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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 11, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 224—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 224, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sièges d'appoint), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this measure provides for the mandatory use of booster seats in cars where a child is under eight years of age and is out of the range of a car seat. This requires that the booster seats be used, and is similar to legislation which is now in place in many other provinces.

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

Bill 15—The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I am very honoured to move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 15, The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

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

PETITIONS

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation, the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by H. Gill, J. Bailey, W. Gill and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Power Line Development

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct a third high voltage transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis instead of down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP detour is more than 400 kilometres longer than the eastern route recommended by Manitoba Hydro experts.

The line losses created by the NDP detour will cause a lost opportunity to displace dirty coal-generated electricity, which will create added and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions

equivalent to an additional 57,000 vehicles on our roads.

The former chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has stated that an east-side bipole and a UNESCO World Heritage Site can co-exist contrary to NDP claims.

The NDP detour will cut through more forest than the eastern route, and will cut through threatened aspen parkland areas, unlike the eastern route.

Former member of the Legislative Assembly Elijah Harper has stated that the east-side communities are devastated by the government's decision to abandon the east-side route, stating that this decision will resign them to poverty in perpetuity.

Manitoba MKO, an organization that represents northern Manitoba First Nations chiefs, has stated that the government has acted unilaterally to abandon the eastern route without consultation with northern First Nations despite repeated requests by the MKO for consultations.

The NDP detour will lead to an additional debt of at least \$400 million related to the capital cost of line construction alone, to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

The NDP detour will result in increased line losses due to friction leading to lost energy sales of between \$250 million and \$1 billion over the life of the project.

The added debt and lost sales created by the NDP detour will make every Manitoba family at least \$4,000 poorer.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to abandon the NDP detour on the basis that it will result in massive environmental, social and economic damage to Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the route originally recommended by Manitoba Hydro, subject to necessary regulatory approvals.

This petition is signed by R. D. McIntyre of Carman, Ian Takuam, Jason Wolfe and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Personal Care Homes—Virден

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virден currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of critical nursing shortages in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virден nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virден is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virден and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virден and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those senior citizens that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virден as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Jean Wiens, Diane Burke and Everett More.

* (10:10)

Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account or the PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

This is signed by Carolyn Lamb, Ty Donie, K.A. Hudson and many, many, many other Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre

beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Bill Zacharias, Susan Wiebe, Abe Zacharias, John H. Dyck and many, many others.

Neepawa, Minnedosa and Areas—Local Hospitals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Residents of Neepawa, Minnedosa, and the surrounding areas are concerned about the long-term viability of their respective local hospitals. Impending retirements, physician shortages, and the closure of many other rural emergency rooms have caused residents to fear that their health-care facilities may also face closure in the future.

Local physicians and many residents have expressed their support for a proposed regional health centre to service both communities.

It is believed that a new regional health centre would help secure and maintain physicians and would therefore better serve the health care needs of the region.

The success of other regional hospitals, such as Boundary Trails Health Centre, has set the precedent for the viability and success of a similar health centre for the Neepawa and Minnedosa area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider the feasibility of a joint health centre, including an emergency room, to service Neepawa and Minnedosa and the surrounding area.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider sustaining health-care services in this area by working with local physicians and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority on this initiative.

This petition is signed by Marilyn Anderson, Penny Elliott, Doris James and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Congressman Satur Ocampo who is the Deputy Minority Leader in the House of Representatives in

the Philippines, along with Orlando Marcelino and Myon Marcelino.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Power Exports

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, for many decades there has been an objective on the part of Manitoba political leaders of all political stripes to sign a major power deal with the Province of Ontario. There's a need for 30,000 megawatts of power in that province.

For various reasons over the years, Mr. Speaker, there have been attempts made to conclude a deal with Ontario. Just last year a major step forward was taken with the announcement by the federal government and the Prime Minister, which we were certainly pleased to see, and which I know the Premier supported, of the money toward the east-west transmission grid to run from Manitoba into southern Ontario in order to help us move a step closer to being able to provide power to the largest Canadian market for clean Manitoba energy.

The size of the Nanticoke plant in Ontario, which spews the largest amount of CO₂ pollution into the atmosphere of any single plant in the country, provides an urgent need for change in our country, a great opportunity for Manitoba.

I just want to ask the Premier if there is any truth to the suggestion contained in the *Free Press* feature a few days ago that the lights may be going out on a Manitoba power sale to Ontario.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I said to that newspaper and to other members of the public, we have an undeveloped resource in northern Manitoba. The resource includes less than 50 percent development of our hydro capacity in northern Manitoba. It requires, obviously, the political will on transmission. It also requires appropriate sales to be made to justify capital investments, both on transmission and on the issue of capital costs of dams.

I've also said repeatedly that we are in discussions east of us, south of us and west of us. All of those discussions continue. Mr. Speaker, when you have a product to sell, as we believe we do, we would point out that the most important agreement

that we can achieve between those three potential partners will be the ones that we will bring forward to Manitobans. So all of those negotiations continue. Some are more fully developed than others. In terms of the results of those sets of negotiations on three levels, I would suggest to the member opposite, stay tuned.

I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite should point out that we did negotiate an agreement with Ontario in the mid-'80s. We did negotiate the Conawapa Dam. We did negotiate an interim proposal to western Ontario. We were able to implement parts of the agreement that we made between '86 and '88. Regrettably, a government that had no judgment, no vision and no foresight cancelled the Conawapa deal and cancelled the elimination of those coal plants in the early '90s.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for that history lesson.

I do recall as a university student reading about some of those developments, and I want to thank the Premier for refreshing my memory. I know he was a member of the Legislature at the time that all those debates were taking place. I know that it's all interesting fodder for historians and for our current Premier. I just want to ask the Premier if we can just move up to 2008 for a moment.

If he could just give the House some more specific information about his recent trip to Minnesota, his discussion with legislators in that state, what are the prospects for further sales to the south. He's been vague about the Ontario prospects. Certainly the story in the *Free Press* was suggesting that perhaps that opportunity is getting further away rather than closer.

But I want to ask the Premier if he can just elaborate to this House the nature of the discussions with potential markets to the south of Manitoba.

* (10:20)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the best predictor of future behaviour is past, and when you look at issues of judgment, that it is very important—[interjection] and ideology, when you look at the extreme—[interjection]

I hear the term being used by the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). That was the argument made to cancel Limestone, and, of course, the NDP built Limestone, then negotiated Conawapa and then, of course, the Conservatives

cancelled it. So you have kind of the rigid ideology of members opposite, the kind of junior Republican Party of members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's like industrial park, but I digress.

Certainly we have had very important discussions in Minnesota. Minnesota and Wisconsin were very helpful to Manitoba at the Midwestern governors' meeting which we were invited to attend. The renewable energy in both the portfolio in Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Midwestern governors now includes hydro-electric power. The Bush administration in Washington does not include hydro-electric power as part of that portfolio, a point we made to Secretary Bodman, who used to be on a board of directors of a mining company that has interests here in Manitoba.

Yes, our meetings were very important. I want to thank the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) because there had been some misinformation put on the record in public accounts and public committees in Minnesota. I think it's very important to have a member of the Cree First Nations and a member of our Cabinet in Minnesota to talk. We are dealing with some of the allegations being made from dams that were built 25 years ago by one or two communities, Mr. Speaker, and it represents—I know members opposite do not think public accounts committee in Minnesota and the 40 percent revenues we gain from Minnesota is particularly pertinent to discussions going on about the future of Manitoba, but certainly what we have learned is—*[interjection]* We had very good meetings in Minnesota. But I would suggest to members opposite that this is always something that you have to be vigilant on.

The issues of environmental degradation are now much more important in all public utilities in Canada, whether it's in British Columbia or Alberta or Minnesota or Wisconsin or Ontario. I'm not sure what will happen in Ontario with nuclear energy being before the public regulators, dealing with nuclear waste. But, yes, our meetings were productive, and I want to thank the Minister responsible for Culture for attending those meetings because he, better than anyone in this Legislature, can speak to the reality and the opportunity of hydro-electric development for First Nations in

Manitoba, which is very important in the state of Minnesota.

Mr. McFadyen: There were a lot of words there and we weren't able to discern any kind of a response to the question, so we're no further ahead in understanding whether or not they're still pursuing sales in Ontario. We have no further elaboration on the exact nature of the discussions with Minnesota. We certainly do want to see increased sales to Minnesota. We're pleased to see the sales to date, and we'd like to see them continue, Mr. Speaker, and we'd just like the Premier, if he could, to just focus and try to provide a candid and direct response to the questions.

So I want to ask the Premier: As we understand it, there's an imminent power sale deal with Alberta. I wonder if the Premier can elaborate to the House on whether such a deal is imminent.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, it's important not to speculate on what we will be able to announce in the future and not speculate. I would say to the member opposite, stay tuned.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Manitoba Hydro Abandonment of Bipole III

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the main need for the Bipole III transmission line is to guarantee reliability of the power system in southern Manitoba. In fact, that's been highlighted by the government's own report, the Farlinger report, which says that the severity of the effect of the complete loss of access to northern generation in the future could lead to southern Manitoba experiencing a severe disruption to commercial and domestic activity, a strain on emergency services and a risk to the health and safety of the population in general, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the Premier, because there's speculation coming out of his own government that he intends to abandon Bipole III and run a line directly west to Alberta as part of the imminent Alberta power sale. Can he confirm that that is the case?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, this contradicts the question the member opposite asked about the east-west grid and reliability on Bipole. I'm glad he's making that point finally. I hope he changes a lot of other policies at his convention this weekend, too. I

notice he's abandoning saving the Jets, Mr. Speaker. I notice he's abandoning the reckless tax cut of 1 percent of sales tax. I notice he's abandoning building—I think he's abandoning building the marina in Point Douglas as part of his cool strategy.

I hope he looks at the latest reports out of Regina dealing with the chattering classes' position on not removing nitrogen from our waters and lakes because Regina is now moving ahead with that. I hope he looks at abandoning that policy, and, yes, in the '90s—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doer: There's so much material I could go on and on, but, yes, going with the question, yes, a grid is required for export sales east and west. Yes, since the '90s, former Premier Filmon had the same report and recommendation in his hands on reliability for southern Manitoba. You might want to ask members of the caucus that were former Cabinet ministers why they hid that report, why they hid it from the people of Manitoba, why they didn't make it public like we did at the committee.

Yes, we believe in reliability and if you can have increased sales and increased investments on the reliability side, it makes it much more affordable than cancelling Conawapa and not being able to do reliability. They are connected, and he's made the point about Bipole being reliability and other transmission options being for export sales.

Thank you very much for making that point.

Mr. McFadyen: I think we should have question period before lunch every day. He's in way better form in the mornings than he is in the afternoons, Mr. Speaker. There was nothing in that performance that came even remotely close to a response to what is I think quite an important question. I would have thought after the big birthday that he recently celebrated that the class clown routine might have fallen by the wayside. He might start acting like a premier who actually might want to respond to a serious question.

So I'm going to put the question again. Is he planning to abandon Bipole III and instead build a transmission corridor directly to Alberta thereby creating a Churchill Falls scenario, which is what created the catastrophe for Newfoundland in its relationship with Québec?

* (10:30)

Mr. Doer: You know, it's almost like I'm listening to Stockwell Day, because, Mr. Speaker, the Churchill Falls situation—let me explain this to you. Churchill Falls deals with the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador being landlocked with the Province of Québec. Actually Manitoba is not landlocked in terms of the United States, and the comparison he makes is devoid of geography, just absolutely devoid of geography.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, we are going to build reliability, and he's made our point because last spring or fall he was going out saying, oh, this statement about the east-west grid is different. Well, it's not different. Reliability has got to be dealt with in terms of the Bipole III. It was a recommendation from members opposite. We are going to deal with reliability here in Manitoba, as tough as that's going to be because everywhere in Canada transmission lines are opposed. They're stopped in British Columbia after three years of work. Why? Because of the environmental reasons. Stopped in Alberta—that environmentally sensitive corridor between Calgary and Edmonton was stopped, again for environmental reasons.

We know that the environment is part of it. I know members opposite don't appreciate that. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, speaking of moods, I want to say to the member opposite, I was very impressed with his speech to the Chamber of Commerce a few days ago. Besides the fact he took shots at one media without them being in the room, he also said—

An Honourable Member: *The Free Press.*

Mr. Doer: Sh, sh, we don't want to tell anybody. It's a good mood in this room this morning, which is always a mixed blessing for an opposition leader when the mood is so good at the Chamber of Commerce. As you know, we're like vulture fund managers. We thrive on bad news. That's the mood of the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

I remind members when the Speaker's standing that all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I want your co-operation so we can have a little bit of decorum here, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier planning to abandon Bipole III, yes or no?

Mr. Doer: Let me explain it to the member opposite again. Reliability is what I said yes to. Reliability requires a transmission line. Members opposite said no to the transmission line. They said no to the public in releasing the report. They didn't disclose it at the committee. I understand they had their meetings at some other place, but they didn't make it public to the people of Manitoba.

We made the report public to the people of Manitoba in the Public Accounts Committee. We made it very clear that reliability must be dealt with. We prefer to deal with reliability and we're going to deal with reliability, with deferring the costs with increased sales. That is where we're going.

Mr. Speaker, we are not going to hide the report on reliability and not proceed. It is going to be very unpopular, as I said, for what happened in British Columbia, what happened in Alberta, to build a transmission line anywhere. But the easiest thing for us to do would be like the members opposite, hide the report, do nothing, drift along to the next election, not provide political targets for fabricated information.

That would be the easiest thing to do. We're not taking the easy route because Manitobans need reliability and we have the backbone to do it.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the question because there are members of his Cabinet telling people that the intent of government to get out of the political jam that the Premier is in is to announce a power sale to the west, abandon Bipole III, make it look as though there's some logic to the western route.

So I just want to ask the Premier again: Is he planning to abandon Bipole III, yes or no?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite criticized part of a debate in the last election, one of the seven or eight debates we were—six, actually—part of, which, by the way, was a lot more than we had in 1999, but I digress.

If we had a transmission and sale to Alberta across the north, we still have to deal with the issue of reliability in the south. We have said that to the

media. We said that to the member opposite when he was trying to catch us on a perceived contradiction on the issue of export sales in Canada versus the reliability in southern Manitoba.

We did not hide the report. Members opposite, Cabinet ministers that are sitting in his caucus today hid a report from the public, which I think is fundamentally undemocratic, Mr. Speaker. We made the report public, and that's why we're proceeding with reliability in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: I'm not sure that we've got an answer yet, Mr. Speaker, so let me just ask him one more time. The proposal that Hydro is going out with, and they're distributing a newsletter through western Manitoba that says: Bipole III, a major reliability improvement project. It shows the potential western route which ends up at the Riel converter station east of Winnipeg, starting in the northeast of Manitoba ending east of Winnipeg. This is the proposal that they're currently consulting on.

I just want to ask the Premier—if we can just get a direct response, yes or no—are they proceeding with this proposed Bipole III, yes or no?

Mr. Doer: We are proceeding with a bipole because we need reliability. The siting of the route is now, as the member opposite said, in public discussions. We've already talked about places that he's raised in terms of siting. Will the siting be popular in some parts? No. No transmission line is popular in the local areas.

In fact, the member from East St. Paul opposed the former Minister Newman when he got elected in terms of increased capacity and reliability through the Springfield-East St. Paul area, Mr. Speaker. The consultations will take place. The exact proposal—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Some of those routes actually go through some other constituencies, including some of our own.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the actual siting will include much of the right of way that's already there in the west side, much more, as Mr. Farlinger had described, than on the east side. It will include both the environmental issues when it's proposed to the Clean Environment Commission. The last environmental hearing we had dealing with costs did include representatives of the Public Utilities Board which would be my preference so we can deal with costs.

The Consumers' Bureau of Canada, through the Manitoba representative, has already talked about the costs. The numbers they've used and the numbers Hydro use are completely different than what the Tories are sending out with taxpayers' money all across Manitoba. How much are those mailings costing the taxpayers of Manitoba, and why don't you use Mr. Brennan's numbers instead of fabricated Tory numbers, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McFadyen: I think the Premier, somewhere in that response, said that they're proceeding with Bipole III. I want to thank him for responding to the question on the sixth time that it was asked.

I want to ask the Premier one final supplemental. He has said that it is the objective of his government to fully develop Manitoba's hydro-electric potential so that we have the ability to export power to the east, the west and the south. That will require the construction of Bipole IV, a fourth bipole line. I'm wondering what route the Premier has in mind for that bipole.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issues of reliability and sales have to, in our view—we've said this all along—be dealt with on the additional transmission line. This transmission line was recommended in the early '90s, the mid-'90s, the late '90s to members opposite. It was also part of our ongoing work with Hydro to deal with the issue of reliability. You cannot have increased reliability without the converter stations, which, of course, get added into the transmission costs in terms of the information and the fabricated information being put out by members opposite.

At the end of the day, you can get away with that for awhile, Mr. Speaker. You can try to get away with it for awhile, but sooner or later the truth catches up to you. I would strongly recommend that when the member opposite goes to his convention this weekend, now that he's abandoning the commitment to bring back the Jets, now that he's abandoning his 1 percent reckless tax cut immediately on the sales tax, now that he's abandoned his marina in Point Douglas, that he come forward with the same numbers Manitoba Hydro is using with his public address at the convention.

I want an honesty conversion on the road to Damascus tonight at his convention and he would do a great service to the people of Manitoba.

* (10:40)

Budget Public Safety Issues

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Public safety is a No. 1 priority for Manitobans but not for this NDP. Justice announcements in the budget were woefully inadequate to address public safety issues, gang activity and the flow of illegal guns into Manitoba from other jurisdictions.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why did he fail to make public safety a No. 1 priority for his government?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite, I think, is being a bit disingenuous in not referencing the fact that the only minister of a provincial government in the country travelled to Ottawa to stand beside the Minister of Justice, Rob Nicholson, to support the amendments to the Criminal Code, and I say the ones that are coming into effect May 1, mandatory penalties for serious firearm offences and reverse onus on bail coming in force on May 1, 2008, proposed by the Member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for years and years and years. The Minister of Justice asked me to come to Ottawa to stand beside him to announce those bills. Further, coming in force on July 2, provisions of the act dealing with dangerous offenders and driving—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hawranik: Rather than the Minister of Justice travelling to Ottawa, why doesn't he stay in Manitoba and look at the crime we have here in Manitoba? Let's look at March, for instance, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at March: Shots were fired at a Winnipeg building on March 13; at a Winnipeg residence on March 24; then shots were fired at another residence on March 26. On March 29, three people died; three people were killed from gunshot wounds in a home in Winnipeg.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to take on the gangs and the illegal guns here in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member's not clear. I don't know if he did criminal law, but criminal law is the jurisdiction exclusively of the federal government. The federal Minister of Justice asked me, the only provincial minister in the country, to come stand behind him when he announced these measures that are going into effect. Thirdly, as we speak, there's a working group dealing on gang

violence co-chaired by Manitoba and the federal government to put in place before the end of the year gang offences that have been proposed by none other than Manitoba and our criminal gang task force.

Mr. Speaker, the member might say we shouldn't go to Ottawa, but that's where the law is made, and we're prepared to do that any day to help the federal government change the laws and make it more safe in Manitoba.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, for the information of the Justice Minister, I have done criminal law compared to what he has done. Secondly, the criminal law applies evenly throughout the country, and let's look at the results here in Manitoba. Let's look at April: Shots were fired at a Winnipeg bar on April 3; this morning seven shots were fired at a residence on Burrows Avenue.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to make our community safer?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in addition to the federal Criminal Code amendments dealing with firearms offences, dealing with reverse onus on firearms offences, dealing with dangerous offenders and dealing with impaired driving the minister asked me to come to Ottawa with, the gang provisions that we're talking about now include, for the first time, a drive-by shooting offence which is not in the Criminal Code, which is recommended by Manitoba, which has been endorsed by all the ministers at a meeting in Winnipeg in November and which our members are travelling from Manitoba delegations going to Ottawa to discuss the amendments to make the streets safer in Manitoba and every province in the country. It's been adopted unanimously by all provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we'll do anything and we'll go anywhere, anytime, to make the streets safer for people of Manitoba.

Child and Family Services Act Legislative Changes

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, Child and Family Services is still in a state of chaos. We on this side of the House are pleased to see the minister finally admit that Child and Family Services needs to be changed.

In the fall we asked both the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to make safety the first priority. Every time we asked, they refused, even though the lives of vulnerable children were at risk. Why did the

minister continue to put culture ahead of safety and why did he wait so long to change his mind?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, indeed the child protection system was always intended and it must, of course, be founded on the principle of, indeed, child protection and child safety coming first.

Whether it's debate in here, whether it's public debate, whether it's in particular the inquest report into the tragic death of Tracia Owen and the observations of the judge there, we always have to make sure that there is no mixed message going; clearly to all Manitobans and to those hardworking people on the front lines in the child welfare system, that child safety is job 1, period.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, back in the fall this minister repeatedly refused to make legislative changes to The Child and Family Services Act. He insisted, even with evidence to the contrary, that safety was always job 1. He was wrong. We have seen too many tragic cases where safety was not put first; for example, Gage Guimond, Tracia Owen, Fonessa Bruyere, Phoenix Sinclair.

Is this government planning to back up these legislative changes with real action or is this just more empty promises from the minister?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly aware of how members opposite have been flip-flopping on different issues, whether it's suburban land profits. I can go on the list, but I hope that they will support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation speaks to the need not only to, right from the very top, right from the legislative scheme, make an absolutely clear and emphatic statement that's consistent with the authorities act, unanimously passed by this House, that safety is job 1, but, as well, that it be backed up with all of the changes that the Changes for Children initiative is dedicated to, and that is right to the issue of training and greater support on the front lines.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the minister has still not answered the question. Are these proposed changes just another NDP publicity stunt or does it mean that this government is willing to consider major changes to the Child and Family Services system that will ensure the safety of children?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we know the record on child welfare of members opposite when they had the ability. This Legislature unanimously agreed, as

did the northern and AMC grand chiefs, the president of the MMF, when the devolution bill was brought into this House, that the care, the safety and security of children in Manitoba is of utmost concern to all Manitobans. That was the primary consideration, the first thing that was said in that legislation.

It is very important we now understand, I think, clearly, as a result of public debate and the inquest report, that that should be consistent with the message in The Child and Family Services Act. There should be consistency, safety of children—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Country-of-Origin Labelling Government Action

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, we have a livestock industry in economic crisis. Due to the trade challenges created by the country-of-origin labelling, some U.S. farmers are breaking contracts with the Canadian pork producers while our farm families are losing their livelihood and their farm. Manitoba producers face the prospect of having to euthanize thousands of animals in the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture explain why this government has failed to take significant action on the COOL as we see it today?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should understand that COOL is U.S. legislation that provinces and the federal government have been concerned with and have been raising issues with for some time.

In fact, our Premier (Mr. Doer) has addressed the issue. I've addressed the issue with the federal minister. I've asked the federal minister to take action, to do a NAFTA challenge. In fact, together with Manitoba pork producers, we're putting together evidence and letters to provide to the federal Minister of Agriculture and the minister responsible for trade to get them the evidence so that they would indeed proceed with a NAFTA challenge.

* (10:50)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is the largest exporter of weanlings in Canada. Yet, uncertainty due to the country-of-origin labelling is preventing these pigs from crossing the border.

If the Premier is so committed to dealing with the livestock producers, why do the Manitoba hog

producers face the prospect of having to euthanize thousands of animals yet today and tomorrow?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we do have a very large weanling export industry. They have contracts with U.S. farmers. U.S. farmers are breaking those contracts because of high feed costs and they are not going to import those weanlings.

Indeed, it does cause a very serious challenge for our producers, and my staff have met with producers. I am going to be meeting with Manitoba Pork to talk about this particular issue. There's no doubt that there is a challenge facing our pork producers because of the high Canadian dollar, the high input costs and because of the pending COOL ruling.

Mr. Eichler: According to information we received after several months and requests from this side of the House, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has finally agreed to meet with the pork industry to discuss these very serious challenges in the upcoming week. Honestly, it's a disgrace it took that long.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit today to immediately deal with Manitoba Pork, Manitoba cattle associations to address these ongoing challenges before it's too late? It's already too late. Get on the job and get it done.

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, I just can't believe that the member opposite is making these kinds of comments. Our Premier and this government has met with producers. The Premier was at the KAP meeting. Pork has asked for a meeting. There's a meeting scheduled. We are working with the industry.

The member is trying to create some kind of headline that the Premier hasn't met. Well, I would remind him that government works as a whole and I have been working with it. My staff have met with the industry. We have come up with solutions. We met with Pork. We put money in place that they asked for. We met with the cattle producers. We addressed the issues of the BSE loans, Mr. Speaker. For the member opposite to say we have not met is absolutely—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Police Services Resources

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has been able to prove that it is a master of deception. We know, whether it's a budget, whether it's a Throne Speech, whether it's the

election, they talk about more police officers. We need to recognize there's a need to fix the system. We can talk about the Tammy file where we could look at the Health Sciences Centre as being one of Winnipeg's largest police stations. We have police officers that are constantly at the Health Sciences Centre.

You talk about the Tammy file, for example, where we'll have four to eight police officers in a 12-hour period being a glorified babysitter. The system needs to be fixed. It's not just provide more police officers. It's looking at what our police officers are doing and asking questions why is the Minister of Health failing?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): First off, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is opposed, on record, to hiring any more police officers. That's a first. It's extraordinary.

Secondly, it's a question, Mr. Speaker, of—I'm actually very pleased with the work that's being done by the Winnipeg Police Service, and I'm very pleased that a former employee of the Department of Justice has gone over to become the chief of police of the City of Winnipeg. The expertise, for example, that that chief has brought to the job of working with a wide variety of groups, like setting up the crystal meth strategy, is working in terms of the strategy; like, today, we see recreation directors hired to provide services to keep kids involved and active.

Mr. Lamoureux: I'm not interested in government spin. Mr. Speaker, I'm interested in getting police officers out of our health-care institutions and into our community police stations. We have community police stations that are not being opened in the province because there is a lack of police officers in our community police stations. And the minister laughs from his seat, well, the Member for Inkster doesn't want more police officers.

Mr. Speaker, I want our police officers to be better and able to do the things that they do. I don't want glorified babysitters in our Health Sciences Centre. I want those police officers in our community police offices or out on the streets fighting crime.

Why won't the Minister of Justice get on the same page as the Liberals and start fighting crime as opposed to talking about it?

Mr. Chomiak: I was surprised because the very member stood up in the House and said we do not need any more police officers; we hired over 150.

Now he says we don't have enough police officers to staff offices. That is so Liberal, Mr. Speaker, talk one way, say something in the other way.

One hundred and fifty officers on the police; over 100,000 kids served by the Lighthouse programs that keep people involved and doing other things; Gilbert Park has a Boys and Girls Club.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite said on the record we don't need any more police officers. It is extraordinary that he would stand up and say, oh, we can't open offices because we don't have enough police officers. Hells Angels have been put on the shelf, in the clink, as a result of the activities of our police officers.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request leave to finish my question, if I could.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to finish? He has one supplementary left. *[Agreed]*

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I want to really make this simple for the Minister of Justice. This is about ensuring that we have community police offices that are appropriately staffed. It is about ensuring that we have community police officers in and amongst our streets fighting crime.

This government seems to say, all we want is the headlines, saying, we are going to hire more police officers; we are going to hire more police officers.

Mr. Speaker, the police officers are there. What we need to do is to ensure that they have the ability to be able to service our communities, that they are not being tied up in the Health Sciences Centre and other hospital facilities, that they are not being tied up in our courts, if we only better utilized our police officers.

When will the minister do the right thing in dealing with this issue?

Mr. Chomiak: I am very pleased that the new police chief and the City Council are reviewing the activities of police officers and their activities.

I just want to point out that the last *Police Resources in Canada* independent publication said, quote: Manitoba has 96 more police officers on the street in 2007 than in 2006. The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said, quote: We don't need more police officers on the street.

That was a quote from the member opposite. Now, I fail to understand his pleas today. We want a more efficient police—we've not only provided resources but we've put in place improved programs. We can't have this Liberal one-trick pony every day in question period. It's more complex than the Member for Inkster—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question period has ended.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

International Day for the Elimination of Racism

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight an event held at Maples Collegiate in March to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. Organized by students under the direction of Chuck Duboff, led by the Maples Collegiate Unity Group and led by MCs Nicole Selkirk and Jaclyn Oliver, the school assembly highlighted the detrimental effects racism has had on our society throughout history.

* (11:00)

The event's two guest speakers: Troy Westwood and Professor Mary Young, from the University of Winnipeg. Mr. Westwood spoke about racism against Aboriginal people and performed his powerful version of "O Canada," which speaks about the abuses that occurred as a result of the residential school system. Professor Young then told her own personal story of having been a student in a residential school as she was growing up. These were both powerful presentations that had a great impact on the students and encouraged them to make a difference by fighting racism within their own communities.

The event concluded with a ribbon ceremony presented by members of the Unity Group that honoured the memory of those who have felt the impact of racism, from the victims of the Japanese internment camps in Canada built in the Second World War to present-day victims of the conflict in Darfur.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Acting Speaker, the devastating effects of racism have been felt throughout history in Canada and across the world. I would like to commend and thank the students at Maples Collegiate for their efforts in highlighting this issue for their fellow students. Positive change will come only when we work harder to combat racism on every level and this

assembly was an important step in that direction. Thank you.

Inaugural Osborne House Breakfast

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): In March, our caucus had the privilege of being a co-presenter of the inaugural Osborne House Breakfast. As the largest shelter for victims of domestic violence in Canada, Osborne House provides a safe place for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Hearing from past clients at the event put a face on the invaluable service shelters like Osborne House provide to women and children who feel like they have no hope for a better life. With the help of Osborne House, every day women are working to break the cycle of domestic violence.

Keynote speaker Tanya Brown, an advocate against domestic violence and the sister of Nicole Brown Simpson, reminded us not only of the importance of having a plan and a place to go but also of how important it is for each of us to watch for the signs of abuse. It could be your friend, your neighbour, your co-worker. All of us in our daily lives can be quiet observers in the struggle to end domestic violence. We can take note of significant changes in behaviour of our employees, our friends and even our family. We can be ready with an open heart and a listening ear. One person at a time, we can help victims of domestic violence make a new start.

As long-time supporters of Osborne House and the only platinum sponsors of this fundraising event, we were very pleased to help Osborne House in its efforts to raise \$30,000 for its Children's Program. Teaching children healthy ways to deal with their angry feelings can help break the generational cycle of abuse. Children have choices too, and Osborne House makes healthy choices available to them.

I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this very worthwhile event and, in particular, the Progressive Conservative MLAs from River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), Carman (Mr. Pedersen), Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), Russell (Mr. Derkach), Ste. Rose (Mr. Brieze) and, of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) for their contributions to Osborne House.

One step at a time we can make a difference in the lives of people who need help making a change for the better. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Outstanding Principal Awards

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Acting Speaker, principals are both leaders in the school and in the community. They are important innovators who encourage staff to explore new ideas and develop new opportunities for students.

Two Manitoba principals were recognized by the Learning Partnership as outstanding principals recently. Gordon Crook from Technical Vocational High School and Susan Gustafson from Stony Mountain school were among the 33 principals from across Canada honoured with the award.

The Learning Partnership is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to championing a strong public education system in Canada. The organization honours the extraordinary contributions of dynamic educational leaders in publicly funded schools. The award is given to principals who have made a measurable difference in the lives of their students and their own local communities.

I know that Gordon Crook has been an advocate of increasing financial assistance to students at Tec-Voc. When Gordon started at Tec-Voc, the school had only two awards totalling \$300, and now the school provides nearly \$14,000 to benefit more than 35 students. Gordon's skills in building partnerships are well-known not only to students and staff, but to the community as well. He successfully forged a partnership with Manitoba's cutting-edge aerospace industry to ensure that students have an opportunity to learn about and to directly experience working in this important industry.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Susan Gustafson has been a leader in developing a new school timetable that breaks up the day into 300-minute instructional sections separated by two nutritional and activity blocks. This spreads out the instructional day in a balanced way and provides teachers with more flexibility in the classroom.

Susan is also spearheading the Safe and Caring Learning Communities program which teaches educators how to develop respectful relationships within school and the community.

I would ask that all honourable members join me in congratulating these two outstanding administrators. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

David Robert Blake

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It is with sadness that I rise today to speak of the passing of Mr. Dave Blake. Mr. Blake was a very familiar face to this building as he diligently served as the MLA for the Minnedosa constituency for 17 years.

In February, just a month shy of his 83rd birthday, Mr. Blake passed away in Minnedosa, which was a community he called home for many years. Born and raised in Rapid City, Mr. Blake began a career with the Royal Bank of Canada. His work with the Royal Bank spanned 41 years and took him to many communities throughout Manitoba. It was an opportunity to serve as the manager of the local bank branch that brought Mr. Blake, his wife Gwen and their five children to Minnedosa in 1970.

After the retirement of Premier and local MLA Walter Weir, Mr. Blake became the Progressive Conservative candidate for the constituency of Minnedosa in 1971. A by-election victory began Mr. Blake's 17 years in public office. At the time, he was one of the few bankers elected to the provincial Legislature, and he received many accolades within the Canadian financial institutions for this achievement.

During his time here at the Manitoba Legislature, he provided a strong voice on issues important to his constituents, and there was always value in the experience he brought to this great legislative process.

Mr. Blake retired from politics in 1988, but I can say with deep appreciation that he remained a strong supporter of his successors, former MLA Harold Gilleshammer and myself. He certainly set a fine example for us to follow, and I'm honoured to continue the legacy he began.

Mr. Blake loved his province and his community and was a proud member of the local legion. Besides his time in public office, he was always very active in many organizations and clubs. Prior to becoming an MLA, Mr. Blake was president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. He also served as president of the Royal Canadian Legion in both Selkirk and Hugh Dyer branches.

Mr. Blake had the commitment and ability to make a difference in the world around him, and he certainly left a mark wherever he went.

Our thoughts go out to Mr. Blake's wife, Gwen, and his family at this time. He will be remembered fondly and deeply missed. Thank you.

Battle of Vimy Ridge Memorial

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, every spring in my constituency, there is a solemn but very important ceremony held at Vimy Ridge Memorial Park, and the most recent honouring of that historic battle took place just this past weekend. I was honoured to attend and be joined by my colleague the MLA for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), also Pat Martin, member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre, and Harvey Smith, councillor for Daniel McIntyre, along with many representatives, both those on current duty with the military forces of Canada, their families, their friends, their neighbours, and those who have retired from the service.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, of course, was a horrific struggle. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost, and, at the end of the day, it was, in fact, the Canadian troops working for the first time together, all of the different military units of the Canadian Forces at the time, for the first time came together to take the ridge and to secure victory at a very important moment in the First World War.

The monument which was established at Vimy Ridge overseas was then brought back to Canada and not just to Canada but to Winnipeg, right into the heart of our city in Vimy Ridge Memorial Park. The park itself has received considerable attention from our government through the Building Communities Initiative.

* (11:10)

It was a wonderful setting, as it always is, for this bittersweet and yet very important memorial. I want to thank all of the veterans who were there, all the dignitaries who attended and the staff at Veterans Affairs Canada for making it possible for us to honour the 91st memorial of that very important struggle. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Second Day of Debate)

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

of the government standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to address the budgetary policy of the government as outlined by the Minister of Finance on Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, this is my third opportunity since being elected in the Fort Whyte by-election to speak on provincial budgets, and I have to say, notwithstanding the disappointment expressed in previous years, that this year's budget was even flatter, less inspiring and more troubling than any budget that I have seen since being elected to this Chamber two and a half years ago.

When we look at such statements, and the budget, obviously, is the most important policy statement of the government that is made, the budget is a reflection of the values and the priorities of government. We look at the budget, Mr. Speaker, with a view toward whether or not the spending, taxing and other policy measures contained within that budget are reflective of the priorities of Manitobans, their aspirations for a better future, their fears about the issues that need to be addressed and the risks that may exist on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, the budget fails on every count. When we compare this budget to what Manitobans need, both today but also as we look to the future, the future that we all want and hope for our children and grandchildren, this budget is a failure of monumental proportions. It may be that, through the incrementalism or the dead-hand approach, which was referred to I think very well by the *Free Press* in its editorial yesterday, there is a sense of drift within this government, a lack of focus, a real lack of—a real detachment, a growing detachment, in our view, from the priorities of Manitobans. The party in power, the NDP, has always campaigned on being in touch with the concerns of regular working Manitobans, and this budget could not be further removed from that kind of a campaign. In fact, we see it fail in so many important fronts that we cannot support it, and we would instead say that, as opposition, we have responsibility and a wish to put forward a vision and a plan as to how we achieve that vision that is better than what has been presented by this third-term, tired NDP government.

The one thing that we know about Manitobans is that they're practical people. They're prudent. They know that things don't come easily. We work hard for everything that we get in this province, Mr.

Speaker. We're always realistic about what we're able to achieve. I think, notwithstanding that realism and that practicality of Manitobans, that we are all united by big dreams and high aspirations for what we might achieve together as Manitobans as we look toward our future.

But one of those things that Manitobans do, which is so at odds with the direction of this NDP government, is they have the good sense, in good times, to pay down debt, that when the money is coming in, when a family has a good year, when a small business is successful, when a farmer has a year where maybe prices are high and costs are down, they take that surplus and they use it to pay down past debt. They put away some of that money into a savings account because they know that the next challenge is not far around the corner. That's just the reality of life, not just here in Manitoba, but anywhere, Mr. Speaker, and that we use the bounty of today to prepare wisely for tomorrow.

What's most, perhaps, disturbing about this budget is that, rather than using the opportunity that has come through massive new federal transfer payments into Manitoba, and we'll address the issue of our dependence on transfer payments momentarily, but rather than use that golden opportunity to pay down debt in Manitoba, the NDP has instead gone the opposite direction of Manitobans. They've raised the debt. The total debt of our province is higher today than it has been at any point in our province's history, roughly \$19 billion and climbing as of this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. That is an unacceptable departure from what Manitobans would expect of their government. For the NDP in this budget to increase debt, to add to the mortgage that was going to be left to our children, a mortgage that they're going to have to work long hours to repay, they're going to have to make sacrifices in the way of fewer public services and other things that they might have wished for and hoped for. Instead, they'll be working longer for less in order to repay the mortgage that is being left to them by an NDP government that is concerned only about scoring political points today and is completely lacking in concern for what may happen to the next generation. To increase the debt is irresponsible. It's reckless; it is completely negligent in terms of what is going to be faced by our next generation of Manitobans.

On that point alone, for that reason alone, this government is fundamentally off-track. It is moving in the wrong direction; it is not on the side of

Manitobans who have the prudence and the common sense to use—to pay down debt in good times in order to prepare for those difficult times which are not far away in very many cases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all would like to believe that good times are going to last forever and we hope that they will, and we all, as we look to our own personal circumstances, regardless of our politics, hope that we will continue to see growth throughout the world, growth that will continue to lift our economy here in Manitoba as we've seen over the past decade, growth that was hard-earned. There was a lot of hard work done by governments throughout the world, in fact, including here in Manitoba, to lay the groundwork for the prosperity that we today enjoy.

By way of example, there were tough decisions made through the 1980s and 1990s. The Free Trade Agreement, which the NDP campaigned against—I remember the then-Leader of the Opposition, current Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), saying that he and his party were against free trade. They put that on the record. They were opposed to NAFTA when it came in, which I notice they've done a complete 180-degree turn on today as the Democrats in the United States campaign against NAFTA. We see the Premier suddenly coming to the defence of the agreement that he attacked when he was in opposition. He likes to talk about flip-flops, but this Premier built a political career out of attacking trade with the United States, and today, now that he's had the benefit of actually spending time in government and had the benefit of some experience with the massive growth in our economy, now he's the biggest defender of NAFTA.

We welcome that change; we welcome the fact that the Premier is embracing Conservative ideas. That's always good news, that even though the NDP may have some political success, they've embraced Conservative ideas. We heard the Justice Minister earlier today praising Conservative ideas on how to make our communities safer, but we are troubled by the fact that while he stands in this House one day, inside the House saying, we support the Conservatives on what they're doing, when he leaves the Chamber, he goes out and campaigns for Jack Layton and the NDP who are throwing sand in the gears every time the federal Conservatives try to move forward on these issues.

So he says one thing in the House, he says something completely different on NDP convention

weekend. When Jack Layton comes in, the Premier shares the stage with the NDP Leader and they go around offering campaign advice to the federal NDP. Well, I don't know, Mr. Speaker. What I would suggest is that they should be consistent. They should campaign for Stephen Harper and the Conservatives when the time comes if they really want to put their money where their mouth is on these issues.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) spent his career as an NDP politician attacking trade. Now he's in favour of it and so we welcome that flip-flop—41 flip-flops to date, Mr. Speaker, and counting. And we don't want to go through the whole list because I've only got about half an hour to go through the list of flip-flops that he has executed since he got into politics.

* (11:20)

The growth that we experienced and that we've had in the last 10 years have been because there were difficult decisions and great leadership shown by prior governments, and free trade was one of them. The decision to bring spending under control and get our finances under control here in Manitoba was another. The decision to embark on a plan to reduce our debt over 30 years—which was enshrined in legislation—which was attacked by the NDP government at the time, was the right way to go. Legislated balanced budgets, again, attacked by the Premier and the NDP at the time, have paved the way for the prosperity that today we enjoy.

So, Mr. Speaker, in many ways it's reminiscent of the spoiled rich kid who rebels against his parents and then turns around and takes the increased allowance and spends it in ways that attempt to portray that person as the most popular kid in the class. That really is the best characterization of this budget and the way this Premier and this Finance Minister govern our province.

But, Mr. Speaker, we need to be responsible. We need government in this province to recognize that the money won't always rain down from Ottawa, that there are risks that are posed when we get this reliant on federal transfers. We saw a report come out earlier this week, on Wednesday in fact. The same day as this budget that increased spending by 6.2 percent, we saw a report come out from the IMF talking about the likelihood, the possibility of a global recession coming into effect in the next little while. We saw a report from the Federal Reserve talking about the dire economic circumstances in the

United States and the fact that this could drag down the world economy, which could include Manitoba.

So this is not a time for reckless spending. It's not a time for spending all the money being handed down by the rich uncle, Mr. Speaker. It's a time for responsibility. One of the things that we had to see in this budget to support it was a genuine commitment to reducing Manitoba's debt, and the government has gone in the opposite direction. They've done the opposite of what common sense Manitobans do. They've increased the debt in this budget. We also wanted in this budget to see a commitment to preparing for difficult times by putting more money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is our rainy day savings account. Instead, they drew it down, as we could be approaching difficult times in our economy. So, on those two counts, increasing the debt, drawing down the savings account, when they should have done the opposite: pay down the debt, increase the savings account, as we look at what may be coming.

It's reckless and irresponsible, and it's all about the Premier following through on the pre-election deals that he always makes going into elections in order to try to ensure that he gets enough votes to win elections. You know what? The ability to make political deals is something that some people may think is admirable. It's something that we know this Premier is very good at. He's an acknowledged expert on cutting backroom deals. We don't deny that one little bit. But, when you look at the price to be paid by regular Manitobans for those backroom deals with NDP special interest groups, then we know that we are on the wrong path.

So, Mr. Speaker, on the first count, we know Manitobans pay down debt, this government runs it up, in good times. On the second count, we know Manitobans put money into the savings account in good times; this NDP government draws money out of the Province's savings account when we should be doing the opposite. It's just the wrong path for Manitoba. It's reckless, it's irresponsible and it disregards the interests of young Manitobans in the generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other areas of concern within this budget that we will highlight as we go forward, one of which is the 6.2 percent increase in spending from last year's budget to this year's budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), as he always does, uses apples and oranges when he makes comparisons in order to mislead

Manitobans into thinking he's being prudent. He talks about 3.3 percent. That's not the right percentage. From budget to budget, from actual to actual, you've got to pick one or the other. You can't go from last year's overexpenditure on the budget to this year's budget in forecasting increased spending. He's increasing spending by 6.2 percent over last year's budget at a time when there are projections for growth as low as 2 percent and as high as 3 percent.

So that's why we said and that's why we took the position prior to the budget that spending should be increased in this budget but that it should be limited in a prudent way to the rate of projected economic growth. That rate of growth is between 2 and 3 percent. The government should have increased spending from last year's budget to this year's at the rate of growth. Then we could have said that this was a government that was interested in being responsible and prudent. Instead, we have a 6.2 percent increase, double the rate of projected economic growth. Yet we have a government that says they still can't manage within that amount.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) was attacking us yesterday in the House for saying that the government should be able to manage within the rate of economic growth, a spending increase within the rate of growth, even though they have already added \$4 billion in spending since they came to power. He said that we were offside with Manitobans by saying that they should manage within the rate of growth. Well, with all due respect, I disagree. I know Manitobans think and believe that any government should be able to manage within the rate of economic growth of 2 and 3 percent. Instead, they've doubled that. It's reckless. It has got us on the wrong path, and it is wrong for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there are other concerns that we have about this budget. One of the other things that Manitobans do, because they are sensible people, is when they set their budget for the year they focus on their priorities. They don't scatter money all over the place without any sense of what they want to achieve. They don't spend a little bit here and a little bit there without any view to getting results. What they do is they focus on areas of priority. What we asked this government to do going into this budget was to focus on doing what is the most fundamental responsibility of all governments. It is to keep its citizens safe from crime. Now we see in Manitoba today examples of horrendous violent crime. We see people being shot as they are sitting in their homes.

We saw the most recent example occur even last night, shots being fired into people's homes.

This is not the Manitoba that any of us want to have. This is the Manitoba that has been created under this NDP government and has been allowed to occur, not out of a desire to have it occur but simply out of a lack of focus, a lack of setting priorities and a lack of commitment to dealing with what are the priorities of Manitobans.

So we called for the addition of 350 new personnel within our justice system to deal with this challenge, increasing the number of police officers. We know that our Prosecutions branch is struggling under the caseload today. They need the resources in order to increase the number of prosecutors to ensure that cases are brought to trial, and then that those who deserve to be behind bars are put behind bars.

We said that we want to see support for the courts so that our judges are able to process and deal with cases more quickly, so we don't have people getting two-for-one remand time, we don't have defence lawyers having the ability to mount arguments under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that delays in trial are prejudicing the case, and having cases thrown out, and to have the ability to launch inquests into the very serious mismanagement within our Child and Family Services system. They need the resources to do these things in an effective and timely way. They don't have them under this government, even though they have increased spending by almost double since they came to power, \$4 billion added to the budget. Yet there is not enough, according to this government, to meet the needs of our justice system, the most fundamentally important element of government in Manitoba when it comes to protecting the basic safety and property of the people of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our country's Constitution talks about peace, order and good government as being a fundamental responsibility. You can't do anything else you want as a community or society when people don't feel safe, when parents don't feel they can send their kids out the door to school without feeling anxious about whether they will make it safely, when seniors feel they can't walk the streets in the evening on a warm spring evening like the ones we've been enjoying lately without the fear of being robbed or being assaulted, when people feel they can't walk around freely and are downtown where people are working so hard every day to try to establish businesses, but those businesses are

suffering because they can't bring people down to shop in the stores because they don't feel safe in our downtown here in Winnipeg.

So this is a fundamental failure of the NDP government, and they have failed once again in this budget to address it. The amount that has been allocated to dealing with our crime problem is minuscule in comparison to the major increases in other areas. So it is a lack of focus that we have concern about, a lack of focus on the priorities of Manitobans.

* (11:30)

We've seen through the public opinion surveys Manitobans are telling us clearly that they want the issues of crime and safety addressed. They want to know that they are going to be safe when they leave their homes or their businesses, and they have a government that has turned a blind eye, has ignored those calls, and has instead decided to drift along with a budget that increases spending by 6.2 percent without any view toward achieving results. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) is correctly reminding me of a budget speech that lasted almost an hour; a mere two minutes dedicated to the issue of safety in our communities. It's a shameful ignorance of what is the issue that all Manitobans want to see addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that all Manitobans believe in is that when we charge taxes to Manitobans we all know we don't have any choice as to whether we pay those taxes or not, and we willingly pay those taxes in order to support government services that are going to deliver value and results for our whole province. But, in exchange for that contract between government and the people, that the people have to pay their taxes or they face penalties, there is an expectation in return that government will then deliver services that meet the priorities and needs of the people.

This government has no respect for that contract between the people and the government. Those people take the money and they spend it in ways that are completely motivated by short-term politics. They appeal only to short-term self interest of those who they think will feel good temporarily about receiving payments from the government. But what this budget shows so clearly is how little respect the NDP has for the people who get up early in the morning every day, work hard, play by the rules and

pay their taxes in order to support the activities of this government.

The issue is so starkly demonstrated by a budget that allocates \$1 in tax reduction for every \$9 in new spending. The message it sends to taxpayers in this province, Mr. Speaker, is that we put nine times more importance and value on those who spend your money than we put on those who actually go out and work to earn the money and pay the taxes to support our system. It is an unbelievable slap on the face for all of those people in our province who work so hard and pay their taxes in order to support the activities of government.

If you look at what they did on the basic personal exemption, raising it \$100, less than what the rate of inflation will do, it's a message to working Manitobans, especially low-income working families. These are the people who are most in need of tax relief in our province, are the people who work hard every day in lower paying jobs and pay their taxes. They needed to see the basic personal exemption raised so they could keep more of what they earned, spend it in accordance with their own priorities and get a message from their government that we know how hard you're working, we respect what you're doing, keep going to work every day because we need you in our province and we want to send you a message that we believe in what you're doing. The message that they got instead is, we're going to hand you a crumb; it's going to be more than eaten up by the rate of inflation; we have no respect for you because all we're concerned about is sprinkling money around for short-term political gain.

That, Mr. Speaker, is a clear indication once again of how far out-of-step this NDP government is. The party that used to claim that it was the party of working families has slapped those working families in the face with this budget by giving them an increase in their basic personal exemption that doesn't even keep up with the rate of inflation. It's shameful. They've abandoned those people who they used to count on and take for granted as their core of support and this budget is one more indication that this NDP government is out of step with working Manitoba families, especially low-income families who were looking for more than what they got in this budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have in this budget, again, an indication of a government that raises debt in good times when it should be reducing debt; a

government that takes money out of the savings account when it should be putting money into the savings account; a government that has no respect for hardworking taxpayers but is concerned only about spending money in the interest of short-term political interest, group-politic benefit. That is not the kind of Manitoba that any of us know we can be.

Now, there are lots of initiatives in the budget on an individual basis that are steps that can be supported by Manitobans, and I said, when I was asked afterwards, if you look at some of the individual initiatives, there are good things that money is going to be spent on in order to provide benefits to communities and highways upgrades, which we've been calling for, and other areas. We don't criticize some of the individual initiatives, Mr. Speaker, but it is the overall picture of increasing spending at 6.2 when the economy is only growing at just over 2 percent. It is paying, raising debt when we should be cutting debt. It is taking money out of the savings account when we should be putting money in.

I guess what we have happening, I think, Mr. Speaker, is the phenomenon that was feared which has been highlighted by Professor Schwartz from the University of Manitoba and others who talk about the danger of our increased reliance on transfer payments from Ottawa. This is what happens when you have a government with, effectively, a handout mentality.

I know there used to be a joke in Ottawa when the previous NDP government was in power, that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was a part of, that you knew the delegation from Manitoba had arrived at the airport because, even though they shut off the engines on the plane, the whining didn't stop. That's what they used to say in the old days, and it carries on to this day. They go and they whine in Ottawa after they get off the plane. The whining carries on that we need more money; we don't have enough. Every time we have a problem, we'll pass the buck, blame it on Ottawa, accepting no responsibility, no personal responsibility for what they have done or not done to this province.

So, when we get to the point of almost 40 percent of our money flowing in from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, we know we've got a serious problem. Perhaps that's why it is that this NDP government thinks that they can disregard taxpayers, that they can show disrespect for farmers, that they could ignore the plight of hardworking working-class

families, that they could ignore taxpayers, is because they know that they can drive the economy into the ground and they'll be rewarded by a structure of equalization payments that rewards bad performance, and that they know they'll get more money out of Ottawa as long as they keep whining.

That allows them to be able to afford to kick agriculture when it's down. They think they can afford to insult working families with an increase in their basic personal exemption that is below the rate of inflation. They think they can increase spending by \$9 while only providing \$1 in tax relief to hardworking Manitoba families. They think they can increase the debt, draw down the savings account, spend recklessly in order to try to generate some short-term political headlines. It's because they're dependent on the goodwill of people who don't even live and vote here in Manitoba. They depend on the good will and the hard work increasingly of the people of Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and provinces around us, and a federal government that has the resources to be able to spend here in Manitoba to keep the government afloat.

Now it used to be, Mr. Speaker, that we in Manitoba—and I think the people of Manitoba still have this sense. I know they do, in fact, because everywhere I go Manitobans say that we value our ability to stand on our own two feet and to be reliant. This is another area where the government doesn't share the priorities and the values of Manitobans, because this is a government that wears its dependence on Ottawa as a badge of pride when Manitobans view it as a mark of shame. They're dead wrong to do it. It's not the Manitoba way to go to Ottawa looking for handouts. It's not the Manitoba way to insult the hardworking taxpayers, farmers, small-business people, nurses, teachers, police officers and others who get up and work hard and pay their taxes. That's not the way our province was built, and our future will not be built on going to Ottawa for handouts. Our future will be built on self-reliance and the values that made Manitoba strong in the first place.

So, with all of these comments, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, notwithstanding the fact that we have a government that is way out of step with the people of Manitoba, a government that does things that are so inconsistent with the values of the people of Manitoba that it's leading us off on the wrong track in so many ways, notwithstanding that fact, we are a province that is resilient. We are a province that works hard. We are a province that has big dreams

about our future and a practical, realistic sense of how we're going to get there, and we know that we will get through this period of "malgovernment" that we have under this NDP government.

* (11:40)

We know that we've got a great future ahead of us. That's why we as a party will look forward to debates as we go forward, to putting before the people of Manitoba a positive, hopeful, optimistic vision that all people can buy in to. That's not just a collection of special interest groups in this province. It is a group of people who come from divergent backgrounds, from different beliefs, a group of men and women and people who've come from far away lands who share aspirations and values that we will work toward together as one people, as one province, not just a collection of special interest groups.

This budget is a special-interest-group budget. We want a budget that addresses the values and concerns of all Manitobans. Save when times are good; pay down debt when times are good; respect taxpayers; learn to stand on our own two feet; make ourselves stronger and better, and allow ourselves to become the great province that all of us know that we can be, Mr. Speaker, not just a dependent department of the federal government.

We used to be, in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that premiers would stand up and fight for our province on the national stage. Now we have a premier who's turning into the equivalent of a deputy minister in the federal government responsible for administering federal funds here in Manitoba. That's not good enough. We deserve better.

For that reason, we cannot support this budget, and I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting:

therefore regrets this budget fails to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

(a) failing to move Manitoba forward towards achieving its true potential and becoming more competitive, both within Canada and internationally; and

(b) increasing Manitoba's reliance on the taxpayers of other provinces through equalization payments; increasing spending by over 6 percent without any emphasis on getting results for Manitobans; and

(c) continuing to channel billions into taxpayer-funded projects at the expense of private investment which is the true basis for a wealthy society; and

(d) neglecting to reduce taxes which are increasing, out of line with taxes charged in other places, with \$9 of new spending for every tax dollar of tax relief; and

(e) increasing Manitoba's staggering debt load rather than doing what all responsible families and governments across Canada are doing in good economic times which is to reduce debt; and

(f) ignoring the priorities of Manitobans by failing to provide adequate resources to combat crime and put an end to the revolving-door justice system; and

(g) raising Pharmacare deductibles yet again, forcing seniors and low-income Manitobans to bear the brunt of wasteful spending decisions; and

(h) failing to end hallway medicine as promised while, at the same time, nearly doubling the health-care budget; and

(i) ignoring the city of Brandon, Manitoba's second-largest urban centre; and

(j) extending the tuition freeze for yet another year and weakening our universities and colleges; and

(k) failing to plan for and meet the urgent infrastructure, education, and child care needs of growing communities throughout the province; and

(l) neglecting to protect Manitoba's most vulnerable children in the care of our child welfare system; and

(m) abandoning rural Manitobans through punitive regulations and the lack of a long-term plan to grow the rural economy; and

(n) failing to address the challenges facing the cattle and pork sectors as they deal with low commodity prices, the impact of the high Canadian dollar, rising input costs, pending country-of-origin labelling, and the extension of the moratorium on the hog industry; and

(o) failing to provide a strategy to deal with the more than four dozen boil-water advisories in Manitoba; and

(p) postponing any significant progress on greenhouse gas emission targets until beyond the scope of the current government's mandate; and

(q) neglecting to reverse the misguided political decision to run Bipole III down the west side of Lake Winnipeg, thereby abandoning east-side communities, wasting \$1.5 billion and mortgaging the future of Manitoba children.

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that the motion be—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The motion will be as printed. Okay. The motion is in order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it's spring in Manitoba. All throughout this province, people are feeling good about this province. There's an optimistic mood everywhere in this province. Well, maybe with one exception, with members opposite.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I appreciate that he's got a big weekend coming up. I'm assuming by the rather low key nature of his speech today he's saving his best material, his fire, for the Brandon convention. As I watched members opposite give him a standing ovation, I would just remind him that the former Leader of the Opposition, Stu Murray, had the same kind of enthusiastic support every single year he was leader. So I wish the Leader of the Opposition well.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the great advantage that I have, and I want to put it on the record as I start the budget speech, is I get to see a good part of this province every weekend as I drive home. Last week it was a little bit different. I left Winnipeg; it was plus-10 degrees. Before I hit home it was minus-28. It reminded me of the diversity of this province in terms of weather.

When I compare the complete lack of vision that members opposite have in terms of this province—just listen to the Leader of the Opposition and the tired, recycled rhetoric that we heard from the Leader of the Opposition—I'm reminded of what a great province this is. You know, we've got some of the greatest diversity of any jurisdiction in North America, not just in terms of our geography, our eco-systems, but our population, more than 100 languages spoken in this province, with the highest Aboriginal population of any province in this country. No, you don't hear any of that from members opposite, because their Manitoba is the 1950s Manitoba. They don't recognize that.

We have the most successful provincial immigration program in the country. We had 10,000 people, and we're headed for 20,000. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is giving us credit. I know, the fact, I'm proud of the fact that 30 percent of the immigrants are going outside of our urban centres. That's unique in this country.

This is the diversity of this province, and there's the diversity of our economies as well. You don't hear any of that. We have right now a booming mining sector in this province, unheard of prices, unheard of exploration. There are areas of the province that are facing tougher times, like the livestock industry, but how about grain and oil seeds. Finally, farmers are getting the kind of returns on their investments that they deserve. It doesn't matter where you look in terms of manufacturing, there's one province in this country that is weathering the storm better than any other. It's the province of Manitoba. We have a diverse economy and we're doing well.

The members opposite get stuck in this kind of track of saying, well, there's nothing happening. Take a tour around this province, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite drives out to Brandon this weekend, he may want to check out all the development that's taking—

An Honourable Member: The highway.

Mr. Ashton: —well, first of all, the highway, a dramatic improvement over the days when he was chief of staff to Gary Filmon in the 1990s.

But, you know, I don't want to even just focus in on the billions of dollars we're investing in our highways. He should maybe take a little bit of a detour, because if he goes through Portage, if he checks out Neepawa, if he checks out Minnedosa,

and then drives around Brandon, he'll see that this government has been there working with rural communities, working with the City of Brandon, and we're making a difference in terms of our rural economies and the economy of our great second city, the city of Brandon. That's the reality in this province. That's the reality.

* (11:50)

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) let his guard down at the Chamber of Commerce meeting. He talked, you know, compared himself to the vulture capitalist. Even I wouldn't have gone as far as calling the Tories a bunch of vultures. I don't know if he had a premonition about any circling at the PC convention in Brandon this weekend, because, certainly, the vultures were out at the last convention, just ask Stu Murray about it.

But, you know, he talked about how typical it is. He knows that if you go to the Chamber of Commerce—and I spoke to the Manitoba Chamber recently. If you come to the Thompson Chamber or you go to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, I spoke at the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, here's what's happening in Manitoba. Maybe the members opposite aren't aware of this, but we have a growing economy. We are predicted, again, to have a growing economy, beating much of Canada. We've got a growing population, 1.2 million.

I love members opposite, like the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who get up and talk about the challenges on the school side. Mr. Speaker, when you have a growing economy, it does put strains on the kind of services, whether it be in terms of highways or hospitals or education. But, you know, when the Tories were in office in the 1990s, they didn't have to worry about building new schools because there was no growth in this province. That is the difference under the NDP. We've got growth, yes, and challenges in managing that, but that is a real difference.

Now, I notice the member opposite, he's obviously trying to reinvent himself. You notice how he didn't come into the speech today with his Save the Jets. I know he promised to do that in the last election, Mr. Speaker. I know its playoff time and, maybe, I'm in a doubly good mood today because I'm a Canadiens fan, but I really feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) because I remember when in the election he started talking about saving the Jets. He's been trying to find this

cool factor. I'll tell him, a lot of people I talked to said, you can talk about bringing back the Jets, but it was not cool to get up in an election and try and mislead people into thinking that by standing in an empty arena—by the way, an arena that was built by a partnership with the private sector and this government and other levels of government, and the Tories opposed—but standing in that arena, that's not cool, that's not even fair to the intelligence, to the people in the province.

I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition is going to go into his PC convention and wear his Save the Jets paraphernalia, Mr. Speaker, because it didn't cut it. I won't bug him about Point Douglas. You know what, he's actually, since the election, visited Point Douglas. Too bad he didn't visit before the election when he talked about flooding a good part of it and building a marina. There are people that live in Point Douglas, and with the kind of work we're doing as a government working with the people of Point Douglas, we're building a much stronger community. But I remember those winning comments in the election.

But what also struck me, if he's reinventing himself, there was a real opportunity today to get up and disown the comments he made in the election. Remember when he promised to do one thing. Now, Stu Murray, when he was leader, promised to cut one thing: the University College of the North. It hadn't even been implemented, but he was going to cut it anyway. Brings together existing resources, but he was against it. Mr. Speaker, people in northern Manitoba kind of remember those kinds of things. Well, the Leader of the Opposition decided to one-up it, because he was not only going to cut something that wasn't even there yet, he stood—it's interesting, the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) sits providing advice to the member. He got up in southern Manitoba, and maybe he thought that we didn't have access to newspaper clippings and the fax machine and the Internet, but he said, we're going to cut money out of northern Manitoba. By the way, his definition of northern Manitoba was north of Riding Mountain National Park. I guess Tories get nose bleeds when they drive too far north of Highway 1.

I say to the member opposite, you can't even hope to be considered as a potential premier of this province if you're not prepared to represent all regions in the province. You failed that test in the election and you have not done anything in your comments since to show the error of your ways. I'm proud of that, Mr. Speaker. I got up yesterday and I

spoke about the real difficulties facing our livestock industry. Now let me explain this to members opposite. I have no livestock producers—

An Honourable Member: And you never will.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), who was confused for the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) by his colleague, says I never will. Who knows with climate change.

I remind the member opposite and, Mr. Speaker, you may be aware of this, there was an individual in Churchill who actually raised pigs in Churchill for a period of time. What's interesting—*[interjection]* Yes, the polar bears liked that. Long after the pigs were gone, the polar bears still come back to where the pigs used to be, looking, I guess, for a free lunch. That's a true story.

So never underestimate that one of these days northern Manitoba may indeed—thanks to the work of the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) with the northern food program, the Healthy Foods program, we are getting a completely new commitment to market gardens and to agriculture in our own area. By the way, 40 percent of the agricultural reserve land is in northern Manitoba. You know, check it out. There was an agricultural test station in Wabowden for many years. So the member opposite is the Agriculture critic. I look forward to maybe one day, because I get the feeling if he sticks around he may be the critic for Agriculture for a long time, he may be coming north to Thompson to meet with a group of farmers in the next 10 or 20 years as he continues to be a very successful critic in terms of Agriculture. I wish him many years ahead in terms of that.

But, you know, that is the reality of what's happening in this province. It's a dynamic province. It's a changing province.

Now I looked at what the members opposite came up with and I was struck with one thing. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is starting to work in phrases like working families and working people, and I was just waiting for him to launch into "Solidarity Forever" perhaps at the end. I love Tories talking that way, because, you know, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't cut it. People out there know the reality. They know what the Tories stand for.

I want to talk about one issue I'm really proud of, what we've done with the minimum wage. Every year we have raised the minimum wage. We have now just increased it again. But I noticed the

Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) got up and criticized it.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Now I want a bit of a reality check here. Because the economy is booming, have you noticed one thing? You drive by businesses in this province and there is something that didn't exist for many years when the Tories were in power. It's called a Help Wanted sign, a Help Wanted sign. I've got news for members opposite. A lot of businesses are saying we are paying above the minimum wage. In my community right now, I don't know if there is a single employer that's paying the minimum wage. If ever there was a time to raise the minimum wage, it's now when the economy is doing well. We've done it over time. That's fair to small businesses. But, you know, the Member for Morris gets up and criticizes raising the minimum wage. Now what would they do? Would they roll it back? If \$8.50 is too much, \$7.50, \$6.50, \$5.50? I mean, I don't know of members opposite, but they still don't get it on the minimum wage. So don't talk to us about working families. It just doesn't cut it.

Now you talked about special interest budget. The member opposite called it a special interest budget. I'm never sure when members opposite talk about special interests what they think is a special interest. It's not a term I use. It's not a term we use. When we provide support to people in our communities, we don't call it a special interest. Would anybody in here, by the way, think that farmers are a special interest? Well, certainly not on our side. Maybe they think because we put more money into agriculture than they ever did when they were in government that that makes us a special interest party and a special interest government.

What else is special interest, increasing the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit? Are people who are primary caregivers a special interest? I wonder, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, we reduce the personal income tax. Are income tax payers a special interest? Well, I don't know. Property tax credit \$75, again, going up to a \$600 credit. So property tax credit payers, do you own property in this province? I guess they think that's a special interest. How about small business? We reduced the small-business rate. It's going to go to 1 percent by the year 2009. Is that a special interest?

You know, I suspect the next comments I'm going to make probably fit the description more than

that. We understand the needs in our communities. I'm really proud as minister responsible for IGA and responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program. In addition to all the work that we've done in terms of justice, in terms of dealing with crime itself, we're also dealing with the causes of crime. For the first time ever, we have designated funding, half a million dollars for rec directors in our communities, across the province, here in Winnipeg and across the province. You know what? We are going to give kids an alternative, an alternative, and I tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and put it on the record that I don't think there are a heck of a lot of kids in this province that are bad kids, but there are kids, if you ignore them and you don't get in and give them positive alternatives, who will get into trouble. Our goal is to not only deal with crime, but deal with the causes of crime. I wonder if the members will support us on that. Is that a special interest?

* (12:00)

When I look at all the continuing work we're doing in education, yeah, I know members opposite don't like that. I know they sort of have a newfound relationship with retired teachers, but, you know, they have not supported any of the stark increases we put in terms of education. This year, again, we have brought in not only record levels of funding, but, in many school divisions now because of the additional support, we now have tax freezes. Now members opposite wouldn't understand what a tax freeze looked like. They wouldn't recognize it if they tripped over it when it came to property taxes. We saw huge increases, but we put money in it. Does that count as a special interest?

The supports to post-secondary education. I mean, look at it, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have just announced a major capital investment at the University of Manitoba to support the Domino project. We've got record levels of funding across the province and, yes, some of that is going to the University College of the North. We make no apologies for that because we've got 35 members in our caucus and there's not one that doesn't understand the importance of supporting all regions of our province. So call it special interest if you want. I think if you add up all those things I was just talking about and what else there is in the budget, sounds pretty much like the people of Manitoba. That's pretty well everybody in this province; that's governing for the entire province.

I could talk about the continuing progress there is with health, the considerable work we were doing, despite the federal government, in terms of child care. These are huge priorities, but I want to focus on one thing because the member opposite tried to cover up—I noticed he tried a little more uplifting rhetoric than he normally does. I got to say to the member opposite—apparently, he was down there with Obama and with Clinton. You know what? I understand the Tories are easy to spot; they're the ones dressed in blue suits at a Democratic meeting down in the States.

I know a fair bit about American politics. I respect the people of the U.S. They'll make their own democratic decisions, but, somehow, I don't see a lot of similarity between the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the Democratic Party, believe you me. Junior Republicans, maybe. What I find interesting is despite the kind of failed effort to take a few pages out of the uplifting rhetoric—mind you, there aren't too many pages like that in the Tory book right now. He really gave it away. He criticized us for the spending increases. He said that they should be no more than the rate of inflation. He also said there should be, somehow, some priority areas. So what that raises is—and, by the way, this is consistent with their election platforms if you go back to the 2003 election where they're really costed out and others, because what they do, here's the Tory formula: they promise reckless tax breaks. They hope if they get in they can bring them in, and then what happens is they bring in the cuts to public services to try and balance the books after. They blame it on the deficit, not on their actions, on reckless tax credits, tax breaks, but on terms of those cuts. Well, here we see the reality, because, you know, yesterday, they were the friends of the livestock industry. When the vote takes place on the budget, they're essentially going to be voting for an amendment and voting against the budget based on the fact it spends too much money.

I want to put this out as a challenge to members opposite because they all have an opportunity and get up and debate this. What would they cut? They brought in an amendment, right? I didn't hear anything in there. They didn't say they were going to cut health care. They didn't say they were going to cut education. They didn't say they were going to cut transportation. They might take it out of the north, we know that. They didn't say they would oppose the many new taxes initiatives we brought in. I want to put on the record there's another great thing about

Manitobans, they get it. You can't be on both sides. You can't one day call for major new spending and the next day vote against the budget that we feel is balanced, not only a balanced budget, balanced in terms of priorities.

I want to finish by saying this: I'm really proud to be a part of a party that gets one basic fact. That is, if you want to be government in this province, you have to have a vision for all Manitobans. We are a party and a government committed to all Manitobans. That's why I will oppose this amendment, and I will enthusiastically support one more really good NDP, one more really good Manitoba budget. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the robust enthusiasm from the members of my caucus as I begin to debate the amendments that have been put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). I always enjoy hearing the speech from the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It is spring, and it's always a bit like seeing a frozen relic from the past thaw as he comes to give his address here in the Legislature. We probably won't hear from him again until the Throne Speech, I suppose, in the fall as he goes back into the deep freeze at that point. We look forward to that as well because it is always not a lot of substance but certainly a lot of entertainment in the speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that in this particular budget there are a lot of things that we could point to where there were failings and where it fell short. I know that my colleagues will address a number of those different areas, and I will only have the opportunity to address a few.

But, certainly, when we look at the areas of my esteemed friend from the Lac du Bonnet constituency who does a strong job of pointing out the failures in the issue of justice and law and order here in the province of Manitoba, unfortunately, we've received a great deal of attention in the national media, through publications like *Maclean's*, negative publicity about the kind of crime that we have here in our province, and the fact that our citizens don't feel as safe as other citizens in other provinces. I have heard the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) repeatedly, and certainly here today, say that this all revolves around the federal government, that it all revolves around the Criminal Code because the Criminal Code is a national law dealing with

elements of criminal law. In fact, in this case, I would suggest that the Minister of Justice has a point in the sense that, when you look at the Criminal Code overall, it does apply universally through the provinces. So you would think that that's an equitable way to measure how provinces are doing because the Criminal Code applies to every province in Canada, it's then a fair comparison to look at how we're doing versus other provinces in Canada.

We don't stack up very well, Madam Deputy Speaker. We can see that it's only our friends to the west, the good province of Saskatchewan, that is doing slightly worse when it comes to most crime statistics, than we are. The commonality between our provinces, I suppose, is that we both currently have, or have recently had, long-term NDP governments. They are both doing very poorly when it comes to crime under a national Criminal Code system.

We've heard the Minister of Justice talk about, and we've even heard from the Member for Thompson speak about, how we need to look at the root causes of crime. Certainly, members of the Progressive Conservative Party believe that that's an important piece of the puzzle in terms of reducing crime, that you do need to look at the root causes of crime as well. But understand that, when we see that there are 12- and 13-year-olds being charged for very serious criminal offences here in the province of Manitoba, that these young people were three or four years old when this government got elected, they've grown up under this government. So, while they preach about how they're going after the root causes of crime from a very young age, the record shows that it's not true. Young people who were two, three, four years old when this government came to office are now committing crime because their root causes' approach hasn't worked. They've focussed on the wrong things or they're simply saying it in a way to pretend or to convince people that they're making a difference, but truly they're not.

I would like to suggest to the members opposite that they need to look more clearly and more specifically at the issue of drugs in our community. I don't mean the city of Winnipeg; I mean all communities across Manitoba, because there is not a community that's immune to the scourge of drugs. This problem isn't getting better. The problem is, in fact, getting worse. Sometimes individuals will look at communities like Steinbach, or Winkler or Morden that have strong values, very strong communities with very strong families, but even they're not immune to the problems of drugs. There

are many problems with addictions in those communities as well, just as there are in communities like Thompson, just as there are in our major centres like Winnipeg and Brandon.

But we need to look creatively at the solutions. It's not enough to say, well, we're going to give \$50,000 here and \$50,000 there, and try to pretend that you are doing more to treat addictions, Madam Deputy Speaker, because that simply isn't the case.

* (12:10)

I have had the opportunity to travel to other jurisdictions and look at some of the creative ways that they are fighting addiction, and I've spoken to members opposite in the past about therapeutic prisons that they have in certain jurisdictions in the United States and in other parts of the world.

A therapeutic prison, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a place where everyone who's allowed to go to that prison, having been sentenced to a particular sentence for the crime, the non-violent crime that they've committed, is an addict and they've either committed a crime on drugs or they've committed a crime for drugs. They go to that prison to have their treatment done in a 24-hour setting. It's not like what might happen in Headingley, currently, where they go to drug treatment for a small portion of the day and then they go back into the general population where there are people dealing with a lot of different sorts of problems. A therapeutic prison is a 24-hour, all-encompassing treatment facility for those who are dealing with significant addiction so that when they come back on the street, when they come back into our communities, when they are eventually going to be our neighbours again, at some point, they're not still dealing with that addiction, which was truly the root cause of the crime.

I agree with former Chief of Police Jack Ewatski here in the city of Winnipeg when he says that 80 percent of crime in the city of Winnipeg and, I believe, in Manitoba as well is a result of drug addiction. If we don't deal with the drug problem, we'll never be able to fight the crime problem.

So there are creative ways to look at it. I would encourage members opposite to investigate what's going on in Sheridan prison in Sheridan, Illinois, the largest drug therapeutic prison in North America. It's been used as a model for other prisons in North America and, really, around the world to look at the creative things that they are doing. Yes, I understand that that sort of a model is new to Canada. Yes, I

understand that it would be creative and something innovative. But I don't think that Manitoba always has to be the last jurisdiction to adopt something. I don't think that Manitoba always has to be the final province to come on board for something that's working. I think sometimes we can actually lead. I think we can lead.

I believe there was a question about whether or not it's actually working.

An Honourable Member: We're often the first.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says we're often the first and, in some ways, he's correct. We're the first when it comes to violent crime. We're the first when it comes to property crime. We're the first when it comes to many crimes, and I'm glad that the Member for Burrows has recognized that. In fact, I saw a very misleading brochure that the Member for Burrows recently distributed to his constituents saying how the government was cracking down on crime and that crime numbers were actually decreasing, and that sort of propaganda, that sort of misleading propaganda that is distributed by the Member for Burrows and, I suspect, other members of that caucus. Certainly, I know the new Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) during the campaign tried to dismiss the issue of crime.

But I suspect that if they were genuine and would talk to their constituents, those who've had their cars stolen, those who've had their homes broken into, they would find that this is really an issue, that this is a serious issue and that they're not going to convince anybody through their propaganda that they fill the mailboxes with that it's not an issue.

An Honourable Member: Are you running the next campaign?

Mr. Goertzen: Stay tuned.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) continues to point all of the blame and all of the problems here in the province with the federal government. In fact, I don't believe that there's ever been a federal government that's been stronger against crime than the current Conservative government. But they don't do it all on their own, and they will acknowledge that the provinces play a large role in terms of that responsibility, that they have to come forward.

We have a federal government in Ottawa right now that's put forward new resources for police

officers for the province of Manitoba to backfill some of the gap that's happening here in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that they're doing a yeoman's service in trying to reduce crime in this province, and I think that the Minister of Justice needs to come on board and do his fair share as well.

We had the debate here in question period about more officers and the need to support police officers here, both in the city of Winnipeg and, I would say also, right across this province of Manitoba. I don't think that any of us wouldn't lend an encouraging word to the officers and the work that they do each and every day going out to unknown situations, responding to calls where they don't always know the situation that they're going into. I believe that every member of this Legislature believes in the work that our police officers are doing.

But there is a question about the amount of resources, about the number of police officers that we should have in this province. There are two positions that were put on the floor during question period: the position of the New Democrats that believe that a sprinkling of new officers is good enough, and the position of the Liberals that we actually have too many police officers. We reject both of those positions. We say, a pox on both of your houses, Madam Deputy Speaker, because that is not the position that's going to make Manitoba safer. We need a significant increase in the number of officers to ensure that we can get the drugs out of our schools and we can get the criminals off of our streets in all communities.

I know the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) looks in frustration and sort of puffs because he doesn't believe in what I am saying, but I think that, if I would go to the good constituency of Gimli and I would talk to those individuals there, they too would say that we need to have law and order and safety in our community and this needs to be a priority.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So I congratulate the federal government for putting the resources into the new RCMP officers here in Manitoba, but we need a provincial government that's going to stand up and do the same.

For my friend—and I do consider him a friend—the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), whom I more often than not agree with on certain issues, but not always, I would say that his position is incorrect on this one. We do need more police officers here in the province of Manitoba. In fact, he could do some

service to this Legislature to continue to talk to his federal friends in Ottawa who continue to stall legislation, who continue to ensure that there isn't good crime-fighting legislation. Where there is responsibility for the federal government, it is not getting through the House, it is not getting through the Senate, in a timely fashion. I would encourage him to speak to his Liberal colleagues there. *[interjection]* Well, he says it's been done, so I guess that either means that sooner we're going to see quick movement within the federal Liberal Party.

I'm sure that Mr. Dion is quickly addressing the issues in Ottawa to get the legislation through now that he's had the encouragement from the Member for Inkster. Really, when you look at the position, both of the federal and now the provincial Liberals on crime, it is a bit of a two-headed horse. You can saddle it up and run it in either direction, but the reality is you need to stand for something when it comes to law and order.

You need to determine what it is that you're going to believe in. We believe that more resources for police officers are an important part, not the only part, but it certainly is an important part of solving the overall crime agenda. But not to the sprinkling of the NDP; not to the little bit of police officers here where we don't fill the positions or a little bit of police officers there. It really is a significant increase of police officers and other law enforcement officials right across the board.

I want to speak about a couple of the initiatives within my own area that need addressing within the constituency of Steinbach and a little broader within the region as well, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at a budget, when you look at whether or not a budget is good for a person's community, I think what's prudent to do is to take the needs of that community, put it on one side of the column and take the needs or take the actual budget on the other side and see if those issues are going to be addressed.

So, when I looked at this budget, I didn't see that the need for a new lagoon in the community of Mitchell was actually going to be addressed. That's a community that isn't able to grow anymore, hasn't been able to grow for a year because they don't have the facility. They've come to the government and said, we are a community that's stagnant now. We can't grow because of the lack of this facility, and yet this government hasn't come on board and this

budget doesn't give them any indication that it's going to change.

The need for mental health-care facilities within the southeast region, a crisis stabilization unit, this budget said nothing about ensuring that facility gets put into place.

There is the need for new operating rooms at the Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach that are so old that the doctors say that if somebody actually inspected it, they'd probably shut them down. That hasn't been addressed in this budget, and I suspect that under this government, if any past indications are any indication of future actions, it's not going to be addressed.

The roads in the riding, really throughout the southeast, are crumbling. I remember the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) who in the 1990s said that, if they ever reach government, they wouldn't have to put a nickel into roads in southern Manitoba because those people really didn't need it. Those were the words of the Member for The Pas. If one promise was kept by this government, it was probably that promise, and I say shame on this government for ignoring such a significant part of this province.

The need for doctors in our region. We have two doctors who are leaving the Steinbach region in about a month and a half. They've announced that; it's become public. That's going to leave 3,000 to 4,000 people, many with young families, who aren't going to be able to access doctors in that region.

* (12:20)

Of course, there is the hog industry, which we've already discussed and which we've already talked about. That's just in the area that I represent, but, truly, throughout the region there are many other issues.

My colleague and my friend the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) raised the issue of the Letellier Bridge and the fact that that community doesn't have access on both points of the river because of the inability of this government to decide that they are going to replace that bridge so that all people in that area can access the region in a reasonable fashion.

My colleague from Springfield, on many times in this House, has talked about the need to have bridges upgraded in his area so that they aren't considered a safety concern and to ensure that they're there for the safety of all members.

Certainly, I've discussed issues in La Verendrye, in particular in Falcon Lake where they don't have ambulance service and we've worked with members of that community to try to bring issues here to the Legislature to ensure that ambulance service is provided to Falcon Lake and, really, that there is good coverage for all the members of La Verendrye across that region.

Their own minister, the current Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux), has decided he doesn't want to meet with them. He won't meet with those residents. I'm certainly willing to meet with them and to try to work towards a solution for their area because their minister won't do that.

We've heard from the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who, on many occasions in this area, raised the need for new roads in his region. That's an important part of our province. We need to ensure that the residents of the Lac du Bonnet constituency are getting that infrastructure that they deserve as well.

Finally, my colleague for the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) just recently raised the issue of the hog barns on the colonies in her area. They're looking to do some expansion, and now because of the moratorium those plans not only are put on hold, but, really, the future and the livelihood of that colony is put at stake because of the decisions of this government.

So, when you look throughout the entire southeast region from Lac du Bonnet down to Steinbach, across to Emerson, you see that there are a number of different concerns—good industrious people in the region who are working each and every day to try to better our province, but who aren't finding satisfaction from this government, generally, but from this budget in particular.

When I will talk to these individuals over the course of the next few months, they'll be asking me, well, what is it in the budget that's going to improve the hospitals in Bethesda? What is it in the budget that's going to ensure that we have full ambulance coverage in Falcon Lake? What is it in the budget to ensure that roads are improved throughout the region in areas like Lac du Bonnet and in southern parts of the region? What is it in the budget to ensure that producers in the area of Morris are going to be able to have the expansion that they're looking for in their industry, and what is it in the budget that's going to ensure that the residents of Springfield also get attention that they deserve on their bridges?

So there are a number of unanswered questions because of this budget. It's not a budget that we can support because it, ultimately, doesn't meet the individual needs of Manitobans directly.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from other members of this Legislature on the shortfalls of this budget, and I would hope that this would be something that would be addressed by the members opposite, by the members of the government and we can move forward with a budget that's more acceptable to all Manitobans. Thank you very much.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I will be speaking and voting against the amendment by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I will be speaking and voting in favour of the budget motion.

It's always interesting following the Member for Steinbach because he gives some people here so much to comment on in rebuts. I'll keep that part brief, but, you know, being in the official opposition you have the luxury of having your cake and eating it too or at least wanting to or, as we used to say, being on the side of the angels. I certainly know what that's like because I spent nine long years in opposition, and I can't imagine how depressing it must be to spend 12 years in opposition.

In fact, I ran into a former Conservative Cabinet minister, and I won't quote his name because I wouldn't want to embarrass him, or the opposition, but it was rather interesting because he said that he thought that our government was good for at least another two terms. So I can't imagine what it would be like to be in official opposition for 16 years or 20 years. I mean, just the prospect of that would make some people want to resign and take up the profession of law, which they're currently studying, and have a real career and make some real money, rather than spending another eight years in opposition after the next election.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to make the mistake of being arrogant or taking the opposition for granted because one should never underestimate the opposition or the Opposition Leader because anything can happen, and I've been there. My party went from government after the 1986 election, the third party in 1988, and I was part of that. I was a candidate in 1988, and I remember it well. The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) remembers it well because that was when he was first elected. He won a seat from the NDP and we

lost many seats to the Liberals. Then we won most of them back. We're still working on Inkster; we're still working on River Heights.

So the lesson is, Mr. Speaker, that you should never take the current situation for granted. You should always work hard. We do. We get up every day and work hard in behalf of all Manitobans, which, I think, is one of the things that distinguishes us from our opposition. My colleague the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talked about the diversity in our caucus which we're very proud of. By comparison, the official opposition had some diversity, but they got rid of their one minority member and got somebody else—

An Honourable Member: He just misses Denis. That's all.

Mr. Martindale: Well, we do miss Denis Rocan. He was a very interesting source of information and sometimes entertainment, and he did some good things like bringing in the bill to ban smoking in bars and restaurants. We're grateful for that. I think all members appreciate that. Even the official opposition supported that, eventually. They came around. So sometimes individual members can do some good things, even in opposition. Even when they're offside with their party and their leader, good things can happen.

Now, this budget has so many good things in it that I couldn't possibly talk about all of them, so I'm going to have to be very selective. But I'm proud to be in a government that produces good budgets like this and has an excellent Minister of Finance that is doing progressive and good things for all Manitobans.

I'd like to begin with what Budget 2008 means for you and your family. The first item is a new Primary Caregiver Tax Credit to provide eligible Manitobans \$85 per month up to \$1,020 per year for primary caregivers. I think this is a very good example of how when we hear things in the community and concerns that people have, we listen and we respond in our budget or in our Throne Speech. Many times I've heard people who are looking after other family members, particularly elderly family members, saying, I had to quit my job to look after an elderly parent, or I'm spending every waking hour outside my job looking after an elderly person or someone that needs care in their family, but I'm not getting paid for it. Now, if the government had to do it, they'd have to hire a lot more home care, or if they'd have to hire home care

in the first place, it would actually cost the government a lot more money, so why don't we get some credit? Why don't we get an honorarium, even a token amount, because this is not really an hourly amount, this is a monthly amount? It's a recognition that there was a need and that we are honouring that and we are compensating people. So I think this is a good, new policy, new budget announcement that we can be proud of.

Budget 2008 increases the education property tax credit by \$75 to \$600, saving Manitobans an additional \$24.5 million annually. I would have to say that this is another area where we've listened to the public because people have concerns about education property taxes and so we are reducing their taxes through a provincial credit.

Budget 2008 provides funding for more prosecutors and 20 more police this year toward 100 more police positions over the next four years. We have been doing this repeatedly in our budgets. You know, the public understands that the kind of law-and-order fix that the opposition wants and which the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) just talked about and which was very prominent in the

Conservative campaign, that their law-and-order platform only has one leg. People know that combatting crime is not that simplistic, that if all it took was putting more people in jail to make society safer, people might buy into that, but they're not going to. A good example of that is a study that came out recently by the Pew Center in the United States. I happened to be visiting my wife's relatives in Georgia when this study came out. It talked about how one out of every 100 Americans is in jail—the highest ratio of any country in the world. Of black Americans, one out of nine males between 18 and 25 is in jail. Now, if putting more people in jail made countries and communities safer, then the United States should be the safest country in the world, but it's not. Why is that? Because people get out of jail, because people, when they're in jail, learn more about how to commit crimes. So we need recreation—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have 23 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 11, 2008

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Budget Hawranik; Chomiak	560
Bill 224—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats) Gerrard	553	Child and Family Services Act Briese; Mackintosh	561
Bill 15—The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act Rondeau	553	Country-of-Origin Labelling Eichler; Wowchuk	562
Petitions		Police Services Lamoureux; Chomiak	562
Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry Lamoureux	553	Members' Statements	
Power Line Development Pedersen	553	International Day for the Elimination of Racism Saran	564
Personal Care Homes—Virden Maguire	554	Inaugural Osborne House Breakfast Driedger	564
Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment Schuler	555	Outstanding Principal Awards Braun	565
Long-Term Care Facility—Morden Dyck	555	David Robert Blake Rowat	565
Neepawa, Minnedosa and Areas—Local Hospitals Briese	555	Battle of Vimy Ridge Memorial Altemeyer	566
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Manitoba Hydro McFadyen; Doer	556	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Budget Debate (Second Day of Debate)	
		McFadyen	566
		Ashton	573
		Goertzen	577
		Martindale	581

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