

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 210—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (Harassment in the Workplace)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 210, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (Harassment in the Workplace); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail (harcèlement dans le lieu de travail), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Bill 210 provides anti-bullying measures to apply in public and private sector workplaces in order to achieve an improved workplace environment for workers and for employers. It is appropriate that this bill is introduced close to International Women's Day because women are disproportionately targets of bullying in the workplace, and this bill will be of particular benefit to working women.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 23—The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des collectivités et des quartiers, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill strengthens the act to also allow premises to be shut down for such ongoing dangerous and negative uses as meth labs and other drug production, illegal, restricted or prohibited weapon and explosive storage or stockpiles, what I would call grooming houses where children are sexually exploited and, of course, Mr.

Speaker, does not target unregistered rifles or shotguns that are otherwise legal. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by: Lawrence Hauber, Cheryl Hauber and Ken Wedge and many, many others.

* (13:35)

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

Highway 10

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

A number of head-on collisions, as well as fatal accidents, have occurred on Highway 10.

Manitobans have expressed increasing concern about the safety of Highway 10, particularly near the two schools in Forrest where there are no road crossing safety devices to ensure student safety.

Manitobans have indicated that the deplorable road condition and road width is a factor in driver and vehicle safety.

It is anticipated that there will be an increased flow of traffic on this highway in the future.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider providing sufficient resources to enhance driver and vehicle safety on Highway 10.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider upgrading Highway 10.

This petition is signed by Katie Wozney, Brenda Shoemaker, Amanda Swair and many, many others.

Funding for New Cancer Drugs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of the disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide

these leading edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by Don Campbell, Robert Cassels, Vic Savelsbergh and many, many others.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from the River West Park School 20 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Jennifer Saunders. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Services Interfacility Transfers

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Under this Doer NDP government, doctors are leaving, emergency rooms are closed and hallway medicine has become highway medicine. Manitoba patients are being shipped on the province's crumbling roads to access health care services. To add insult to injury, these patients are then being sent ambulance bills for hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars.

My question is to the Premier. He is the one who is responsible and he is the one who is accountable for this crisis in the rural health care system. When will he stop offloading his failures onto the backs of

Manitoba patients? Mr. Speaker, when will this Premier stop treating our rural citizens as second-class citizens in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the members opposite brought in a specific health care user fee for northern people only. In fact, they said, quote: They did not vote the right way. We eliminated that two-class of Manitoban here in this province.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the question clearly is about interfacility transfer payments. It is interesting that it was this Premier's own Minister of Health who called the practice of billing patients for interfacility ambulance transfers, and I quote the minister, he called them stupid.

Mr. Speaker, this government committed nearly six months ago to change those rules and yet, as we have seen in so many instances, they have done nothing. Broken promises do not pay ambulance bills.

Mr. Speaker, when will this Premier stop treating rural citizens like second-class citizens and fully fund interfacility ambulance transfers? When is he going to do it?

Mr. Doer: Moving on to the lack of ambulance services in rural Manitoba, I would point out that there is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Well, maybe the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) might have raised it in his caucus when they delegated the issue of billing of ambulances to the rural health authorities that they had established under their administration. Number one, there is a lot of required—*[interjection]*

Well, the Member for Minnedosa (Ms. Rowat) might look at the new ambulances that are parked in the garage, something that did not happen when she was in office, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The challenge for rural health care is, first of all, being dealt with increased numbers of students in medical school and increased numbers of doctors in rural Manitoba. Not enough and not in all the right places, but I believe

there are over 65 additional doctors in rural Manitoba.

Secondly, we have introduced not only a nurses' training program, but a nursing training program that is targeted for rural and northern nurses which we think is also very important, something not introduced by members opposite.

Thirdly, diagnostic equipment and operating rooms in Steinbach, Selkirk, Thompson, The Pas, Mr. Speaker, and many other facilities. I know you cannot handle the truth.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order and just in response to what the Premier's last comment was. Indeed, we could handle the truth if he could find the way to tell the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the point of order is with regard to relevance to the question that was asked. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) asked the question about interfacility transfers. This is a very, very important issue to rural Manitobans. Manitobans today in the rural part of this province have to pay the cost for being transferred from their hospitals which have been closed by this administration. The cost is not now the public cost, indeed, it has become the cost of the individual.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question that the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) himself acknowledged was a policy that was stupid, and those are his words. Six months ago he said that they were going to fix it.

We are asking the Premier today about that specific question. I ask the Premier then to sort of answer that question more specifically than just railing on about other issues.

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

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of pieces in the preamble and statements made by members opposite that I was addressing. Yes, there was a specific question on ambulance services, and I had not completed a) my second answer, and, b) I

anticipate a third question on it which I will continue to try to attempt to answer the questions.

I think the point of order is totally out of order, Mr. Speaker, and we should allow the question and answers to continue. I am quite confident in the answers we have because I am very confident in the long-term plan to reinstate better services for Manitobans living in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. At this point it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister still has the floor and the honourable First Minister to continue to conclude your comments.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we did announce 163 new ambulances that is now contained in the budget as a third year. Those ambulances have much greater capacity to deal with medical emergencies with communication systems back and forth to emergency doctors in rural Manitoba. Secondly, the new dispatch unit that is crucial to a better system in Manitoba has been approved and is being constructed in the city of Brandon. Thirdly, we committed in our Speech from the Throne to proceed with a rate that is fair between all Manitobans, including rural Manitobans, and we are committed to doing that.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the challenge they have in rural Manitoba is the arrogance of this Premier. That is the problem with health care in Manitoba.

Under this NDP Premier, rural Manitobans have seen their health care services erode. Eleven emergency rooms throughout rural Manitoba are currently closed. Many doctors are leaving, some are experiencing temporary closures in their emergency rooms and along with that, they are seeing reduced hours.

For the past seven years, rural Manitobans have witnessed this Premier turn their backs on their health care services, Mr. Speaker. When will this Premier stop stalling? When will he get his head out of the sand and do something with respect to rural health care in Manitoba and fund interfacility transfers?

Mr. Doer: In our Speech from the Throne, we stated that as part of our long-term plan to reinstate better services for rural Manitobans we would have a

universal rate for ambulance treatment in Manitoba—*[interjection]* Well, Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite do not want to debate the budget, but I would point out that we have a number of issues dealing with the budget and ambulance services in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, 1) more ambulances, 165, that is part of the plan; 2) the whole issue of the dispatch unit; 3) more diagnostic equipment including an MRI in Brandon, in rural Manitoba; and, 4) a universal issue of ambulance fees. We are going to, in this session of the Legislature, reverse the unfair practices that were put in place by the previous government. That is a commitment we made to Manitobans and that is a commitment we are going to keep.

Herceptin Funding Approval

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): In July of last year the Minister of Health made a recommendation to the Province's drug review committee to fast track its approval of the breast cancer drug Herceptin. Yet, eight months later, Mr. Speaker, Herceptin has still not been approved for funding.

Why does the Minister of Health continue to stall on the approval of this lifesaving drug for many Manitobans?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the member's information, Herceptin has been an approved drug for primary applications since 1992 in this province, and it has been approved since last summer for Agilent therapy for women, who have approximately 20 percent of breast cancer cases, who have the HER receptor and, therefore, can be helped by Herceptin. It is being administered on a case-by-case basis and has been administered since last summer. The member's information, as usual, is wrong.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is, in fact, wrong. What is happening right now is that CancerCare Manitoba is having to make up for the extra funding for Herceptin because the government has not come through for that funding. I would suggest that the Minister of Health check his facts.

In July of last year the Minister of Health said, and I quote, "I expect, as has been the case in the rest of Canada, that the committee will make the recommendation that the drug should be made available." When will the government begin

covering the cost of Herceptin properly and fully and even partially for Manitoba breast cancer patients?

Mr. Sale: Well, I am glad the member has corrected the perception that she attempted to leave that women are not receiving this lifesaving therapy where their genetic makeup makes it an appropriate drug.

If we were able to proceed to the debate of the budget, the member would find what is being provided for CancerCare Manitoba and she would find what additional wait list and other strategy measures are being proposed. We would have the opportunity in the debate process to answer any questions she might have in this regard, but let me assure Manitobans, Herceptin is being prescribed on a case-by-case basis as women's needs are appropriate to that particular drug's efficacy.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I do not need to have to wait until Estimates to ask questions about funding for cancer drugs in Manitoba. I am asking it in Question Period today, and I would like an answer from the Minister of Health, something he seems reluctant to offer.

Mr. Speaker, at a time of unprecedented increases in transfer payments from the federal government for health care, will the minister approve today the \$12 million for CancerCare Manitoba that they have been asking for and that the minister has refused to help provide these lifesaving drugs for Manitoba patients?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me reiterate that we have been working with CancerCare Manitoba since last summer on the question of the new and very expensive drugs, including Avastin and Herceptin. Not all provinces and, in fact, to date, not any provinces are covering Avastin, with the possible exception of British Columbia. In the area of Herceptin, most provinces are doing what we are doing and that is approving it as a new therapy on a case-by-case basis. Thirdly, our health care system is responsive and flexible, and when there is a need for something to happen, whether it is neurosurgery, heart surgery or cancer therapy, our system responds and the funding issues will be dealt with. If they would like to get at the budget, I would be glad to do that.

* (13:50)

Pharmacare Deductible Increase

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, once again, this NDP government is targeting seniors and low-income Manitobans. For the fifth consecutive year, this NDP government has increased the Pharmacare deductible by almost up to 25 percent.

My question to the Minister responsible for Seniors (Ms. Oswald): Why is she, again, focussing seniors and low-income Manitobans to choose between either milk or medicine?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, our Pharmacare program remains one of the fairest and one of the most comprehensive in the country. We cover 44 percent of all pharmaceuticals that are dispensed in the province of Manitoba, second only to Ontario at 45 percent.

The Canadian Diabetes Association has recognized Manitoba, in particular, as having the best coverage for diabetes supplies. We have had letters of support and thanks from the Multiple Sclerosis Society. We run a very fair program based on the needs of Manitobans and on their ability to continue to make Pharmacare accessible and affordable for all of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reimer: The budget that was introduced on Monday really revealed the government's true intentions. At the same time, this government then went out and crowed about its \$9-tax cut to seniors; \$9, two and a half cents per day. Two and a half cents per day, that is what the seniors got as a tax cut. They increased their deductible by \$72. That is a great advantage living in Manitoba.

If that is what the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) thinks is a fair advantage, then I think he has it wrong. Why are they doing this on the backs of seniors?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to forget that that was the government that cut the property tax credits. We have added \$250 back to the property tax credits.

We have lifted the ceiling on property tax credits for seniors up to over \$800. We have reduced the ESL for seniors and people living in their homes. We have reduced taxes for seniors and people living in their homes. We have increased the non-refundable tax credits which also applies to seniors.

In Manitoba, being a senior citizen in this province is one of the most affordable propositions in the country with one of the best Pharmacare programs in the country. The members opposite know it, we know it as well, and so do the seniors know.

*(13:55)

Mr. Reimer: Unfortunately, there are a lot of seniors in this province who are earning less than \$20,000 a year. The savings that are being realized by this government, that they are crowing about, is \$9. Mr. Speaker, \$9, two and a half cents per day, that is what they are saving. Now they are increasing the deductible on a lot of those seniors who are making less than \$20,000. They are increasing by up to \$72 per year.

What kind of an advantage is that for the seniors living in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, people earning \$20,000 in Manitoba, we have taken them off the tax rolls and they do not pay any taxes. If the member would take the trouble to read the budget, on page D11, we do analysis for what the benefits have been for seniors. A senior couple at \$30,000 in this budget has saved 93 percent of the taxes they paid in 1999 through the reductions we have made. We have made the cost of living for seniors much more affordable in this province. We will continue to make sure they have a decent quality of life with good health care coverage and good access to health care at a very affordable price.

Budget Economic Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister's own advertisement in the newspapers on the budget claims that the Manitoba economy outpaced the national average.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why should Manitobans believe this wild guess when the NDP has produced the only economy in Canada that has grown below the national average for each of the last five years?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thought the member would at least get up and apologize for the horrendous 'Hawranomics' that we had yesterday in this House where, when after the economy grew \$12 billion, he figured out in his weird and wonderful way that that was a tax increase. The economy grew \$12 billion. The

economy, by the external forecast, outpaced the Canadian average last year. It remains one of the most diverse economies in the country, but for the problems that were experienced in agriculture has done extremely well. The manufacturing sector will grow by 64 percent this year.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the only person who should apologize to this House is the Minister of Finance. I refer the Minister of Finance to page A4 of the 2006 budget papers. The minister states that in 2005 the Manitoba economy grew equal to the growth of the economy in Canada. In direct contradiction the minister's propaganda indicates the Manitoba economy grew at a rate above the national average.

I ask the Minister of Finance this: Which of his wild guesses is right? Did growth in the Manitoba economy exceed the national average or did it equal the national average? Is his budget wrong or is his publicly-funded propaganda wrong? Which is it?

Mr. Selinger: The member is astounding. If he would get his year right, he might get the number right that goes with the year.

Here are some examples of how we are performing above the national economy. Average weekly earnings in Manitoba are up 3.7 percent; in Canada, they are up 3.1 percent. Business wage settlements in Manitoba are 2.7 percent; in Canada, 2.6 percent. Business bankruptcies down 16 percent; in Canada, down only 7 percent. Exports to the U.S. up 5.3 percent; in the rest of Canada, up only 4.2 percent. I will save further information for the next question from the member opposite.

*(14:00)

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, more propaganda from the Minister of Finance. Clearly, if the advertisement placed by the Finance Minister is wrong, the minister should place another ad to admit he was wrong. If the budget is wrong then all of his numbers in the budget cannot be relied upon.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will you admit your mistake in the advertisement or will you admit your mistake in the budget? Which is it?

Mr. Selinger: You know, for a guy who makes a \$9.5 billion error on the net debt and then interprets \$12 billion growth as a tax increase, I cannot believe he can stand up there and keep a straight face, which he cannot. He is grinning right now.

Now, to continue with the statistics, Mr. Speaker, retail trade grew 6.5 percent in Manitoba. It only grew 6.1 percent in Canada. Another really interesting statistic, unemployment down to 4.3 percent in Manitoba, but at 6.6 percent in Canada. More people working, wages growing faster and the economies are growing. The only thing that is shrinking is your ability to get the facts right.

Maple Leaf Distillers MIOP Loan

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Well, Mr. Speaker, only the NDP crowd could applaud the Finance Minister who has created the largest debt in the recent history of this province. My question is for the minister who has been helping him, the Minister of Industry.

This side of the House, Mr. Speaker, has been demanding some accountability from this government on the Crocus file. Last night, I heard hundreds of Crocus shareholders worrying about some accountability, worrying about their retirement and wanting to know if there was any possibility that there would be a public inquiry to hold someone accountable for what has happened on that file.

Mr. Speaker, we heard their angst and their anger, but it is becoming increasingly evident that the taxpayer is going to be on the hook to clean up behind this government. In December, through Freedom of Information, we asked the status of Maple Leaf Distillers and their MIOP loan.

The Minister of Industry, first of all, he delayed, then he denied and then eventually it became evident that we are going to be, as taxpayers, probably on the hook for about \$700,000. Will this minister explain how he got to this state on that MIOP loan?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the MIOP loans when they are conducted they have appropriate due diligence. In the past, that has happened and we will continue to do that. Under the Filmon government, in fact, under Shamray there was \$7 million invested by the Province under the former government. Shamray is now involved in a \$50-million fraud case.

The Tories were satisfied when the Auditor went and conducted an investigation. That was sent to the RCMP for charges and now there is a fraud case in front of the court. That was appropriate under the former government and what we followed up on is appropriate now. The only inconsistency is the

members opposite who continue to flip-flop between what is appropriate behaviour, what is just and what is right.

Crocus Investment Fund MIOP-related Loans

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): What is just and right is a public inquiry to know where you are wasting the money and interfering.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely insulting that this Minister of Industry would talk about what is appropriate when all we get out of him is a history lesson and no facts, no information, no accountability. He should be walking down there to his Premier (Mr. Doer) and turning in his resignation.

On January 26, the member of the department indicated that he was not sure how many other Crocus-related loans may have MIOP implications. Does this minister know?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the MIOP loan program as was provided, all the loans have been currently provided to the members opposite under Freedom of Information, as per their request.

What we have done under the MIOP program is focussed on developing and growing the economy. I would remind members opposite that under their MIOP program it cost or lost \$39 million. Under our government, it earned \$187,000. We have set up a system to manage and prudently invest. Under yours it lost \$39 million. We need no lessons from the members opposite.

Public Inquiry

Mr. Cummings: Well, it is obvious this minister is not prepared to give his resignation. I would hope the Premier is seriously considering asking for it.

Mr. Speaker, the question to this minister is the simple fact that he has left a trail of inept management and financial turmoil in his department. They participated in the fraud at Crocus, and they have created a horror of inaction on the part of this minister. The Premier has created a trail of inaction, as a matter of fact, and every time he is asked for a public inquiry he passes it off.

We are now seeing the potential terrorization of the taxpayer. Mr. Speaker. When can we expect a public inquiry?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about fraud. If you look at the fraud, you look at CalWest, an investment that was made under the former government. It does happen time after time that there may be a case where you do the due diligence, but in the case there may be some defrauded incidences.

Last month there was a criminal trial on charges. It was for CalWest Textiles. It was defrauded under the MIOP program on three loans. The loans were made in the 1990s with \$3.2 million under the former government's watch. These loans had to be written off.

There has been a court case, a fraud court case that was conducted just recently. These loans were written and signed off by Minister Stefanson and Minister Downey. The loans had due diligence, they had fraud and the appropriate action occurred. They went to the RCMP for charges and went forward without political interference.

Viewpoints Research Government Contracts

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Yesterday in the House this NDP government confirmed Viewpoints Research conducted political polling of government employees. Specifically they asked who they are going to vote for in the next provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned that Viewpoints Research recently acquired three contracts from the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission. These three contracts amounted to over \$35,000. Can the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission advise the House of the nature of these contracts? Furthermore, can he confirm or deny if any of these surveys or survey questions were political in nature?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I can inform this House that the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is one of the best run corporations this province has ever seen. The CEO and the administrative staff at the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission do an absolutely wonderful job for this province. Year over year over year they have run that corporation with diligence, under our watch, and certainly with them they continue to grow and put money back into the provincial economy. I can tell you every single contract done through the

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is done with diligence and the proper procedures.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, given the actions of this Doer government, Manitobans have a right to be cynical.

My supplementary question is further to Viewpoints. We have learned that Viewpoints Research has acquired a contract from Manitoba Public Insurance to a value of nearly \$100,000. Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance advise the House of the nature of that particular contract? Furthermore, will he confirm or deny if any of those questions were political in nature?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, MPI follows a very strict procedure in terms of letting contracts, and contracts in the type that are described by the member opposite and that is a well-established practice. They are an excellent corporation that pays particular attention to how they deal with matters like that.

Mr. Cullen: The Auditor General recently reported on the conflicting nature of the players in Crocus and the number of public entities in Manitoba. A public inquiry is the only way to address these questions. We have also learned that Viewpoints Research has acquired a five-year contract with the Workers Compensation Board. This particular contract is valued at \$500,000.

Can the minister responsible for Workers Compensation give us an update on the nature of this conflict? Furthermore, are any of these surveys or survey questions political in nature?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): We were in Public Accounts with the member opposite when he asked these questions of the CEO of the Workers Compensation Board. Those are the appropriate people to answer those questions, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to remind members opposite that yesterday was International Women's Day, and we paid tribute to women in this province. I think that women should be able to run their businesses in this province regardless of who they are married to.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, last night my leader and I attended the meeting where we saw hundreds of Crocus shareholders, individuals that believed in Manitoba at one time to the degree that they invested hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars. Because of government neglect and incompetence, tremendous amounts of money have been lost. At that meeting, I was circulating a petition asking people to get involved. All I had to do was say public inquiry and they were literally pulling envelopes out of my hand because they want a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, out of all the 250-plus people that I personally met only one said no to a public inquiry, and he might be related to the government in some way, who knows. The shareholders of our province, the people that care for our province, want a public inquiry.

Why will the Premier (Mr. Doer) not call a public inquiry?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, all points that needed to be dealt with have been dealt with. The Auditor had unfettered access to all the records of Crocus. He conducted a public, 245-page report which had 120 recommendations which were public.

We have sent all legal matters to the RCMP, which is appropriate. We have sent all the cases of the Manitoba Securities Commission to the Manitoba Securities Commission for appropriate disposition. CCRA and other regulators have been sent the appropriate information. These are all public institutions that are responsible to the public. They have the professionals to react to the situation and they will conduct the investigations and proceed as they see fit without political interference.

Mr. Lamoureux: The Crocus shareholders and Manitobans do not want to hear from a government lackey on this issue, Mr. Speaker. I am looking at the Premier and I want the Premier to stand up and tell this House: What is he doing to protect the interests of the Crocus shareholders?

Those Crocus shareholders last night want a government who cares about the Crocus Fund. They want to see action and they want to get to the bottom of this, Mr. Speaker. They want to understand what the government did and did not do that caused them

to lose millions of dollars. They have a right to know. My question and challenge to this Premier is to do what is right and call a public inquiry today.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Manitoba, when it established the Crocus Fund in 1992 and '93, made it very clear that this would be an agency similar to or an investment fund sponsored by labour under law that would be administered in a way that was outside of the decision making in government.

In fact, the prospectus states and I do not know whether the member has ever read a prospectus before, but the prospectus states: None of the security administrators or any department or agency of the government has assessed the merits of an investment in the fund. The security administrators and government make no recommendation concerning such an investment and assume no liability or obligation to any investor of the fund.

Mr. Speaker, if we had broken that law we would be before the Manitoba Securities Commission. We did not break the law. We followed the law.

Mr. Lamoureux: It is not good enough. This Premier, Mr. Speaker, is not meeting the needs of this—

An Honourable Member: It is good enough for us.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. The Premier is not listening to what everyone wants. You have both opposition parties, you have the independent media outlets, you have shareholders, you have Manitobans as a whole; all of them want to get the truth. They want to know what actually has taken place and the only way we are going to know that is if this Premier gathers enough courage and calls for a public inquiry.

If he wants to have an easier legislative agenda, if he wants to be able to do more things, he has to recognize that Manitobans deserve a public inquiry. There is going to be a lot of due diligence inside this Chamber because we are doing what Manitobans want. We want this Premier to call a public inquiry. When are you going to do that, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier?

Mr. Doer: We always do what is right, not what is easy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in 2001, we changed The Auditor General Act to allow the

Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature, to be able to go in and investigate loans, direct and indirect grants to any company.

When Crocus challenged the right of the Auditor General to go in and look at the books, under the new power we backed up the Auditor General to let that individual go in because we believe everyone, including the government, should be held accountable and the Auditor General did so in the report, Mr. Speaker.

Advanced Education Government Initiatives

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, given the importance of retaining the best and the brightest of our students, can the Minister of Advanced Education and Training inform the House of the recent initiatives in that area?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address this question with our latest initiative announced yesterday. The Manitoba Graduate Scholarship has risen to \$135 million. It will allow us to support 65 master's students, 45 Ph.D. students. It will keep Manitobans here, attract talented students from elsewhere, encourage research and prepare Manitobans for a knowledge-based economy. This is good news for all of Manitoba.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Premier of this province is the only person who can call for a public inquiry into the events of Crocus so that all Manitobans could have those many unanswered questions finally answered.

Mr. Speaker, last night the investors in Crocus were together. They are resolved to have a public inquiry into this matter and they are united. A survey was done, and, I believe, 71 percent of the people who were surveyed, indeed, asked for a public inquiry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is it that this Premier is hiding? Why is he stalling? Why is he not doing the right thing that is being asked of him by Manitobans, to call a public inquiry to clear the air with regard to Crocus? If he has nothing to hide, if his ministers have nothing to hide, then call the public inquiry.

* (14:20)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again when you look at the 1998 Auditor General's report, the report is very consistent with Clayton Manness's statement in the House that this fund would be managed by people outside of government and not by civil servants. The Auditor General reported to this Legislature in 1998 that this fund is to be operated in an arm's-length way from the government in a similar nature as a mutual fund. We operated completely within the bounds of the law and completely consistent with the prospectus.

We, further, because of our concerns about MIOP loans, passed a law to allow for the Auditor General to follow the money. The old laws did not allow the Auditor General to follow the money. In fact, the old laws of Elections Manitoba did not allow Elections Manitoba to follow the money, or in the case of members opposite, follow the lost cheques. We have amended those acts under Monnin, post-Monnin. We amended that legislation to deal with post-Elections Manitoba's power to follow money and that led to convictions in 1999.

We have also allowed the Auditor General to follow the money. That is why we have a 145-page report with a number of recommendations in the report. We also had the Auditor General before the Public Accounts Committee. For the first time ever, we had deputy ministers before the Public Accounts Committee. The Auditor General stated, and I quote: That he would expect that people would and government would respect the audited financial statements of organizations. We obviously respected the audited financial statements of Crocus, as did many other entities.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Landslide (Philippines)

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to inform this House about the tragic events that took place in the Philippines last month. On February 17, an enormously powerful landslide swept over Guinsaigon, located in the southern part of Leyte, Philippines.

A small farming village in the south of the Philippines, Guinsaigon was pelted by heavy rains for two weeks before the landslide. With residents returning to their community following several days of sunny weather, a flood of mud, earth and rocks rushed down on the village, covering it in 10 metres

of debris, and while the hunt for survivors continued unabated the vast majority of the town's residents seem to have been lost to the terrible surge.

Mr. Speaker, the response from Manitoba's Filipino community was immediate. A relief fund, quickly organized by the Philippine Disaster Relief Committee of Manitoba, helped ensure that survivors had access to those basic services that were most needed. The committee members were: co-chaired by Lindy Cantiveros, Lito Taruc; vice-chaired by Fred De Villa; secretary Perla Javate; treasurer, Nap Eborra. The members are Pastor Fred Sebastian, Robert Viray, Li Buenaventura, Tess Dizon, Rey Ar Reyes and Dr. Roland Guzman. To contribute to this global relief effort, the provincial government donated \$100,000 towards aiding those survivors on the ground in the Philippines.

I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible efforts made by the search teams in Guinsaugon, who worked tirelessly to aid those trapped by the landslide. I also want to commend and thank the Manitoba Filipino community for its organized response to this crisis. Above all, I ask that all members join me in a moment of reflection for all the residents of Guinsaugon who lost their lives, swept away from this world by an unstoppable tide. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to have a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

Crocus Investment Fund

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province of Manitoba to do the right thing. This Premier has an option. He knows full well that in the past couple of years under his watch that there has been a black eye on Manitoba with respect to venture capital.

We know that the Auditor General has been very clear in stating that there were red flags that came into this NDP government that were ignored around this Crocus Fund. We also that the Workers Compensation Board report that was delivered by the Auditor General also said that there were red flags and concerns in that report. Specifically, the CEO of Workers Compensation Board, under a signed affidavit, stated clearly that if this Premier and his government had listened to the CEO, Pat Jacobsen of WCB, that in fact Crocus may not have happened.

We just heard the Premier talk about the Auditor General. The one thing that is very clear is the Auditor General did not have the ability to ask questions of this Premier under oath. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

There are 33,000 Manitobans who have been negatively impacted, all taxpayers have been negatively impacted and venture capital in Manitoba has been negatively impacted. We on this side of the House, opposition parties are asking for an independent public inquiry. The media outlets are asking for it. One of our major TV networks yesterday asked the question; 71 percent responded they want an independent public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier has an opportunity to do the right thing. He can either keep his head in the sand, or he can do what is right for all Manitobans. What they are asking for is to call for an independent public inquiry and put to bed, finally, what went wrong and why 33,000 Manitobans and, in fact, all Manitobans are being punished because this Premier refuses to do the right thing.

Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I recognize the 10th anniversary of the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, known as CDEM. This council has dedicated its many efforts over the past decade to expanding and strengthening the economic and cultural life of bilingual municipalities in Manitoba. Today, the vibrant and varied existence of those same municipalities attest to the hard work and commitment of those involved with CDEM.

Monsieur le Président, il faut reconnaître qu'avant tout l'épanouissement actuel de nos municipalités francophones est dû à l'engagement de centaines de bénévoles au cours des dix dernières années. La contribution de ces bénévoles ainsi que le travail acharné des pionniers de l'entrepreneuriat francophone ont donné d'excellents résultats. C'est grâce à eux qu'on assiste à une renaissance et une remontée sans précédent des activités économiques dans nos communautés bilingues.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that above all, the current expansion of our Francophone municipalities is due to the commitment of hundreds of volunteers over the past 10 years. The

contributions of these volunteers, along with the hard work of the pioneers of Francophone entrepreneurship, have produced excellent results. It is thanks to them that we are seeing an unprecedented renaissance and renewal of economic activity in our bilingual communities.

English

Created in 1996, CDEM has been a driving force behind economic innovation and development in Manitoba's 16 bilingual municipalities, all the while emphasizing the continued importance of bilingualism in economic and cultural affairs. Their work helps ensure that the rich cultural and economic heritage of Manitoba can be passed on to future generations.

Lors de leurs célébrations, le CDEM a bien choisi comme thème *Vous avez fait une différence* pour reconnaître l'effort des bénévoles et des pionniers. J'aimerais remercier ces bénévoles et pionniers qui se sont montrés essentiels à l'essor de leurs localités. J'aimerais aussi remercier le CDEM et le féliciter pour ses 10 ans de succès. Finalement, je souhaite que nos municipalités bilingues connaissent encore plus de succès à l'avenir. Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

For the celebrations, the CDEM has fittingly chosen the theme, "You made a difference," to recognize the efforts of the volunteers and pioneers. I would like to thank these volunteers and pioneers who have proven essential to the rapid development of their communities. I would also like to thank the CDEM and congratulate the council on its ten years of success. Finally, I wish our bilingual municipalities continued success in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pharmacist Awareness Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House that this week is Pharmacist Awareness Week in Canada. The theme of this year's event is "Pharmacists, your prescription for care," which reminds Manitobans of the often overlooked but vitally important role pharmacists play in the delivery of health care in our province.

Pharmacist Awareness Week is designed to showcase the crucial function played by pharmacists on a day-to-day basis. Whether it is providing advice about prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs or counselling on health-related issues, Manitobans depend

on their pharmacists to be knowledgeable, forthcoming and efficient, which they are, Mr. Speaker.

This week is also designed to raise awareness of the troubles faced by pharmacists in many jurisdictions. For example, Mr. Speaker, attracting and retaining pharmacists in rural areas in particular has become a growing problem. Problems such as this must be effectively addressed to ensure that pharmacists will be able to continue to provide the kind of quality care that Manitobans need and deserve.

I would ask all members of this House to join me in saluting our pharmacists, who work hard every day in all of our communities to help meet the health care needs of Manitobans. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Silver Bullet Hockey Tournament

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation of a fun-filled weekend recently enjoyed by many St. James residents. Our young hockey players, ages 5, 6, 7 and 8 years old demonstrated their skills and sportsmanship in front of encouraging fans, friends, family and volunteers at the 52nd annual Silver Bullet Hockey Tournament held at the Silver Heights Community Club from February 10 to 12.

The event was blessed with great weather and great activities, including a pancake breakfast, silent auction and social. Mick E. Moose of the Manitoba Moose was there to cheer on the kids and check out some up-and-coming hockey talent.

The winners of this year's tournament in the 5- to 6-year-old category were the Silver Heights Stars. Runners-up were the Assiniboia Ice Hogs. In the 7- to 8-year-old category, it was the Assiniboia Ice Hogs in first place and Sturgeon Creek in second.

As MLA for St. James, I was pleased to present awards and pins along with Mick E. Moose on the final day of the tournament. I wish to congratulate all of the teams who participated in the event. The kids showed great enthusiasm for the game of hockey and everyone played their best.

It takes a lot of people to make an event such as this run smoothly. I wish to recognize tournament convener Bob King for his commitment and drive in putting on this event and also coaches Tim Vandale and Ezio Franz for their leadership, Ross Miclash expertly maintained the rink ice, and volunteer Todd

Jackson was ever reliable with his work on the house and grounds.

* (14:30)

Thanks to the efforts of so many dedicated volunteers, this year's event was a truly memorable one. The fundraising efforts were especially commendable and will make a big difference for young hockey players. A big thank-you goes out as well to the parents for showing such enthusiasm and dedication. Mr. Speaker, it is great to see communities working together to support their youth, building teamwork, friendships and lasting memories. I wish all the kids the best of luck in next year's tournament. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Second Day of Debate)

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

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you very much. I do want to say a few words on the record about the budget that was just introduced by this NDP government.

But, before I do, Mr. Speaker, I would think it is perhaps appropriate that I thank a few people that have allowed me to take my place here in this honoured Chamber, the Legislature, for the past five years. All members in this Legislature, I think, when having the opportunity to recognize why they are able to serve here, the first people I think that they always remember and will thank is their loved ones and their family members that allow them to do the kinds of things that every member in this Chamber does, and that is try to represent Manitoba to the best of their abilities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my wife, Ashleigh, my two daughters, Sarah and Hayley, for standing behind me and supporting me as I did what I did as a member of the Legislature; and certainly my parents, Victor and Jean, who have always seen me as a small kid from Punnichy trying to make a difference and always being proud of what I did. I know they were very proud of me in this role. So I would like to acknowledge them as well. On my

wife's side, my father-in-law, and I want to be careful when I say the word "senator" because he was a Liberal senator and was a very, very honoured member I believe of that Chamber, did a tremendous job, Senator Everett and his wife, Patti. They have been very, very supportive of me in this role.

The other thing, of course, is you do not get here unless people in your constituency support you and represent you and allow you to represent them, Mr. Speaker. So, of course, I want to thank the people of Kirkfield Park and my volunteers who worked so hard, tirelessly, during and between elections to ensure that I was properly represented in the Kirkfield Park constituency.

Of course, I have had tremendous staff that I will be thanking personally. Without the staff, Mr. Speaker, we, again, are in situations where we need people like staff to make sure that we do our jobs properly and that we have their support on an ongoing basis, and that is something that I have been very blessed with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the budget which I think is an important opportunity for all the members in this Chamber to debate, to look at, to perhaps offer some differences because there are differences in this Chamber. There is difference of approaches of how we as the Progressive Conservative Party would approach running Manitoba and how members of the New Democratic Party approach running Manitoba.

In its very, very basic format, Mr. Speaker, a budget is simply an opportunity for expenses to be looked at with respect to the revenues. At the end of the day, whether you are running a business, whether you are a single parent running a household, whether you are an ag producer trying to run the best business you can, you always look at seeing what your revenues are and look at what your expenses are. At the end of it, everybody works very hard to ensure that there is some surplus, there is some profit, there is something left over at the end to invest either in their family, in their household, in their business or to try to make their lives and their families better.

It is an opportunity to examine your own fiscal house. How are you doing in your fiscal house? How are things going? Are you meeting your targets? Are you able to look and sure, Mr. Speaker, that what you are doing is the right thing, whether it is in your business or whether it is in the province?

It is also an opportunity for you to examine how it is that you are doing stacked up to how everybody

else is doing. I would say that on that basis, and one thing I am not sure that this Premier (Mr. Doer) or this NDP government understand, but it is not provinces that compete. It is businesses that compete; it is the individuals that compete; it is the plumbers, it is the carpenters, it is the small entrepreneurs, it is the bigger businesses that we have. They are the ones that compete.

* (14:40)

What the government is responsible for is they are accountable to ensuring what kind of a climate that they are putting in place for those entrepreneurs, those businesspeople, to compete. So, in other words, the government of the day has to be accountable for the budget that they have brought in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question is: Where is the money being spent? What results are you getting with respect to the money that is being spent? Is the government of the day, are they ensuring that they have created that business climate, the climate that allows those entrepreneurs, those businesspeople, to go out and compete?

Well, in this last budget, the seventh budget we have seen from this NDP Premier (Mr. Doer), he has attempted to make Manitoba competitive. So a lot of times what happens is, Mr. Speaker, in this Chamber we see what the NDP government has put forward, and the question always is: Is there a difference in how you would run Manitoba? Well, if I were premier of this province, you bet there would be a difference because the NDP operate as a self-preservation society. That is what they operate, day in, day out. When they get out of bed in the morning, that is what drives the NDP. It is a self-preservation society.

Clearly, it is important to know that you cannot move ahead unless you take some risks. For example, Mr. Speaker, progress always involves risk. There is an old saying that you cannot steal second base with one foot still on first. There is a difference between the NDP self-preservation society and the Progressive Conservative Party. I want to talk about that difference because the Progressive Conservative Party, we are built on deep respect for the individual, on his or her dignity and freedom. It is the right to succeed, the right to accept responsibility. Progressive Conservatives believe that if people want to work harder, that is their choice, but they should be rewarded for that extra hard work, because we in the Progressive Conservative Party believe that when

individuals succeed, then communities succeed. When communities succeed, the province succeeds.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this budget—and I think it is important when you look at the budget that it was interesting that somebody said that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. *[interjection]* Well, we all know who said that because the Premier just said, "I said that." When I look at the fact that over the last five of six budgets, this NDP Premier has not been able to live within his budget, I say to Manitobans, ouch, if that is what this Premier wants to base the future on, because his past behaviour has not been one of stellar performance in the province of Manitoba with respect to spending.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this budget, the NDP numbers, their own numbers in the budget, here is the beauty of NDP math, unfortunately to the detriment of the taxpayers of Manitoba. Just listen to this. The NDP project revenues of \$478 million. That is the number that they used in the budget. Recall what I said at the beginning about what a budget is. You look at your expenses and your revenues and what is left over. So we know they are talking about revenue of \$478 million. What are they going to spend? Are they going to spend \$476 million? No. They are going to spend \$555 million. On the very fundamentals of how to run a province, this is an NDP government based on the Premier's own words about the best way to look at the future is the behaviour of the past, and they are now going to continually spend more than what they are going to bring in. I do not have to remind this Chamber, because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) reminded all Manitobans that, after the third quarter results of last year, they spent \$275 million more than they anticipated. That is what the Minister of Finance has said.

Mr. Speaker, we see this minister's and this Premier's ability to constantly raid the rainy day fund. Why do they do that? Not because it is raining, not because it is raining. No, they do that because, as I said, they look at revenues of 486 and they say, well, let us spend more than we are taking in. We have done it five out of six budgets already, because we have the rainy day fund. That is something that we can sneak in and we can put it in to ensure that there is a sense of balanced budgets.

I want to go from one spectrum, quoting the Premier, perhaps to another spectrum, and that is the quote that said the problems of the world we have created will not be solved at the same level of

thinking we created them at. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was Albert Einstein.

What this Premier should perhaps listen to is to understand that all of the problems that they have created with budgeting, all of the issues about spending more money than they take in, clearly is not going to be solved if they continually take the same approach. I would think that Albert Einstein would be somebody that perhaps this Premier, in fact this government, should maybe pay a little bit of attention to because I think it would serve all of Manitobans well.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fascinating that we have just seen the Olympics take place in Turin, Italy. I think it is tremendous because what happened is in Manitoba we had some tremendous athletes, tremendous athletes: Cindy Klassen, Clara Hughes, Jennifer Botterill, and others. But these athletes, what did they do? They participated, they competed, and they won gold medals. The reason that I bring them forward, very simply, is because those are Manitobans that understand the importance of competition. They understand the importance of setting high standards and they understand the importance of achieving those high standards.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen under this Premier in the last seven years is the inability to try to lower, lower, lower expectations. I know that this Premier loved to come in and basically say, well, okay we cannot compete with Ontario, they apparently have too many people, and we cannot compete with Alberta because they have oil. Hey, we can compete with Saskatchewan. Let us talk about Saskatchewan. There is who our real competition is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Saskatchewan has passed us. They have gone by us. Saskatchewan is now a have-province. Manitoba is a have-not province. So I am not sure what country it is that maybe this government wants to start comparing us to, but certainly all the provinces are out. We cannot compete with the provinces; they have passed us. They have passed us in the seven years that this Premier has been on his watch.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen budget after budget that the mantra of this government is very clear: spend more, get less, spend more, get less, spend more, get less. Well, that has been changed a little bit. Now it is spend more, get last; spend more, get last. That is the mantra of the NDP government. It is unfortunate for all of Manitobans because when you

have last, according to the Canadian Conference Board, in health care, it is not good for Manitoba patients. To be dead last cannot be anything that anybody can get out of bed and say, wow, it is going to be a good day today. That just does not fly with Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I know that provinces, as I said earlier, do not compete. But, if they have the right climate and they allow businesses and individuals to compete, then that province moves ahead. But as I have said, we have now been passed by Saskatchewan.

*(14:50)

So always people say, well, so what would you do differently? I can tell you what a Progressive Conservative government has done and will continue to do, and that is we would have a long-term economic strategy, a long-term strategy that would deal with a low tax strategy. Why is that? Why would we do that? Because after-tax return rates determine what the next investment is. That is what determines investment. It is what the after-tax rate is. The lowering of the tax rate, therefore, makes more proposals viable. More people want to invest, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be interesting if more people in Manitoba started investing in this province? But it would be a home run if, outside Manitoba, people would look at this province as a place to invest.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that this would have been a great opportunity, perhaps, for this Premier (Mr. Doer) to talk about maybe a red-tape commission. We have seen it in other provinces. We know that in this province we are a high-taxed, over-regulated province. We know that, when business looks at Manitoba, they fly over. They are flying over to Alberta. They are flying over to Saskatchewan. They are flying the other way over to Ontario. Why? Because of the high-taxed, over-regulated economy and structure that this NDP government has put in.

We on this side believe that if you want to grow the economy, what you have to do is you have to have an aggressive pro-growth, pro-jobs agenda. I know, having spent some time in the business community, we have some of the best and brightest minds in this community, but imagine if we had an opportunity to double the number of entrepreneurs that we have in this province, if that was a goal that we talked about on a day-by-day basis as a government, saying we know that we cannot compete but we can set the bar high; we can create the climate so that those businesspeople, those

entrepreneurs, those people who live in our rural communities, they can compete and grow and be better and prosper and create jobs. That is the kind of thinking that we need in this province, Mr. Speaker, but it is unfortunate that we do not have it.

Mr. Speaker, now that we know that for seven years mediocrity and complacency reign with this NDP government, why do we not have a look at some of the actual taxes that were released in this last budget? Now, it is interesting, the business tax this Premier (Mr. Doer) talks about, talking about reducing it to 13 percent, now I am sure—and I am surprised that I did not hear a round of applause from the other side when I said that, but I think even members opposite understand that if you talk about reducing the business tax to 13 percent, not in July of '06, not in July of '07, but in July of '08 it is going to go to 13 percent, I would suspect that there very much is going to be an election and perhaps a change in government before this government even gets to the 13 percent.

Let us look at another one, small business. They are talking about small business, reducing it to 3 percent. Well, Mr. Speaker, are they going to do it in the budget as most other provinces do? When they introduce tax relief, they talk about it in that budget. Small business, are they going to reduce it in this budget? No. Well, then, they must be going to do it at the end of '06. The answer is no. When are they going to do it? In '07. So we see that they are talking about the small business tax being reduced to 3 percent in '07. The capital tax, they are talking about putting it at 0.5 percent and the payroll tax 2.15 percent.

So let us look at those four areas of taxation that this Premier is trying to convince all Manitobans, all entrepreneurs to get up in the morning and feel good about competing with other provinces in Canada. There is the business tax that this Premier is talking about, reducing it to 13 percent not next year, but if they are still in government perhaps they can experience it in '08, so 13 percent in '08. Well, currently, today, as we speak, where is Alberta? The Premier knows full well that Alberta is at 11.5. Today, B.C. is at 13.5. There have been numerous comments made and reported in the newspaper about where we look at it with Saskatchewan. They are talking about looking at reducing it somewhere around 12 percent. Now, it means, Mr. Speaker, arguably, arguably that may not be accurate, but is it not interesting, in that province, that at one time this Premier said we should be competing with, once

again they are talking about passing this, not in '08, not in '07, but today? Today. That is what is happening in the other provinces of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, with the capital tax, we know that this Premier is talking about looking at it. It is currently at 0.5 percent. Well, in Saskatchewan, it might be at 0.6 percent, but the fact of life is in Saskatchewan they have a \$30-million exemption. So there is Saskatchewan once again reaching out to their small business community and saying: We want you to compete; we want you to grow; we want you to create jobs; we want you to grow the economy.

Well, then, Mr. Speaker, let us get to the granddaddy of them all. By the way, we know full well that what the Premier is going to say is that we never once talked about doing anything with the payroll tax. Well, no, why would they? They brought it in. They brought in that hated payroll tax. That is the legacy of the NDP government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about a long-term economic strategy, one would hope that you might address at some point down the road the hated, dreaded payroll tax. Why? Because here we are in Manitoba. Manitoba is the only have-not province, under this NDP government. We are the only province in western Canada with a payroll tax: B.C., nada; Saskatchewan, not happening; Alberta, they have not got one; Manitoba, we punish small business. I thought it was interesting, I thought it was very, very interesting, that this Premier started to talk about something in 2008. Well, he and I both know, because we both get the same briefings, that the Business Council has been very concerned. The Manitoba Chamber has been very concerned that there is no long-term economic strategy. So they are saying to the Premier: Please, please, not just this year. Can you look further down the road?

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see what happened at the Cabinet table. They are sitting around the Cabinet table and saying, okay, so they want us to look down the road. How far should we look down the road? Well, I am sure somebody popped up and said: Well, what about July of this year? Are you kidding me? July of '06? I do not think so. Why do we not pick something later? How about July of '07? No, let us look further down the road. How about, oh, let us see, can it not wait for '08? Yeah, July of '08. Let us do something in '08. They are not doing it because they want to make us more competitive. They are simply doing it because businesses have been saying you cannot provide a long-term economic strategy.

There is no strategy, but there is a number that they have tried to pick.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier has said, you know, we are on the right track. Well, I would like to quote Will Rogers, who said: "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there." That is exactly what is happening in the province of Manitoba. You know it is the old, we are sitting there, along comes a train. Well, we are on the right track, are we not? Yeah, but look what is coming behind us. It is a freight train and it is taking them out. That is why Manitoba falls further and further behind.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that in order to have strong economic growth, it is important that we have strong economic growth in the province of Manitoba to increase our wages, our salaries, and to afford all of the very necessary social programs that we need. But, under this NDP government, let us look at the facts. Has small business created jobs? They have not been allowed to. It is the public sector that has created 75 percent of the jobs in Manitoba under this NDP government. I say, shame on the Premier, shame on this Premier and this NDP government for looking at job creation and saying, well, look, I mean, he says it all the time in the House, I brought back the so-called, whatever he calls them, the building cranes. Well, yeah, he brought them back, but was it private-sector money? Absolutely not. He is spending taxpayers' money to put building cranes on the skyline of Winnipeg. Well, that is a no-brainer. If you want to spend taxpayers' money, there is a tremendous amount of things you can do. The key to success, the key to economic growth, the true key to economic growth, and this Premier does not understand it, but it clearly is private-sector building. If there were private-sector buildings going up all through downtown, we would be proud every day, the private sector would be driving the economy. But that is not allowed under this government, no siree. No, we want to spend taxpayers' money and create this illusion that there is a tremendous amount of growth.

* (15:00)

Well, that is not good enough because we believe in our society that it is the small entrepreneurs, the small business people; they are the true heroes of a strong economy. They always create more than they get back. It is what they do. It is what they believe. They are always the men and women who own the small stores, who live down the street. I

say that because my mother was a pharmacist and she owned the drug store in our community. You knew all those people who owned those stores, those mothers, those fathers who worked so hard, they are the ones who created the job here and a job there.

That is what made the community strong and that is what small business does and that is what those entrepreneurs do and that is why it is such a shame that this NDP government continually tries to keep those operators down. These are regular men and women, regular Manitobans who have big dreams, and they should be allowed to see those big dreams because those big dreams mean that our province is growing and that, indeed, we have a province that we can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was very interesting that when you talk about where Manitoba is going, I mean, one of the things that we are doing in this province under this NDP government is we are leading at under-achieving. I thought it was very interesting one of the comments that was made. The CEO of the Business Council made a comment and said that tax cuts have to be financed either by increasing revenues or reducing costs. The problem in Manitoba is where does our revenue come from. It comes from Ottawa. It comes from transfer payments. The Premier says it comes from growth. His idea of growth might be more casinos, more revenue generated from VLTs. It is not our idea, on this side of the House, of what growth is all about.

To think that when you put a budget together you are sort of doing that *Oliver Twist*, you know, when you are standing in the line and you are shaking a little bit, and there is the Premier going to Ottawa, and he is standing and he is saying, you know, please, sir, more soup, more soup, we cannot control it ourselves, we need more soup. That is no way for any premier to run the province. We need to ensure that we have strong growth, strong economic opportunities for small business. That is how you grow an economy, not by standing and hoping and waiting and praying that somewhere along the way the federal government in their largesse is going to give you something in your province. There is nothing in terms of assuring that there is strong growth in the province of Manitoba if that is how you are budgeting.

I believe that the best way is to ensure that small business has the opportunities to create those jobs, to invest in technology. They are the people who give hope for the future. I have seen it. I have seen it. I

have lived it with my family. Members on this side of the House have seen it as well, Mr. Speaker. When you have small business that is growing, that is where the hope for the future is. I believe strongly, coming from a small community, that it is small business that is best to help rebuild our communities, both in our rural and in our urban settings. It is those people who will help those at the bottom of the ladder begin their climb to success. That is what the success of Manitoba should be.

Where does Manitoba fit in this puzzle of Canada? What has this Premier done to be accountable in terms of where this province is going? Well, Mr. Speaker, we know full well that this Premier has a spending appetite. We know full well that there is not a buck that does not cross his desk where he does not look at it and say, now there is a dollar, is there a way that we can save this, is there a way that we can do something? No. How are we going to spend it? Where are we going to spend it? Let us just spend it. Forget about where, let us just make sure we spend it.

I want to prove my point. This budget alone, this Premier has admitted, adds \$618 million to the long-term debt of Manitoba, \$618 million for the long-term debt of Manitoba. So, Mr. Speaker, where is our debt? It is a record all-time high. It is at \$21 billion. That is the debt of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Shame.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a shame, because before every man, woman and child puts a foot on the floor when they wake up in the morning, that man, woman and child owes \$17,300 because this Premier (Mr. Doer) has allowed the debt of Manitoba to balloon to \$21 million–\$21 billion, I should say.

An Honourable Member: That is with a "b."

Mr. Murray: That is with a "b," and that is what is so shocking about this. Because of the \$4.5 billion that has been added in the seven short years that this NDP Premier has run this province, what have we seen? Have we seen building of dams, Mr. Speaker? No. What sort of building have we seen? Well, we have seen precious little.

The only reason that the debt of Manitoba is at \$21 billion is because this Premier continues to spend more than he brings in. What do you do with that? You put it into debt, and when you put it into debt, what are you doing? You are saying to your sons, your daughters, their sons, their daughters, this

is your problem. We are offloading this onto you. We have no solutions. We have no ideas. We have no vision. We are basically going to fold up our tent and we are going to put \$21 billion on to the next generation. Well, how do you like them apples? How do you like them apples if you want to start to grow and thrive in the province of Manitoba? What does that do for you? It does precious little and that is unfortunate because, as I have said, it was this Premier that talked about the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

Well, Mr. Speaker, \$21 billion, that is unfortunate. I think it is important for Manitobans, hardworking Manitobans who pay the highest taxes west of Québec, hardworking Manitobans to understand the \$21-billion debt. That is just a huge number. It is hard for people to understand that. But that debt has to be serviced. In other words, the interest costs on that debt have to be paid. Well, what are they? How much is the interest debt on a \$21-billion debt?

An Honourable Member: And rising.

Mr. Murray: And that is exactly right. It is not staying there; it is getting bigger. But, with \$21 billion, every day \$3.5 million is taken out to service the debt at \$21 billion. So \$3.5 million every single Manitoba day is going toward servicing this debt.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just think that that is, again, very unfortunate for our province because there is no question that \$3.5 million a day would do a tremendous amount of good to ensure that Manitoba is the kind of province it can be. For example, I am sure that the Premier would be interested to know that for \$3.5 million he could rebrand Manitoba seven times a day. Seven times a day we could be rebranding this province. You do not like this one; let us take that one. How about this one?

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, there are seven opportunities a day when he would reach out to Manitoba companies to allow them to brand Manitoba, not a New York company who in all of their wisdom come up with this great idea of sneaking in and saying—I would just love to have been at that meeting—look, sit down, we have this great idea for Manitoba. No, we do not want to show it just yet. Everybody sit in your places, okay? I want to make sure that everybody is seated because you are going to be excited. It is going to be pretty incredible. We put a lot of time and effort into this one.

So there they are and people are saying, okay, so I wonder what they have come up with. Well, Mr. Speaker, you flip open the flipchart, and what is staring at you? Morty the buffalo. There is a buffalo. So imagine how excited those people from New York were, saying they will not believe what we are going to do to rebrand this province. We are going to call it a buffalo province. Well, with respect, had the people from New York come into the building, had they maybe just entered the foyer of the building—they did not have to go to the offices, just maybe the front of the building—they might have seen two huge bisons.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) wants to somehow again—who is the Black Bart that we can blame in this one? Who is the Black Bart we can blame? When things do not go right in Ottawa, the Black Bart is the Ottawa government.

* (15:10)

Now, unfortunately, he is trying to blame the volunteers. Well, it is unfortunate he is trying to blame the volunteers because it is ultimately this Premier's responsibility. It comes to accountability. If this Premier were accountable, we would not have to spend a bunch of money trying to create an advertising program for Manitoba. We would not have to do that. Simply, we would just have to ensure that we had a very, very open-for-business opportunity. That is the best kind of advertising we can have.

I know this Premier has got to, and I hope this Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) understands because it is important. One of the reasons we are in the situation that we are in because this government does not know how to manage properly. But, Mr. Speaker, their help at this time, and we hear this Premier crowing about different rates that they get from the various organizations out of New York, but he knows, and I know he knows this, because interest rates are so low, we are very fortunate that our costs are not as high as they are.

The Premier also knows that, if those interest rates inch up a half a point or a point, where do we go? Where do we go, Mr. Speaker, because this is a government that, when they sit down and try to make up their numbers, they say, well, we have to say that we have a profit? If we are going to bring in a budget, we have to say we have a profit, so let us see. What are we talking about? Well, we have \$8-billion worth of expenditures, so what would make sense in terms of a profit on \$8 billion? So they come up with

a number. Well, let us pick this number out of the air. What is \$20 million? Oh, it is too high, \$20 million is too high. Okay, what about \$10 million? Well, I am not sure about that.

On an \$8-billion budget, the best that they can do is talk about a \$2-million to \$3-million surplus. Not only do they not exceed or they do not meet it, but, Mr. Speaker, that is incredible on that size of a budget that you can only come up and talk about a \$2-million to \$3-million budget.

I have talked about interest rates. Interest rates being as low as they are allow this Premier to ensure that the kinds of financial statements that they put out, we are in a position that they are not as bad as they are. But, Mr. Speaker, one hiccup in the interest rates and look out. One hiccup in the interest rates and look out.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that this Province is taking in \$2.57 billion more in new revenue since '99. Is this Premier accountable for the spending? No, he is not, unless he wants to stand up and say: Yes, I am the father of a \$21-billion debt in the province of Manitoba. That is what I have created.

When you talk about reliance on transfer payments, the federal government is basically giving us an increase of over 41 percent. Mr. Speaker, that is just not good enough, and we have seen, and I have said earlier that when you want to create a competitive environment on the business side, what about those hardworking Manitobans? What about their personal taxes?

Well, once again, what we see from this Premier is the fact that hardworking Manitobans—and, again, the harder that they work, as I have said our party believes, reward them for hard work. What do members opposite do? They punish them. They punish them if they want to work harder. How do they do that? They basically say: We know we are getting you on the capital tax and on the corporate tax and small business and the payroll tax, but in your personal taxes we are going to make sure that you are paying the highest taxes west of Québec. That is what they ensure.

What incentive is there for a man or a woman to get involved in business? They get you on the capital tax, the payroll tax, and, if that is not enough, Mr. Speaker, they ensure that your personal income taxes are the highest west of Québec. That is unfortunate.

It is unfortunate when we see the rainy day fund that is there really as an insurance—I mean, it is like

running a household. You know that you have this ability, if really things go wrong, that you have the ability to reach into those savings. We have seen a lot of people have to do that in rural Manitoba because this government is failing them in health care. They have to reach into their savings.

How does this government view the rainy day fund? Well, Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that what this government's history is in the rainy day fund is basically to say: Look, what is a couple of million here, a couple of million over there, a couple of million on this side? It does not really matter because at the end of the day this government is going to reach into the rainy day fund, not for one or two or three million, not for four or five or six million, they do not reach into the rainy day fund for that, in fact, in the last two weeks this government has reached into the rainy day fund for a total of \$171 million. That is how this government, this NDP government, runs the economy of Manitoba. Well, that is not acceptable.

When you talk about accountability, look at what is happening in health care, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, with respect to accountability, and it is very interesting that when asked in the House we hear the accountability with respect to the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale). We asked a question about health care in Manitoba, and I am sure that the First Minister (Mr. Doer) is going to stop for a second and listen because it is the Conference Board of Canada, a very, very non-partisan, very, very highly respected organization, the Conference Board of Canada. When they speak, people listen because it is an esteemed group of people.

So what does the Conference Board of Canada say when they look at health care across Canada? Well, they look at all of the factors and then they come to a number, and they sort of decide where you are in terms of your ranking within the country of Canada. Where does your province rank? Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Conference Board of Canada looked at all of the provinces in Canada, took all of their criteria and applied it, where did Manitoba finish under this NDP government? Dead last. That is where they finished: dead last.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it very fascinating that when we simply asked a question of the Minister of Health, what is happening with respect to health care, and we made reference to the fact that we were dead last, the Minister of Health jumped out of his seat and said, well, you know it is hard for us to

compete with Alberta and B.C. Well, why is that? Why is it hard for them to compete with Alberta and B.C.? Could it possibly be because Alberta and B.C. are not afraid to deal with the private sector under a single-payer system? Is it possible that those two provinces have recognized that ideology has no place in the debate of health care? Is it impossible that those two provinces have said that, if we are going to ensure that we have proper health care for the people of Alberta and B.C., we are going to work with the private sector under single-payer system?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought it was very interesting that one of the major newspapers in Canada quoted this Premier in a meeting that he had where he basically said, like most Canadians, Mr. Doer recognized that for the system to function properly governments must allow for more flexibility in its delivery. They talked about the fact that the government already pays for cancer patients to go south of the border for treatment rather than risk their lives on exorbitantly long waiting lists.

Well, once again we have this Premier, and I do not know if, for example, maybe he thought that the tape was not turned on, maybe he thought it was pretty good there with the Premier of New Brunswick, a Progressive Conservative premier, to sit with this editorial board and basically cozy up to that premier because, you know, it is not a bad place to be, you know an NDP premier cozying up to a Progressive Conservative premier, a young, dynamic premier out of New Brunswick who is not afraid to ensure to look at opportunities with respect to health care.

Well, this Premier, although he was quoted, has a Minister of Health, a Minister of Health who is so ideologically driven on this health care file that whenever we talk about innovation, somehow it drives them nuts, it drives them crazy on the other side. Well, I do not know why trying to help Manitoba patients in a single-payer system should drive them so nuts. I do not get it.

Mr. Speaker, it clearly is not about ideology on our side. We would look at any way to innovate, any way to innovate. Innovation should be the key to health care. But we do not see it. I thought it was fascinating the other day in the Chamber when, I think it was the Minister of Health, it could have been the Premier, Hansard will show, it does not matter, but one of the two stood up and took credit for the fact that Boundary Trails was getting an MRI.

* (15:20)

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that at some place in the sentence they could mention Mr. Johnny Buhler's name who bought it. Somewhere they could put it in. I do not know where, but somewhere in that sentence, Mr. Buhler. I know the people in Boundary Trails are happy. I know the people in Boundary Trails are ecstatic. But is it not interesting: "We" put in a new MRI in Boundary Trails? That is exactly when you talk about accountability. Accountability is having the ability to tell what is correct and to be open and honest with what it is that took place. So I just find it interesting.

I asked this Premier (Mr. Doer) today about interfacility transfer payments. That was the question that I asked, and I thought it would be important to ask that question because we are debating the budget. It is important to debate the budget. But I thought it was just as important because his Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), when referring to the interfacility ambulance transfers six months ago, that minister referred to that policy as stupid.

Well, you know, six months later in a budget where we have seen unprecedented revenues, they did nothing to deal with that issue, with what that Minister of Health called stupid. I am not sure what or who the word "stupid" was referring to. I am not sure if it was for the policy, but it came out of the mouth of the Minister of Health and a great opportunity, as we have seen with this Premier (Mr. Doer), to turn his back on rural Manitobans for seven years. Seven years he has turned his back on rural Manitobans. His Minister of Health called this policy stupid, and what happened? They did nothing on that policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, why is it that with respect to health care, this government—yes, they talk about ambulances, but those ambulances are forcing Manitobans out of their communities down highways to create highway medicine. That is what this Premier has done. He has put more ambulances in Manitoba so that those people who would love to have treatment in their own communities are sent down the highway to get health care. Highway medicine is not what Manitobans signed up for. They did not sign up for highway medicine. Can you imagine? There you are, forced to travel the highways of Manitoba in an ambulance, and they are travelling on roads that are probably the worst in North America. So it is a double-whammy. Not only are they forced to travel out of your community, but they are forcing you to travel on roads that are probably the worst in North America. So what kind

of a health care system do we have under this government?

Mr. Speaker, I know that the budget in 2006 increased the Pharmacare deductible for the fifth straight year, more punishment for seniors in Manitoba, our vulnerable people in Manitoba. What do they get from this Premier? They get nothing. They want to crow about the nine bucks that they are giving back to the seniors. That was what this budget was all about. We are going to give you nine bucks back. How do you want it? Do you want a five and four loonies? Maybe you have change for a ten. Give me a loonie back; I will give you a ten. That is what this government is trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, you have nine bucks, but, wait, there is more, not that there is more for seniors, but there is more for this government because they are going to claw back \$72 on the Pharmacare deductible. That is the kind of punishment that we are seeing from this government.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education in the province of Manitoba, one of the things that this government finally listened to, they listened to what we talked about in 2003, which was that Manitobans were saying it is time to eliminate the education tax off of residential property and farmland. That is what Manitobans want. Now, I know when you look at unprecedented revenues, over \$2 billion of revenue, if the political will was there, the finances were certainly there, the money was there to do the right thing, but, no, it is that slow, slow, slow approach for Manitobans. That is why when people look at tax cuts, they realize there are tax cuts, but everybody else is doing it quicker and they are doing it faster, and it is all around us. I know it makes this Premier's head spin, but it is difficult because it is Manitobans that suffer because of that.

Mr. Speaker, you talk about accountability, where is the accountability in schools? When the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), when we talked on this side of the House about bullying and the Safe Schools Charter, accountability; that Minister of Education had no clue. That is not accountability. That is not having a clue about what is right.

On the Seven Oaks School Division issue, the Seven Oaks School Division issue was brought into this House. The Minister of Education did not know anything about it. He did not know anything about it on Monday. On Tuesday, he said, Oh, you mean that school division, oh, you mean that Seven Oaks

School Division, oh, you mean what was happening in that Seven Oaks School Division with Mr. O'Leary. Oh, well, now that you mention it was that Seven Oaks School Division with Mr. O'Leary, maybe I have heard something about.

Well, what kind of accountability is that, Mr. Speaker? Where is the accountability for the Minister of Education who knows full well, and this Premier knows, that they continually underfund education in the province of Manitoba? What do they do? They offload all the tough decisions onto the school trustees. They come forward and say, we are going to reduce the portion that we give you, we are going to shrink the portion, the amount of percentage that we fund. They say to the school trustees, well, we have done our bit, now you go out and tax your neighbour or you go out and make decisions about cancelling programs in schools.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say, shame on this Premier, shame on that Minister of Education. That is not leadership and that is not being accountable to the taxpayers of Manitoba. The taxpayers of Manitoba deserve better. They pay enough tax. If this government, if this NDP government could get their act together, there would be adequate funding to ensure that our schools were funded properly, not on the backs of taxpayers, not offloading the responsibility to school trustees.

Mr. Speaker, in Advanced Education and Training, where is the accountability with this Premier? They all have all our institutions, our colleges and our universities suffering under this NDP government. All they are saying is, we want to ensure that we can provide Manitoba students with the best education in the world. Once again, there are our institutions. Those institutions understand a gold standard of delivery. They know where they want to be. But that is foreign to this Premier and this NDP government, like a gold standard, achieving something, a medal, being at the top of the game. No, we do not want to be there. No, we want to set the bar low so that just getting up in the morning feels pretty good. You know, that is pretty good for us. Hey, how is your day? Well, I am up. Oh, good for you. Hey, high-five, way to go, looking good.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not what Manitoban students deserve. They deserve a gold standard of education, but this government underfunds the institutions. So what do they have to do? Once again, much like this Minister of Education that forces school trustees to make tough decisions, the Minister

of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) and this Premier are saying to the universities: Look, you want to raise ancillary fees because you have to pay for that, raise the cost of books, the cost of parking. You want to raise all those fees? You go ahead because we are not going to fund you properly. You go ahead and you raise all of those other ancillary fees. So, when the president of the Brandon Students' Union says, well, this is worse than we expected under this NDP government, you have to know that that means something.

Mr. Speaker, that is a lack of accountability, and that is unfortunate when you have a Minister of Advanced Education and a Premier that underfund our post-secondary institutions. I am not sure if they understand it or they just want to ignore it, but the tuition freeze is a problem.

* (15:30)

Everybody knows that universities and colleges lack financial support. They lack the financial support they need to provide that gold standard of education. We lack the resources to put into those institutions to provide our knowledge economy for our leading the 21st century.

The real task is to ensure that students who rely on government funding are not left financially crippled when they graduate. That should be the real reason that we should be looking at how to ensure that students, when they graduate from university are not suffering from a huge debt load. A possible solution would be to allow students upon graduation to repay the debt at a percentage of their income. I mean, there has to be some things that we can look at, some things that we can look at and be innovative. Even the Business Council, the Premier knows that the Business Council has said: Look, there are opportunities with businesses and corporations to work with the government to enhance bursaries and scholarships. So there are ways to do it for our universities who are asking, pleading, with this Premier (Mr. Doer) to ensure that they can deliver a gold standard of education. That is something that this NDP government just does not seem to get.

You know, Mr. Speaker, on justice, justice is a very, very serious issue and, frankly, I think that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), and I am still waiting for him to—

An Honourable Member: Minister of injustice.

Mr. Murray: Well, it is the minister of injustice except he is the Minister of Justice when he takes a program that this party, this side of the House, put together, a program that we put together, talking about *Enough is Enough! Standing Up for Safe Communities*. Why did we do it? We did it because Manitobans were telling us they did not feel safe in their communities under this NDP government. But why would they? What does the record show? The record states that the Hells Angels moved into Manitoba under the watch of this Premier.

That is where it all started. That is where all of the gang activity started to take shape, and that is why we see in the province of Manitoba this incredible infusion of gangs and drugs and gun activity because everybody knows and it has been documented, that this NDP government under this Premier is soft on crime. It is not us saying it. We do not have to because other organizations are saying it. Why? Because not only do they believe it; they know it. It is because of that that we see justice in the province of Manitoba as a big issue in terms of making our communities safe. If our communities are safe, Mr. Speaker, I go back to creating an economic environment, whereas our entrepreneurs get up in the morning and wonder when they know full well that the communities are not safe.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about safety, by the way, it was interesting. We talk about safety in the streets. You know, the \$3.5 million a day that we are spending on the interest rates to cover off the \$21-billion debt, with that \$3.5 million a day, we could put 40 new police officers every single day on the streets of Manitoba, every single day, but that \$3.5 million is being ripped away and is being put towards that granddaddy of a debt, the mother of all debts for Manitoba, the \$21 billion. So that is a serious issue in terms of Manitoba.

I thought it was somewhat interesting in the budget when the budget document talked about Hydro. Mr. Speaker, I think that this government has made some very interesting decisions with respect to Hydro. First and foremost, the NDP government decided that Hydro is making a little bit too much money, so, when this Premier (Mr. Doer) says that Manitoba is open for business, what he is really saying is if you make a little bit extra money, watch out, we are going to take it. We are going to take the money in because it is not really the business that is open for business; it is the NDP government's coffers that is open for business, because if you make too much money, we are going to take it.

So, you know, they raided Manitoba Hydro because they could not control their own spending, and what have we seen since? We have seen decisions where Manitoba Hydro, they wanted to build a route by Bipole III. Bipole III was something that Manitoba Hydro talked about years ago, and they wanted to build that from the North. They were going to build it down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Why would they want to build it down the east side? I am no expert; I do not pretend to be. But I thought it was interesting when I talked to a few, I would call them experts, people who understand Hydro, how it works, what makes sense. Their comments were simply we have a line down the west side, and, if we build another line down the west side, there is additional cost. There is an opportunity that if the weather pattern, an ice storm—we have seen it happen in Québec; it is not something that cannot happen. If an ice storm were to happen, would both lines be affected? The answer is yes. So now you see the extra costs, and there is potential for a logistics nightmare. So then you start saying, well, there has to be a reason for this NDP government to ignore the experts.

I respect the fact that there are communities that will be affected if a line were to come down the east side. Those communities have to be part of a decision that works for them. So that is what is important is that those communities have a role. What I find fascinating is that this Premier seems to be taking his advice from Bobby Kennedy, Jr. One thing I do know, one thing I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that it is not Bobby Kennedy, Jr., that owns the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It is Manitobans that own the east side of Lake Winnipeg and it is Manitobans that should be involved in that decision. That is important.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that anytime that you have experts making comments—

An Honourable Member: I am glad you are putting this on the record.

Mr. Murray: Absolutely, I am putting it on the record. I have no difficulty. All I am saying, simply, is that I would not be governed simply on the basis that it is my way or the highway. Speaking of the highway, it would not be bad to have a road up there to connect some of those communities, some of those communities that are suffering because of their isolation. I think that is an important discussion to have. But it is all part of the debate, is it not, Mr. Premier? Is it not all part of the debate? It should be

put into the mix. Maybe at the end of the day, all of the rules would say no. You would want to look at the other side. But there is no debate. There is simply Bobby Kennedy, Jr., coming up and trying to say to this Premier. I do not know if it is the Green Party that is starting to sneak up on the side, so they want to make comments. I am not sure, but one thing I do know is that there has been precious little debate with the public on why it is that this NDP government is so opposed to running a line down the east side.

I do not know and I would be interested to see. I know there is discussion around Wuskwatim. We have heard lots of numbers years ago about what it might cost for Wuskwatim and Conawapa. But the point is, I think all of us in this Legislature, all of us in the province, understand that building costs are not going down. Building costs are not getting less. No, they are going the other way. They are going up and up and up. So what is the true cost of building Wuskwatim? What is the true cost of building Conawapa? What are those numbers? It would be very interesting to find out from this First Minister what those costs are.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of other issues that we see in this budget. For example, we know that the MLCC are talking about an increase of \$9-million projected revenue over last year. I hope they are not doing it on the basis of trying to promote poor people to drink. I do not think that is the right thing to do; I really do not think it is the right thing to do. I would hope that there are opportunities that this Premier would use MLCC in the right possible way, not in asking more people to drink.

On MPI we have seen transfers of almost \$100 million more to the Province. They have collected on drivers' licensing annual fees, \$100 million. Do you think that they would turn around and try to put that into fixing roads, Mr. Speaker? No way. No way, José. Why? Because they need every penny they can get. They need every penny because they cannot control their expenditures. Every opportunity to get more money out of Manitobans, to bilk Manitobans out of more money, that is what this government does.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Culture, Heritage and Tourism, I would just make one comment. We do have a fabulous province. We have a wonderful province and tourists should be flocking here. Manitobans should be using as much opportunity to experience this fabulous province as we can. But can

you imagine, can you imagine those American tourists? You know, they get the brochure. They figure, well, we are going to load up the family. Let us put them in the station wagon and we are going to head up north. We are going to do a little bit of fishing. We heard the fishing is pretty good in Manitoba.

* (15:40)

So there they are and they get to the border at 75. Some of them would probably look at it and say, have we entered some kind of an exhibition of some sort? Is this like a test zone to see if our vehicles can actually be punished so much? Maybe we went on the wrong road. I suspect we made a wrong turn because there is no way, the roads we just came off were pretty doggone smooth. As a matter of fact, that little Bobblehead doll was not moving a second. I mean, I would hope that when they send out all of the tourist information to all of these tourists that come in, maybe what they want to give them is where the local garages are. Maybe that is their idea for development in Manitoba, more money for those garages to fix those tourist cars that need re-alignment and have shocks that need to be repaired. The only shock, Mr. Speaker, is the shock of the highways in Manitoba under this NDP government.

I would have thought that after seven long years this NDP Premier (Mr. Doer) would have said, when you are looking at the budget, let us make sure that 75 is fixed right now, today. Let us get on with fixing Highway 75 today. Why, Mr. Speaker? Well, if we are going to export our goods south of the border, I would hope that at least they arrive south of the border in the same shape that they left the warehouse. But, if they have to travel on those sorts of roads, what message does that send to the business community? Ah, you make your goods; do the best you can; make your widgets; away you go. When you put them in the truck, you do have air ride, right? Do you have air ride on that unit? I hope you do because, man, when you hit the highways in Manitoba, she is going to bounce and she is going to rumble and she is going to do all sorts of things. I just hope that your product arrives at its destination the way it left.

But, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier understood the strong desire to have an economic plan in Manitoba, he would ensure that our roads are looked after. Our roads are so critical for local entrepreneurs to take their goods, whether they are hauling grain, whether they are hauling cattle, whether they are hauling

hogs. It is important for those people to have highways in a proper way. The deficit in 1999 was \$1.8 billion. Today it is over a \$5-billion deficit in our highway system. Why is that? It is over \$5 billion because they have neglected those roads that take our goods to market in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about agriculture and rural Manitoba. I have talked about the underinvestment in our roads, in our bridges. We have seen the sagging infrastructure of water mains. We have seen the boil-water orders that we have in the province of Manitoba in our rural communities. That is something that we can see. It is the real underinvestment in our rural people that is taking its toll on the province of Manitoba. That underinvestment in our people in rural Manitoba is having a significant impact. When we talk about people in rural Manitoba, we are not talking about widgets. We are not talking about a factory line. We are talking about real human lives, real people.

I would say to the Premier (Mr. Doer), and I really would like the Premier to hear my comments. The Premier has missed red flags when it came to Crocus. The Premier has missed red flags when it came to the Workers Compensation Board. Premier, I ask you, do not miss the red flags of what is happening to our families in rural Manitoba. It is a crisis that is going to turn into a disaster. It is something that I would ask you. I know you missed the red flags with Crocus. I know you missed the red flags on WCB. Do not miss the red flags on rural Manitoba that are having such a negative impact on our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, our ag producers have been hit hard. They have been hit hard. Their input costs are high. Commodity prices are low and the income for our producers is at an all-time low. So where is the strategy, where is the vision from this government to deal with rural Manitoba? Well, there is not one. There is not one. There is zero. That is why when I said earlier, are there differences between that side and our side? You bet there are. You bet there are huge differences.

Mr. Speaker, our party believes in rejuvenation, restoring, revitalization; that is what we believe. That is what we believe about rural Manitoba. It is important that we do that in rural Manitoba. There has got to be a strategy. What they are looking at on that side of the House is turning their backs on rural Manitobans. We will not do that. The Premier has

made fun of rural Manitobans for supporting our party. Well, they support our party simply because we are rural Manitobans in our caucus. We understand what rural Manitobans are going through. We understand the importance of celebrating those people in rural Manitoba.

What about an opportunity to focus on the labour market? We have got great immigration in the province of Manitoba, great immigration. It is something that was started by our party. You have continued it on, and I applaud you. It is great. Immigration is important to the province of Manitoba. But is there a way that we can somehow work with our immigration to see that they can understand the importance and the opportunities in rural Manitoba, because the life in rural Manitoba is a great life? It is a wonderful life. That is an opportunity that we should be looking at.

Opportunities for youth. We need to know that opportunities for youth exist in rural Manitoba because when those people, those men and women go to community colleges they want to go back from where they came from. They want to go back and celebrate where they came. They want to go back and celebrate their home town because they understand the importance of it.

What about being self-employed in rural Manitoba, the Internet, having ability to communicate with the world? It does not matter where you live in Manitoba, you should have the ability to work with the Internet to make sure that you can communicate anywhere in the world, Mr. Speaker.

I thought it was very interesting, when I have been asked questions about what was in the budget on agriculture. Well, the fact of life is there was nothing in the budget on agriculture. There were some re-announcements from old announcements, but there was nothing in the budget on agriculture. Since the BSE crisis has come to Manitoba and Canada, I find it somewhat distraught, being distraught. Why am I distraught, Mr. Speaker? Since the BSE crisis and all of the press releases and all of the political rhetoric and all of the announcements from the other side, slaughter capacity in Manitoba has not increased by one, not one. What kind of a record is that? It is a record of shame and turning your back on rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the city of Brandon and city of Winnipeg. Well, we know that one of the frustrations they have is that this government takes an attitude of, well, we will see what we want to do,

we will give you a bit of money, see what happens, and you know what, you had better live within your own means. If this government can live within their own means, then the next thing that would be important is to look at how do we work together with those two cities and our other municipalities to ensure that there is a win-win so that economic growth at the municipal level is economic growth for the province, so that everybody has a chance to work hard, work harder, be rewarded, given those kinds of things that will allow us all to grow. There should be no punishment. It is a concept that is a little foreign over on the other side, but it is called entrepreneurship. It is called working with winners, creating winners and winners so that there is a win-win for the municipalities and the cities and the province.

I know that this Premier (Mr. Doer) likes to talk about revenue growth. Well, the revenue growth that they talk about is driven from casinos, more gambling, more gaming. That is not growth. There is not an entrepreneur that would look at that and say that is growth. That is not growth; it is the opposite. It is not growth. Growth is when small businesses create jobs and those people pay a fair tax level to the people of Manitoba. That is what growth is, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

I want to quote, and I am so proud to quote my father, my dad, Victor Murray. I am going to quote something that he always said to me. He always said when we were on the farm, whenever there was an issue we had to deal with, our dad always said to me that, when solving problems, son, he said, you have to dig at the roots instead of just hacking at the leaves.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason that I bring that forward is because that is what this government had an opportunity to do with this budget, with all of the overspending, with all of the inability to manage the economy, with all of their ability, unfortunately, to add to the debt to make it \$21 billion. There was a tremendous opportunity for this government to dig to the root of their spending problem and deal with making Manitoba competitive, deal with real issues to make sure that Manitoba is competitive. They had that opportunity, but they failed.

So I would say that as I have travelled around this province, I have asked questions of many Manitobans. I say to them very succinctly, you know, if there was one thing that you could do to change Manitoba for the better, what would it be?

That is what I ask Manitobans, one thing. Mr. Speaker, what they say is that they want Manitoba to be a better place for their children and for their children's children. That is why I hope that this Premier takes very seriously the fact that a \$21-billion debt is not going to make our children or our children's children have a better future in the province of Manitoba. It is not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the PC Party, of which I have had the privilege to lead, has made a difference. A PC government that wins the next election will continue to make that kind of difference in the province of Manitoba. I know that a PC government, we want Manitobans to be all that they can be, to have that opportunity to be all that they can be, a province where other people from parts of the world will zero-in on Manitoba and they will say, that is where we want to be, that is where we want to put a stake in the ground, that is a province that is truly open for business, that wants to welcome entrepreneurs in, a province that will celebrate our cultural diversity, a province that will celebrate culture. That goes to the pure fabric of what makes us a great province. Those are the kinds of things that I think we need in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that what we ultimately need in this province in a big way, which we are not getting under this NDP government, is a government that knows how to deliver a gold standard level of service. Much like I referenced those Olympic athletes that worked hard, trained hard, made mistakes along the way, learned from those mistakes, got better, and stood proudly on the podium as the Canadian anthem was played to all of the world, those are the kind of standards that this government should be trying to set. Unfortunately, it is mediocrity, mediocrity, mediocrity.

So the question is: Do we have a proud past? Well, yes, we do on this side of the House, we have a proud past. I will compare that perhaps to the member opposite, the Premier of the province. Our proud past is the establishment of Manitoba's first agriculture college, Manitoba's first technical college, the incorporation of the University of Manitoba, crop insurance, farm credit, services for the deaf, the Nelson River hydro development, student loans, under the Progressive Conservative government, low-cost rental housing, started by our government, social allowance, medical insurance, the Winnipeg Floodway, income assistance, those are all legacies by a Progressive Conservative government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, surely then there has to be a legacy from members opposite. Well, they have a legacy, MTX, ManOil, Saunders Aircraft, the Autopac scandal, that is all part of the NDP legacy. I know members opposite love to rush out and talk to the public and say that they were there first on medicare or they were there first on helping students or they were there first on helping the deaf or they were there first with low income assistance. Well, they are wrong, wrong, wrong. It was the Progressive Conservative Party and the Progressive Conservative government that put those in place for all Manitobans, and that is why we have the kind of province today that we have.

So I want all Manitobans to know, and I started my speech out on the budget, because I was talking about accountability. I was talking about accountability and I was talking about what is the accountability that this Premier has to the province of Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just think I heard the Premier say he is accountable to the people. Well, if he is, then surely the right thing to do would be for this Premier to listen to members of the public, members of the public who have said very clearly to all members of the opposition that they want an independent public inquiry into this Crocus, Workers Compensation scandal.

Members of the public have said it, Mr. Speaker. The media have said very clearly that this Premier owes the opportunity to come clean with what happened with the Crocus scandal and Workers Compensation Board.

An Honourable Member: Ed Schreyer.

Mr. Murray: The Premier's mentor, Ed Schreyer, has said that the right thing to do would be to have an independent public inquiry. A former minister of this NDP government, a former minister of this NDP government said she would welcome an independent public inquiry.

So let me just pause for a second, Mr. Speaker. We have the public, we have the media, we have Mr. Schreyer, we have a former minister, Ms. Mihychuk, we have all the opposition parties that are asking for an independent public inquiry. The only person in Manitoba who is thumbing his nose at a public inquiry is the Premier of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the reason it is a shame is because under this Premier's watch there is such a black eye on venture capital in the province of Manitoba.

When I started my comments about the budget, I talked about how do we create an economic climate, how do we create that kind of province where people are going to say, I am prepared to take a risk, I want to come to Manitoba and take a risk because I believe in that province. But they are not doing that. They are going to other provinces, because he will not do the right thing and call for an independent public inquiry.

Why do we not do the right thing and clear the air? This Premier has an opportunity to do the right thing, or he can continue on an ostrich, head-in-the-sand approach and deny Manitobans, deny everybody that wants the right thing and that is an independent public inquiry.

So I say to this Premier, it is a serious issue and I know he knows that. I know he knows the seriousness of it. So I would ask this Premier, unless the Premier has something to hide, and I hope he does not, Mr. Speaker. But I would say that people would be wondering, and people have said to me that if the Premier does not have anything to hide he should call it. That would be the best way to clear the air, to move Manitoba forward, to ensure that we clear this black cloud that hangs over venture capital in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Premier to know that I would support him tremendously if he did the right thing and called an inquiry because call anybody you want, I know the Minister of Hydro mentions names, I think the great thing is, and I hope you agree, I sense you are agreeing with me and I appreciate that because, you know, there is not a person that should not be called.

The great thing about having an independent public inquiry is there is never a question. I mean, the Auditor General did tremendous work. The Auditor General did tremendous work in terms of both the Crocus and with Workers Compensation Board. I mean, we saw with Workers Compensation where we had a highly respected CEO, Pat Jacobsen, come forward with some very serious allegations to this government. What did the government do, Mr. Speaker, to listen to a highly respected CEO, a woman of tremendous credibility, what did they do to her? Within three days of her bringing these allegations forward, they ran her out of town. They fired and they ran her out of town.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that in itself has a cloud around it, and Manitobans are wondering, why is it that somebody who is a very talented woman, why

would they run her out of town, and why under a signed affidavit would she say very clearly—what she is saying, I believe that if the government of the day had listened to my concerns—[interjection]—if they had listened to Pat Jacobsen's concerns, she is saying in a signed affidavit that Crocus would not have happened. Thirty-three thousand Manitobans would not have been bilked out of their cash. Manitobans would not have this black eye over their venture capital economy. That is why we need to have a public independent inquiry.

* (16:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying to this Premier that this is a tremendous opportunity for you, Mr. Premier, to ensure that Manitoba does have the kind of economy that we could all be proud of, the kind of economy that would be robust and that would grow and that would say to all of those entrepreneurs, come on down, come on down to Manitoba. We are open. You want to take risks in Manitoba, we are behind you. We support you because we know that we are not afraid to compete with Alberta. We are not afraid to compete with Ontario. We have sent people out of this province that have competed with the world, whether it is in hockey, or whether it is in speed skating, they have not looked over their shoulder except to see people in their dust. That is the kind of premier that we need in the province of Manitoba, somebody that is leading the province, and the other provinces are trying to catch us, not what we have now where we are looking up at every other province and saying how do we catch these people. Well, never mind, we never will, we will not, and under an NDP government they never will. I know that for a fact.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I would like to move a motion. 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 the following words:*

therefore regrets this budget ignores the present and future needs of Manitobans by:

- (a) failing to be accountable to Manitobans for the overspending and fiscal mismanagement of this Doer NDP government; and
- (b) failing to be accountable for the fact that Manitoba families will be the highest taxed of any province in Canada; and

(c) failing to provide a long-term strategy to bolster Manitoba's economy and make Manitoba a "have" province; and

(d) failing to be accountable for the dismal state of agriculture in Manitoba and the lack of sufficient slaughter capacity in the province and to provide a sustainable plan for the growth of agriculture and the rural economy; and

(e) failing to provide a climate that encourages private-sector job creation and growth in the province, to provide opportunity for Manitoba youth to remain in the province; and

(f) failing to accept responsibility and be accountable for the province's unprecedented level of debt, which has grown to over \$20 billion under the Doer NDP government, thereby mortgaging our children's and our grandchildren's future; and

(g) failing to eliminate education taxes off residential property and farmland; and

(h) failing to provide adequate funding for post-secondary institutions; and

(i) failing to be accountable for the dead last ranking of Manitoba's health care system by the Conference Board of Canada; and

(j) failing to be transparent and accountable for where health care dollars are being spent; and

(k) failing to be accountable for the increased court backlog and probation breaches; and

(l) failing to provide a long-term strategy for the revitalization of rural Manitoba and continuing to ignore rural Manitobans; and

(m) failing to be accountable for drawing money from the "rainy day fund" in times of unprecedented revenues.

As a consequence, the Government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is in order, and before I recognize any members to speak, I want to remind all members of the House that in their speech or questions all members are to be addressed by their constituencies or ministers by their titles, and also, when quoting from written material, that is also to be addressed by constituencies or ministers by their title. I just want to remind all honourable members.

We have a rotation in order, so I will recognize the honourable—*[interjection]*

Are you on a point of order?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I will recognize a point of order first.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes. I move, seconded by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) be now heard.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The rules do not allow for moving of a motion on a point of order. That is not within our rules.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, I indicated I was standing on a motion.

Mr. Speaker: For clarification of the House, I asked the member if he was up on a point of order, and he indicated that you were up on a point of order.

An Honourable Member: I said a motion.

Mr. Speaker: Are you up on a point of order?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Everybody will have a chance here.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Deputy Government House Leader, are you up on a point of order?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I was standing to speak on the budget.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Well, I will entertain—*[interjection]*

The honourable Member for Inkster, are you up on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was watching actually very closely, and I first note that the moment that you had dealt with the motion, the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) had stood, followed by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) and then followed by the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I was actually watching that so it is very clear in my mind, and our rules do indicate that the first one up to their feet be recognized. So I am pointing it out because I believe that the Member for River Heights should be speaking.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Ashton: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am really surprised the Member for Inkster would rise on that so-called point of order because it is well-established practice in this House which has been confirmed, whether it be Question Period or in terms of speeches, that we have a speaking rotation, and, in fact, it is of particular interest, I think, to independent members such as the Member for Inkster and the Member for River Heights to have that ability protected. We have never, in the time I have been in the House, to my knowledge, in recent parliamentary history in terms of this province, done anything other than have a rotation which allows all members of the House to speak.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke for a considerable period of time. I actually wanted to get up and wish him well in his future. Speak on the budget, Mr. Speaker, I hope to have the ability to speak, and I can assure the Member for Inkster that the Member for River Heights will, in due course, very soon have the opportunity to speak. In fact, I have waited three days to give this speech so I would really like to be able to have it now. Those are our rules. A rotation, not what the Member for Inkster referred to.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is within the rules of Marleau and Montpetit that, indeed, it is allowable to allow for a motion where the order could be changed in terms of

the speaking order of the House, and that requires a motion. When more than one person is standing and a motion is introduced allowing for another person to be heard, according to the rules, *Beauchesne* and also Marleau and Montpetit that we do follow, indeed, that is within the purview of these rules, so I move the motion on that basis.

Now, the Liberal House Leader has indicated that he has a point of order with respect to that, and I happen to agree with him. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think all members would like to speak, but the government has now gotten the message, perhaps, and, perhaps they are a little slow and have not yet, that, in order to be able to proceed with orderly business in the House, one of the prerequisites today is that they call the public inquiry into the Crocus scandal. The air could be cleared very easily, but until this government decides that it should do the right thing, the thing that is demanded by Manitobans, the action that is demanded by the opposition parties, the action that is demanded by the media, and that is to call for a public inquiry into Crocus. We will use the rules of the House to ensure that the message is delivered clearly.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Gerrard), I thank the contribution of all honourable members. My practice, as the Speaker, and I am sure all previous speakers before me, is to look at *Manitoba Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba* and, if there is no guidance or answer, then we will seek advice from *Beauchesne* or Marleau and Montpetit, but my first reference is always the rules and practices of our Manitoba rule book.

It is very clear here, if you look under *Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*, if you look at "General rule on rotation" 43(5), "When a Member speaks in a debate, the Speaker must not recognize another Member from the same party to speak until an opportunity has been provided for a Member from another party who is standing in his or her place . . ." Our rotation has always been opposition, government, opposition, government, so under our rules I have to rule there is no point of order, and I recognize the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) to speak at his turn.

An Honourable Member: I would challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Does the honourable member have support?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order. The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cullen, Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Murray, Reimer, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 31, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past, oh, we will have to have leave of the House.

Is there leave of the House for the Speaker not to see the clock? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I would just like to announce that the Standing Committee of Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, March 15, at 7 p.m., to deal with the Auditor's Report on the examination of the Crocus Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee of Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, March 15, 2006, at 7 p.m., to deal with the Auditor's Report on examination of the Crocus Investment Fund.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 9, 2006

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Crocus Investment Fund	
Bill 210—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (Harassment in the Workplace)		Cummings; Rondeau	1141
Gerrard	1135	Lamoureux; Rondeau	1143
Bill 23—The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act		Lamoureux; Doer	1143
Mackintosh	1135	Derkach; Doer	1144
Petitions		Viewpoints Research	
Crocus Investment Fund		Cullen; Smith	1142
Lamoureux	1135	Cullen; Mackintosh	1142
Highway 10		Cullen; Allan	1142
Rowat	1135	Advanced Education	
Funding for New Cancer Drugs		Irvin-Ross; McGifford	1144
Stefanson	1136	Members' Statements	
Oral Questions		Landslide (Philippines)	
Health Care Services		Aglugub	1144
Murray; Doer	1136	Crocus Investment Fund	
Herceptin		Murray	1145
Stefanson; Sale	1138	Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities	
Pharmacare		Brick	1145
Reimer; Sale	1139	Pharmacist Awareness Week	
Reimer; Selinger	1139	Stefanson	1146
Budget		Silver Bullet Hockey Tournament	
Hawranik; Selinger	1140	Korzeniowski	1146
Maple Leaf Distillers		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Cummings; Rondeau	1141	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Adjourned Debate	
		(Second Day of Debate)	
		Murray	1147