services in many of the rural communities in Manitoba. My communities are certainly not exempt from this. We have seen doctor numbers go down to one doctor in Boissevain, one doctor in Deloraine this past winter. They have basically lost the emergency services for parts of the time in those communities throughout last winter. What is going to happen when we get into the summer holiday season coming up very shortly, this could be a devastating blow for the facilities, the emergency services in rural hospitals.

I also want to talk about the fact that Virden was let to fall down to near three doctors, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the kind of area that it serves, it is no wonder that we are losing people into Saskatchewan from that area because the doctors there are doing a great job, the staff does a great job in all these rural facilities. It is just a matter of they need more support in those areas.

I know that there are doctors being recruited from time to time, and I am encouraged by that. I was encouraged when the government opened up the rules to allow more of these persons to come in and work in these areas, but I know that these hospitals are all frustrated, Deloraine particularly. I asked the question of this House the other day about where is the 2004 government promise to open a cancer treatment centre in Deloraine, and just like the slaughter plan for Dauphin for the herd cattle industry of Manitoba, there is not even a spade in the ground to begin the treatment facility expansion that is needed for Deloraine.

People have been phoning me there throughout the past week, people who are very concerned from the Goodlands area, very concerned about the future of this facility, and I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the minister's reply was no solace for these people. He said, well, you know, we are building one in Pinawa; we are building one in Deloraine; we are doing the opening for the one Friday. I congratulate the government and the people of Pinawa, and the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) was there today for the official opening. But, I guess, if you cannot eat the vegetables without the meat at the same time on the plate, you have got a situation where you have got to finish one before

you can start another one. That is not the kind of promise that was made to these people. It was that there would be a cancer treatment in Deloraine, and this government has reneged on that plan so far.

I will say, however, where credit is due, that they are moving forward with the school after much encouragement in Deloraine, and we look forward to hopefully having it open. I do not know whether it will be for this fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would have to commend the people in Deloraine and the students of Deloraine Collegiate and the staff there for the efforts that they have had to go through in working in the much smaller facility for the past year and that difficulty that they have to go through in order to have a better facility when we are done.

I have to say, though, that Melita hospital, where there is a complement of doctors, has been neglected, if you will, in regard to the fact that some equipment that they have needed there has been removed and moved to other areas. I think that because these people were conscientious and contacted the government last fall there has been some improvement for the few doctors that are there. At least they have got some signs up now acknowledging that they are there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is just discouraging in a rural area where people have had to drive so far on highway medicine.

Finally, on the health issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the facility in Brandon. Of course, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) talks about how long it took to get it built. You know, when you have got health care transfer dollars falling into your lap from Ottawa, it is easy to build with bricks and mortar, but, when you have a situation where you spend tens of millions of dollars on new facilities, bricks and mortar, yet do not have any money left to staff the facility or to put specialists in place, it is a shame. It just shows the complete lack of management and the complete lack of accountability of this government, and that is not why they were elected. They were elected to fix health care in six months with \$15 million.

What rhetoric. I mean, here we are seven years later, the budget has increased by 40 percent; 42 percent of the budget today goes to health care in Manitoba. It is a shame that there is not any more accountability in this government. It is an absolute shame that the hallway medicine that they ranted and raved about in those days has been switched for years now to highway medicine, where people are having to flow up and down the highways of

Manitoba in ambulances that this government is not even willing to cover the costs if you are in them from rural Manitoba. They are not even willing to cover those costs. They are dumping them on the backs of unsuspecting and ill taxpayers, and I think that is an absolute shame. These things will catch up to them, though, as they move forward in the next election which will be coming, we assume, fairly soon, according to the Premier's (Mr. Doer) terms in the House.

*(16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that issues of rural Manitoba—I talked about the fine dexterity of the people who are out in rural Manitoba. I want to talk as well about not just Arthur-Virden, but expand that to the people of all Manitoba, including those in the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon and Thompson and The Pas and Flin Flon and other regions of this fine province, and say that, given half a chance, they will and can compete with any other province in Canada, Manitobans. But their being the highest taxed west of Québec, even after this budget, in many levels of taxation of household income, is not acceptable. The fact that our health system is dead last according the Conference Board of Canada in, I believe there are a couple of areas that I just wanted to make sure we got on the record, the area of the quality of the health care system, dead last in access to diagnostic services and dead last in specialists.

That brings me to a promise that these NDP made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is that they would send more surgeons out to rural areas to perform surgeries and operations in those areas. Well, how can you do that when you have not even got enough surgeons and specialists in the main hospitals of Manitoba to take care of the needs of the people that are already there? So it is just another area of accountability lacking by this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that people in Arthur-Virden, since the last election, have come through a drought in '03. They have come through PMU closures and barn closures and frost in '04. They have come through a huge deluge of rain, six to eight inches on the first of June last year in much of southwest Manitoba and many areas of Manitoba, eventually, before the middle of July. I want to say that there was some 22 inches throughout that whole region and lost a tremendous amount of crop in '05.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that '06 goes better. But, I have to say, in starting off with the Assiniboine River Valley, there has not even been a

settlement. This minister and government and the Premier (Mr. Doer) and others have been in some of the communities saying, we will be there; we will be there with emergency support for you, disaster financial assistance. Well, I was there in Deloraine when the Premier stood beside flooded houses, basements washed in and said the same thing. There are still people who have not received the EMO funding that they require to fix their homes in Deloraine.

Of course, we warned at the time that many of these homes would be limited to the insurance that they had available because, of course, any amount of seepage this government has declared is not their fault; it is not overland flooding. Purely the pressure of the overland flooding and the torrential rains that occurred caused a great deal of the flooding in the community of Deloraine, and they are still recovering from that.

But, again, these people will not be daunted by this no matter how troublesome it has been for them. I would have to say that they are very concerned about it, and the biggest concern they have is the fact that the government has not been there with the blanket coverage that they took credit for in the media to help these people, beyond what might have been considered seepage from sewer backup.

I think the big thing, though, in Deloraine is to make sure that there is a diversion around the community and that the government works closely with them, whether it is the Water Stewardship Minister or the Conservation Minister, in the future to put a diversion around Deloraine and help make sure that this kind of a flood does not happen to that community again. So I really am looking forward to the Province being involved in that. I look forward to being involved when we get into government and making that happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I will say, though, that there is flooding on the Assiniboine River this year. There was Assiniboine River flooding last year in the valley. I attended a meeting in Miniota with a number of my colleagues a week ago Tuesday night, and we heard firsthand the incredible stories of how this flooding took place and how there was a lack of, they felt at least, snowpack testing done to monitor the amount of water that would come into the Shellmouth Dam. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a lowering of the water in the Shellmouth earlier in the spring, but it was nowhere near enough to capture all of the water that has come in, the inflow. So, because of that, we

are seeing a hurt in that area right now. That is just starting to flood some of that land, and there is a concern there.

These people have met with the government, and the government thought they were there to talk to them about what was happening this year. But, no, they were there to talk about compensation for the flood that took place last year. So, now, here we are a year later having to deal with two years in one. We thought they were getting someplace. They have been led to believe that they were getting someplace. Yet articles that we see today indicate that spokespersons for the ministers are saying that, no, these people will not be seeing any support for compensation. So I hope that that is a misquote and that the government will correct that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there is a limited amount of time here today to get into a number of these issues, but I want to say as well that one of the main reasons that this government is going to lose the next election is over their activities in the Crocus Fund, the complete unaccountability that this government, the complete missing of red flags, as the Auditor General has pointed out.

We rang the bells in this Legislature for some six weeks trying to get the Premier's (Mr. Doer) attention to try and force the government, to use the efforts that we could to have a public inquiry into Crocus, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I tell you that having seen that, the new leader has put together a tactical team to deal with Crocus that I fully support because I believe that this team will continue to uncover the problems that the Premier will not face and was afraid to face Manitobans with by calling a public inquiry. He could still—*[interjection]* I hear some chirping across the way.

In caucus, they could still convince their leader to call a public inquiry on Crocus and get right into the whole area of the Workers Compensation Board, the funds that they were using, what the superfund was going to be used for, why they even needed it to save a dying Crocus Fund in the meantime. All of these things would come out, I am sure, but the Premier chooses to keep them covered up. He continues to cover up the fact that they lost \$60 million that was invested by 33,678 investors in the province of Manitoba. That is fully why we need to have an inquiry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the bottom line. Apart from that, every other taxpayer in Manitoba is on the hook for the 15 percent provincial

and 15 percent federal tax credit that those investors got as a tax credit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it completely unconscionable that, when you have a previous minister that was in charge of this file and a former NDP premier in Mr. Schreyer who have indicated that they should call a public inquiry on Crocus, then it is a shame that the Premier will not take the advice of his own NDP members and call a public inquiry. It is very public that there has been a problem.

I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the reason we need this is so that we can provide confidence to the investors of Manitoba to put funds back into these kinds of venture funds because, if you do not have this, you kill the opportunity for many small companies in Manitoba to expand, to even get off the ground. They need this kind of venture capital. They need the kind of support that will start business in Manitoba, and this Premier has killed that opportunity. He has still the opportunity, though, to change that, and we encourage him to call a public inquiry on Crocus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that in the area of Brandon, an area of Transportation that is my critic responsibility, rural development, that the government has completely missed the ball. They have talked about \$129-million budget for highways in this budget, but last year it was \$120 million, so this is only a \$9.5-million increase. The minister, what is it, the Enron minister, no, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) was misleading Manitobans by saying he put \$29.5 million in when he really only put \$9.5 million in. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have a \$120-million budget last year and then say you put \$29.5 million more in and then announce \$129-million budget. It is only \$9.5 million, but that is, of course, NDP math.

So I have to say that they continue to talk about No. 1 highway. They actually are going to do it. They are actually going to build it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, let me just put on the record the fact that this government, last March, March of '05, on two different occasions, indicated that, oh boy, we are going to speed this up. We are going to do the budget. We are going to build No. 1 highway. We are going to finish her in 2006. That is the minister's comment. Well, yesterday on CJOB the Premier said, oh, we are going to finish her in 2007. Oh my. Then he talks about, get the pavement out and get her rolling.

* (16:20)

Well, I will tell you there are 11 kilometres of road out there that have been waiting for pavement since last September. They put the tenders out for it and then pulled them five days later. Can the minister even tell us when they are going to put the tenders out for that pavement again right now? The road is ready to go, but not this government. No funding.

An Honourable Member: Can you see the paving wagon?

Mr. Maguire: No paving wagon out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Anyway, there are another 23 kilometres beyond Elkhorn that have got the base already in it. There is absolutely no reason for this highway not to be paved to the Saskatchewan border by this freeze-up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) is a pretty honourable member, the Minister of Transportation. I have enjoyed working with him on a couple of things. He has kind of stretched the time frames on a few issues. But his Premier (Mr. Doer), they should get their story straight. You have got a Premier that is out of sync with the rest of his caucus. Oh, oh, that is supposed to be the other way around. I mean, if he is going to continue to mislead Manitobans—but he is probably telling him the truth. It will be '07, after the election, will it not? Well, pardon me.

So I just hope that I am still Transportation Minister at the time and have the opportunity of inviting the now-Transportation Minister out to help me cut the ribbon on that piece of road because, you know, if he does not get it done this fall, he will lose the opportunity to do that.

Anyway, I just have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the last thing I want to talk about is the fact that this government has not put money into 18th Street to twin the bridge on 18th Street in Brandon. They had to repave the road twice. They used the wrong base and had to redo that one the year after they did it the first time. They have not finished twinning the No. 1 highway west. They have not finished the bypass around Brandon to make sure that the hog trucks and other facilities can get to the Maple Leaf plant, which is a complete industry development.

I also want to make sure that they take into consideration a number of the other roads that the Province is responsible for in the city of Brandon because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the city of Brandon is growing in spite of having two NDP members from

that city at this present time. It is growing. They have to move out of the road so that it can continue to grow some more. There is lots of expansion to take place there. It is a central hub for all of western Manitoba. We know that these citizens will expand the city on their own.

The last thing I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the horse park that the members talked about for a while. I guess, actually, they did not talk about it in their speeches today in Brandon. There is a \$16-million investment by private individuals who want to build a horse park in Brandon. They talk about it as a casino. It has got just a very few VLTs that are required to make this happen. Here we are with a government—*[interjection]* Well, you know, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) says, very few, very few, as if it was a lot. Well, you know, his government did offer 30. They were asking for 140; they said they would settle for 100. They never talked to anybody. He has not talked to anybody in two years, the member from Brandon West, the minister of development.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that if they would just do something in that area, talk to these people, negotiate with them, you could have another investment in Brandon, but I think the government has another hidden agenda for that city on casinos, and we will see more of it later.

I will just close by saying it has been a pleasure to represent the people of Arthur-Virden, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to say that my congratulations go to Ms. Debbie Fry and her husband, Maurice, as they move to British Columbia. She was my campaign manager and she was my president of the constituency. You know, the policies of this government have forced them into another venture in British Columbia and I wish them all well. I know Debbie's last day as manager of the personal care home in Hartney was the 28th, last Friday, and I wish them all well in their future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure and pride to rise today as the Member for Brandon East to put a few words on the record for this 2006-2007 budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Brandon over the last seven years, we have seen unprecedented growth and unprecedented development in successive budgets. First and foremost, I guess, would have to be

mentioned, the development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, a \$50-million development that was promised for 11 years by members opposite when they were in office, and which was delivered by this government within a year of being elected in 1999. There is no project that more clearly symbolizes nor more clearly illustrates the difference between those of us on the governing side of the House and those members who sit opposite today in opposition than the Brandon Regional Health Centre.

The Brandon Regional Health Centre, as I said, and has been said many times in this House, was promised seven times over 11 years by the members opposite, was promised once and delivered by our government in 1999, 2000. That health centre, which has transformed, really, the diagnostic and medical capabilities available to western Manitobans, that hospital has truly transformed those capabilities in western Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last seven years, that hospital has also seen added to it the first MRI suite outside of the Perimeter Highway; another multi-million-dollar development, the Brandon downtown health access centre, which has been built in the downtown core of the city of Brandon to benefit preventive health measures in our city and in western Manitoba more broadly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen substantial investment, just recently over \$7.5 million in the Westman Lab, which provides laboratory services for physicians, not only in western Manitoba but throughout Manitoba. Those investments in health care infrastructure in my home community of Brandon and in western Manitoba are the largest in the history of the province of Manitoba outside of this city of Winnipeg. I am very proud that it is the Doer government that has invested at historic levels, unprecedented levels, in health care infrastructure in Brandon East and in western Manitoba, more broadly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget that we are speaking to today, seven years later after that first budget that we had seven years ago that began what is a proud legacy of investment in Brandon, this budget is probably the best one that we have ever seen in Brandon because, while our first budget, building the Brandon Regional Health Centre was tremendous, and a superlative budget in terms of western Manitoba, this budget is broad in its scope, very, very broad in its scope. Whereas that first budget built the Brandon Regional Health Centre,

this budget begins the building of Assiniboine Community College at the outstanding heritage site on Brandon's north hill, the former Brandon Mental Health Centre campus that members opposite walked away from in 1997-98 with the last tenants of that outstanding heritage resource. They walked away from that site. When we came into office it was mothballed. There was nothing in it. There was essentially a grand institutional complex, perhaps the grandest in western Canada in terms of its architectural brilliance. It was vacant. That building was mothballed. There was no use for that particular site because members opposite, when they were in government, were more concerned with selling the Manitoba Telephone System to their family and friends, the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact than they were with western Manitoba or with Manitoba, more broadly speaking, outside of the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact—

An Honourable Member: Stock option club.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, the stock option club, as my colleague, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) adds, which has always confused me, in fact, because the *raison d'être*, the very reason for the existence of the Tory party in Manitoba, and we see it today with the current leader of the party, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), meeting with, you know, the who's who of the Filmon rogues' gallery as his new advisory team, you know, Tom Stefanson, who had no small part in making his brother an instant millionaire with the selling of the Manitoba Telephone System; Eric and Tom, with Jim Downey, a well-known figure in western Manitoba and a well-known defender of western Manitoba and a well-known solid politician. After all, he was part of the crowd that committed the Brandon Regional Health Centre, made seven promises to deliver it, and did not deliver on it for 11 years.

There is another chap that is part of that advisory team, Don Orchard, I think, another name from the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a name from the Filmon team that Manitobans—

* (16:30)

An Honourable Member: This is the night of the living political dead.

Mr. Caldwell: —so unceremoniously dumped in 1999. I have to repeat the comments of my colleague. It seems like the night of the living political dead, my colleague from Thompson says,

the zombies that are advising the new leader of the once proud Tory party in the province of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the new leader, the newly-minted Leader of the Conservative Party is taking his cues from the Filmon, Stefanson, Downey, Orchard rogues' gallery over the days to come and the days past, we, on this side of the House, are building Manitoba for the future. We are not looking to the deep dark past of the Filmon Tory years to get advice for a future, a horrific future if Manitobans were ever to re-elect that sorry lot again. But we are building this province, those of us on this side of the House.

With this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in western Manitoba and in Brandon, we are building at historic levels and at unprecedented levels. I made mention, briefly, before I got distracted into the Tory quagmire swamp of—I do not even know how to describe it. I am at a loss for words. It is an awful lot over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the expansion of the Assiniboine Community College, the development of the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site, the restoration and development of that outstanding architectural jewel, the BMHC campus, to house what will be a state-of-the-art college campus for western Manitobans; the beginning of that is in this budget. That is a historic investment. In fact, again, the largest investment in post-secondary infrastructure in the history of the province outside of the Perimeter Highway. I am very, very proud to be part of a new legacy of development for my home community in Brandon with the beginning of the Assiniboine Community College development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Budget 2006-07, also makes reference to highways and roads in Brandon. We have a great deal of growth in Brandon. One of the areas of growth is in the Corral Centre box store development on 18th Street North. I am very pleased that Budget 2006-2007 begins the process of building and rebuilding 18th Street, and the Thompson Bridge over the Assiniboine River on 18th Street, to accommodate the growth and development in the North Hill of Brandon with the box stores.

I should give a bit of a comparison, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the item of highways and roads. The last year of Tory government in the 1998-1999 pre-election budget when members opposite again promised the building of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, and again would have been denied to

Brandonites had the Tories been re-elected. Fortunately, for all of us they were not. In that last Tory year, in 1998-99, the budget for highways was \$173 million. This year in Budget 2006-07, our budget, \$257 million is budgeted for highway construction, a full \$83 million more per year in highways investment, an unprecedented investment in highway renewal in Manitoba.

Budget 2006-2007 also makes mention of a couple of projects that are of importance to myself personally. I think they are very important initiatives in Brandon. I speak of the \$115-million redevelopment of the Keystone Centre, a very important development for Manitoba, as well as western Manitoba, but Manitoba as a whole. We have also invested in additional police officers for Brandon, supporting the Brandon University Wellness Centre to create healthy communities and further develop healthy communities in western Manitoba.

There are also indications of support moving forward for the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame in my home constituency of Brandon. I know that the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum is something that members on this side of the House are very proud of. It is an internationally recognized national, provincial and municipal heritage site, and I invite all members of the House to visit the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum, when they do come to my home community of Brandon, because it is an outstanding institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Budget 2006-2007 builds upon the substantial work that we have done as a government since 1999; increased investment in neighbourhood renewal through Neighbourhoods Alive!, in affordable housing, in child care infrastructure, in child care support. Although we do have some challenges moving forward with the new federal government who does not have a vision that is shared by members on this side of the House for quality, affordable child care, universally acceptable child care. So we do have some challenges moving forward on that as a provincial government and as a province as a whole.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are determined to invest in and build this province. In Brandon and in western Manitoba, we have proven that commitment through the historic and unprecedented investment in the Brandon Regional Health Centre, the first MRI outside of the city of Winnipeg. We have proven that commitment through the development of Assiniboine Community

College at BRHC, the largest investment in post-secondary education in the history of the province of Manitoba outside of the city of Winnipeg. We have proven that commitment in Neighbourhoods Alive!, in being actively involved in renewing core area neighbourhoods, providing for affordable housing, providing for jobs and training, providing for streetscape improvements and, broadly speaking, building a healthier community.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very, very proud to be a member of this provincial government, very proud that my home community of Brandon has been such a beneficiary of successive budgets in health care, in education, in neighbourhood renewal. These investments are unprecedented.

I also should note that, on the taxation side, this government has been the single largest tax-cutting government in the province's history. The members opposite have a lot of rhetoric. They like to talk a lot about tax cuts, but it is this government that has delivered tax cuts to rural Manitobans. We have delivered tax cuts to businesses. We have delivered tax cuts to corporations. We provide tax relief for the education property tax to rural farmers, have equalized the Hydro rates around this province.

On every single one of these initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite, the once-proud Tory party of Manitoba, voted against these tax cuts, voted against giving support to rural Manitobans, voted against giving tax relief to farmers. They voted against giving these measures that reduce taxation to Manitobans, each and every single time. That is a fact. That is not rhetoric; that is a fact.

One of the things—I will just close, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I would like to mention this. I would like to mention it for as long as I am in the Chamber. Western Manitoba where I am from, my family is from, we are proud to have two New Democratic members in western Manitoba right now. There are seven seats out there; we need a lot more. We do have two; we need a lot more. But it is something I always come back to, because there are five Tory seats in western Manitoba that are really taken for granted by the members opposite in the House. They are taken for granted year in and year out, election from election. It is taken for granted that these are going to be Conservative seats because they have always been.

* (16:40)

You know, the arrogance of holding those seats and the fact that they have been held for so long, I suppose. I do not want to forgive the members for taking those seats for granted and taking those citizens for granted, because they ought not to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the fact is that those seats are taken for granted by the Tory party of Manitoba. It is ironic that those seats are taken for granted because of the tax cut regime that we have implemented versus the record of members opposite of taxing and not providing support for rural Manitobans or farmers.

But what always surprised me, it comes back to the Manitoba Telephone System, which really is the single largest scandal in this province's history, at least in my lifetime, where you had family relationships, instant millionaires, "the lucky sperm club," as referred to in the Charleswood-Tuxedo broker community, where the new Jaguars were bought left, right and centre from the selling off of the Manitoba Telephone System, where the Finance Minister's brother was the first millionaire, where family connections were thick with the Filmon-Stefanson clan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the *raison d'être* for the Tory party during the last years of the nineties was enriching their friends and neighbours in the southwest quadrant of the city of Winnipeg. So, while the rural constituents in southwestern Manitoba were being led by Tory members who were supposed to be representing the interests of their constituents, the telephone company was sold off to the south Winnipeg family compact by their friends and relatives in this Chamber. The rates for telephone service skyrocketed subsequent to that sell-off. So, while those five MLAs in southwestern Manitoba said they were representing the best interests of rural Manitobans, they were only representing the best personal interests of the wealthy elite in Charleswood and Tuxedo, who were the main beneficiaries of the sell-off of the Manitoba Telephone System.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were winding up the Manitoba Hydro for exactly the same purposes, to sell off Manitoba Hydro, to sell off the lowest rates in the world to family and friends in south Winnipeg. Thank God, there was an election in 1999 that prevented members opposite from fleecing each and every single Manitoban, not for once but forever in terms of selling off a public utility, Manitoba Telephone System, Manitoba Hydro system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only people that should be returning Tory members to this House after the record members opposite during their eleven years are the people from Charleswood, Tuxedo and Fort Whyte who were related to the members opposite because no other Manitoban benefits from this sort of rule that members opposite provide.

With those words, I will close. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was listening very intently to the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). I would hope that he will listen to some of the commentary that I hope to provide on that topic last discussed because the word that comes to mind in regard to the honourable member's rhetoric is that of a hypocrite. I will state emphatically that, if he goes today to check the actual long distance and residential rates of individuals which he cited in this context, they will find that they are significantly less than any other telephone company operating in Canada.

Also, you will want to make comparisons to the only government-owned utility in the telecommunications business left in Canada, SaskTel. You will then also recognize that that organization has had to hike its rates higher than currently paid by MTS customers here in Manitoba, so I believe that the decision to make the Manitoba telephone company a publicly owned entity, traded on the open market, was a wise one. I also want to state, as well, when asked of the honourable members opposite how strongly they believed in investing in MTS, the question was asked if any one of the New Democratic Party members made a personal investment in MTS. Because of all the rhetoric that went on about that debate, one would be led to believe that the NDP members would consider MTS as a viable entity and one worthy of investment.

Yet what took place? Even the honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who was the point person of the New Democratic Party on that debate, did not feel MTS was worthy of a single nickel of his own personal money in purchase of shares of that. So why, then, the question must be asked as to, if the elected individuals in the New Democratic Party felt that MTS was very worthy of taxpayers' dollars investment, yet they did not feel it worthy of their own personal investment—so, then, why would the general public invest in MTS under the circumstances to which MTS was privatized? Obviously, the general public in Manitoba did not

listen to the New Democratic Party rhetoric on the subject and did, indeed, feel that MTS was a worthy investment. Obviously, today, by the increased value of the shares, Manitobans truly do believe that MTS is a very viable entity, one worthy of investment, even though elected individuals of the New Democratic Party do not feel the same.

Now, moving on to other budgetary debates, I say that there are a fair number of concerns regarding the budget debate, but I want to state that I am, indeed, privileged to represent Portage la Prairie and feel so honoured to do so because my home, Portage la Prairie, has elected me to do so. I am very proud of Portage la Prairie and hope to represent Portage la Prairie for a number of years on the government side of the House in the not too distant future.

Relating to the budget debate, I would like to hark back to Tuesday, March 7, and some of the clippings of the daily newspapers in Winnipeg as pertaining to their evaluation of the budget that we are now debating. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 7, 2006, on page A5: Government scoops \$85 million from reserve to pay the piper. Don't rush out and spend your tax savings—you read a little further on there—basically the tax savings are being clawed back because this government is, in fact, not keeping up with its own responsibility as the government responsible for education in the province. It also said here: Hold off on the ESL tax windfall because the school divisions will be coming knocking for those dollars because of the inadequate funding of public education by this New Democratic Party. In fact, the level of expenditure as a percentage of the school division budgets continues to decrease year over year over year, and a disproportionate amount of increase from local property taxes is having to make up the shortfall. It is coming to historic levels of local percentage-based revenue in comparison to provincial revenues, which is, sadly, a legacy of this New Democratic Party.

In fact, the reason I got involved with provincial politics was from my involvement with the Portage la Prairie School Division, and, at that time, my concern for public education in this province, and what the provincial government was doing at that time. The New Democratic Party actually has accelerated and has even made me more concerned with the state of public funding of education here in the province of Manitoba.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

On the issue of agriculture, I was extraordinarily dismayed to hear the First Minister (Mr. Doer) rise and say that the reason that we are functioning as a below-average province, as it pertains to gross domestic product, was because of agriculture, Mr. Speaker. That, I will say, I am proudly a member of the agricultural community, a producer in this province, and that was a slap in the face. We try our very level best to be good stewards of the land and to provide for not only our families, our community, but our province and nation with wholesome food so that others may go about their business in the world.

This budget, I will say, does very, very little for Agriculture. If the First Minister is recognizing that agriculture is in dire need of support, it is now, and this budget does not address that. It states that they will be looking to help develop economic activity in the agricultural sector, including that of slaughter capacity and value-added processing. But, as evident with the BSE crisis, what has this government done to enhance slaughter capacity in this province? It is woeful. Where other provinces are coming close, if not exceeding, capacity in the slaughter industry as it relates to the actual livestock production, it is really embarrassing to say that one is from Manitoba because that is the farthest from the truth here in our province.

I want to, in my couple of short minutes, to state about the members opposite crowing about the additional monies to Transportation because we are all aware of the disastrous—actually, the roadways here in the province of Manitoba give great concern to the safety of motorists here in Manitoba. The government states that they are adding more money to the budget, which, indeed, in print is the truth. However, on the expenditures side, one has to look back to the history as provided to us by the Auditor General in that over the past five years—we have not got the sixth year of budgeting in just yet—but over the past five years, the Department of Transportation has lapsed more than \$37 million. To say that they are increasing spending by \$29 million, while lapsing \$37 million, I am afraid those of us that drive the highways and roadways here in the province of Manitoba, that is cold comfort to expecting a smoother drive in the near future.

I would like to jump on the paving bandwagon, as the minister stated the other day, but, honest to goodness, I have been looking for the last five years for that paving bandwagon, paving wagon in Portage la Prairie. I am afraid to say it has not been there. That is not because the Rural Municipality of

Portage la Prairie or the City of Portage la Prairie has not requested that the paving wagon come our way.

I will say that some of the roadways are disintegrating before our eyes, and that is unfortunate. The Estimates process last year revealed a figure that I believe is worth noting once again. When asked in the Estimates Committee hearings as to what it would actually require in expenditure year over year just to hold our own, just to take care of the wear and tear incurred on our roadways every year, one would have to expend \$340 million. That is \$340 million on maintenance and capital projects just to break even, and now the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) crowed about \$257 million being expended this year. I am afraid we are falling further and further behind.

Also, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) made note of the federal government only putting in place about \$80 million worth of spending, where they take out of the province of Manitoba about \$165 million annually. I will say that that is true. The federal government has to improve even on what was announced just two days ago. I am certain that they will. They recognize that the economy of our nation is based upon the ability to deliver the goods and services, and all goods and services do come to us by way of roads.

Here in the province of Manitoba I want to say that this government is expecting to take in over \$360 million in road-related revenues. Again, if the First Minister wants to criticize or be critical of the federal government in the relationship as to revenue garnered from the motoring public, then I would say that one does not have to look too far away to be critical, because his own government is taking in far, far more money from motoring Manitobans than the government itself is reinvesting in the roadways here in the province of Manitoba. That is a significant disappointment because we have close to a \$3-billion deficit in the transportation system here in the province of Manitoba, yet we are falling further and further behind.

Now, not only are we falling farther and farther behind, I am concerned about the next generation and its view as to where they may invest and put down roots. Here the province of Manitoba is lagging so far behind.

Let us just examine the personal exemption, because that is something that is front and centre for every working Manitoban. Where do we rank? Well, Mr. Speaker, we rank 10 percent lower than

Saskatchewan; we rank 14 percent lower than B.C.; and we rank 90 percent lower than Alberta. How can any Manitoban work and live on less than \$8,000? Yet this government thinks they can. They think that they can live on less than \$8,000 because they are taxing these individuals.

Also, to my own dismay, as far as believing in the family and couples coming together in marriage, in union, here in Manitoba we do not want people to get married because the Finance Department penalizes those who do. You would be better off to remain single and not marry here in the province of Manitoba, because this government says that in their taxation regime. Here in Manitoba, if you are a spouse, the exemption is 15 percent lower than B.C., 30 percent lower than Saskatchewan, and, wait for it, Mr. Speaker, 124 percent lower than Alberta. Alberta wants to see people in union, in marriage; Manitoba does not.

Here in the province of Manitoba we also want to take great pride in our natural resources, and that is my responsibility for critiquing, but here, again, I must say that the minister crowed the other day about

how this government wants to be the saviour of the environment and wants to be known as standing up and doing so. You know, this government across the way, perhaps colleagues should ask the Conservation Minister, when they came to government here in the province of Manitoba, 5.5 million hectares were protected. Do you know how much it is today? Mr. Speaker, 5.3; 200,000 hectares have been let lapsed and let go out of the protected status under this NDP's regime, and they feel very, very proud. Let me quote from the minister: "continue the good work" of his department.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that is in the best interests of Manitobans, and it is one that I would like to see changed. The minister himself wants to say that he is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) will have 13 minutes remaining.

The time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 4, 2006

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