



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? No. Dispense.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS medical authorities have stated that breast cancer in Manitoba has reached almost epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS yearly mammograms are recommended for women over 50, and perhaps younger if a woman feels she is at risk; and

WHEREAS while improved surgical procedures and better post-operative care do improve a woman's chances if she is diagnosed, early detection plays a vital role; and

WHEREAS Manitoba currently has only three centres where mammograms can be performed, those being Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson; and

WHEREAS a trip to and from these centres for a mammogram can cost a woman upwards of \$500 which is a prohibitive cost for some women; and

WHEREAS a number of other provinces have dealt with this problem by establishing mobile screening units; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has promised to take action on this serious issue.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right, where we have with us this afternoon Gerry Ducharme, the former member for the constituency of Riel and former Minister of Government Services.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you.

Seated in the public gallery this afternoon we have eight Grades 11 and 12 students from the Glenella School under the direction of Mr. Dwayne Zarichny. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings).

We also have thirteen Grade 9 students from Garden City Collegiate under the direction of Mrs. Claire Weiss and Mr. Bruce Sallee. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Personal Care Homes
Funding Formula**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Madam Speaker, we have reviewed the last annual reports available to us from the Department of Health dealing with funding in personal care homes. In the Winnipeg personal care homes the for-profit increase in funding from the Filmon government in the last available year is 4.1 percent. The nonprofit personal care homes were decreased in their funding by a half a percent.

I would like to ask the Premier, why is the government funding the profit homes at a rate of over 4 percent at the same time they are cutting back in the funding support to the nonprofit personal care homes in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I certainly will endeavour to seek information on the point that the member for Concordia raises, because it certainly does not seem to make logical sense unless there was inclusion of capital.

Madam Speaker, my experience in this House is often the information that is brought to the House by the Leader of the Opposition does not quite match with the facts, but I will endeavour to check that on his behalf and report back.

Mr. Doer: The numbers are there in the annual reports.

Madam Speaker, over the last five years the Premier (Mr. Filmon) shrugged his shoulders when we asked the question and just threw it off to his Minister of Health. Over the last five fiscal years the government has increased funding to private, profit nursing homes through three different cabinet ministers by some 21 percent while it has decreased funding for the nonprofit personal care homes. Part of that, of course, is an increase in beds, and part of that is just a basic increase in funding as we saw last year with the same amount of beds.

I would like to ask the Premier, did he consider Dr. Shapiro's report dealing with personal care homes dealing with assessing quality of personal care homes, when she indicated to the government that profit homes would have an increased risk for elderly in the homes, increased falls, increased fractures, increased dehydration, more unfortunate opportunity to have

pneumonia, and being older and a female resident in a profit home increased the risk of serious fall?

Did the government, did the Premier consider that in the funding priorities of the government for profit homes versus the nonprofit public homes?

* (1340)

Mr. Praznik: I am not going to accept the analysis of the Leader of the Opposition without an opportunity to check the facts, because there are a host of reasons why different numbers could be shown. There could be change in the level of care which would require an increase in funding; there could be particular capital initiatives in particular to those facilities.

So I would like the opportunity obviously to check on that, because the funding mechanism should be, to my understanding, the same whether it is a proprietary home or a nonproprietary facility. I will endeavour to check those particular numbers for the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Doer: Again to the Premier, who has been in charge while this extra funding went to the profit homes: In the last fiscal year available in annual reports, the funding for profit homes went from \$51.8 million to \$53.9 million, and the nonprofit homes went down from \$90 million to \$89 million. I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that they are increasing the profit homes and they are decreasing the nonprofit homes, is this the reason why he has refused to have a public inquiry about the injuries and deaths in the nursing homes, Madam Speaker, because he is afraid that the truth will come out about their funding priorities for profit homes and the kind of service that provides versus the nonprofit nursing homes here in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition again takes information and tries to stretch it into a case that he is trying to make without having the facts. Well, the member references the annual reports. Yes, the numbers are there, but what do those numbers—what are they made of? Are they because of a change in function that required a higher level of care in the specific circumstance? Is there capital involved with that? Are there renovations? He quotes a budget

line that is increased. Have there been additional beds in the system? Those are the kinds of facts, if the Leader of the Opposition was truly interested in them, that he would want to have before coming to the conclusion that he is making here today.

Let us not forget all governments in this province, his party included, because they were in power throughout the '70s and part of the '80s, we have a mixed system of personal care homes in this province. We have had that mixed system through the Schreyer administration and through the Pawley administration. But it is incumbent upon any Minister of Health and any government to ensure that, whoever runs the facility, there is proper care for our citizens who are residents and that is what we intend to do and have tried to do in the past.

Campaign Contributions Personal Care Home Owners—Private

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, Montesquieu once said that the corruption of every government begins nearly always with that of principles, the principle of public health care for people, not profit. I would like to ask the Premier if he can confirm that his party has received close to \$100,000 in campaign donations from operators of private personal care homes in this province and that in the last election his party received more than \$50,000 in campaign contributions from the operators of private care homes in this province.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I cannot confirm that any more than I can confirm whether or not the New Democratic Party received hundreds of millions of dollars of contributions from unions. Sorry, I will correct myself and say whether they received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the unions who have bought and paid for them, but these are matters that are public record. They are available in the information that is filed under The Election Finances Act, and they are available to all to be able to examine. He can examine it as well as anybody else.

Mr. Ashton: Well, speaking of “bought and paid for,” will the Premier confirm that one personal care home operator gave \$3,000 directly to the Premier's campaign?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, no, I cannot because I do not examine the origins of those funds, and I can tell you that many, many people, thousands of people make contributions to our party because they believe in the work that our party is doing, they believe in the principles that our party stands for, they believe in having good government in this province, and we do not ask them what job they have or what business they are in.

The New Democrats may be beholden to the union bosses of this province because hundreds of thousands of dollars are transferred over to them. I remember when Bernie Christophe of the UFCW or Manitoba Food and Commercial Workers said on the night of the election of the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) as the Leader of that party, “the machine works.” His machine had made sure that they had in place the person whose strings they could pull so that they could do the things they want, and that is the kind of thing that fascinates New Democrats, Madam Speaker, but we believe that people of Manitoba who support us do so because they believe in good government.

* (1345)

Personal Care Homes Public Inquiry

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My final supplementary, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier confirm what is obvious from the facts, that the reason the private personal care home operators have been donating the money to the Conservative government is because it has favoured the private system and that even at this date with the problems in the private system refuses to call a public inquiry to get to the bottom of the problems with our private and increasingly privatized health care system in this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): No, Madam Speaker.

Campaign Contributions Personal Care Home Owners—Private

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, obviously, the Premier does not get it. He does not

understand that a patient at a place like the Kildonan Personal Care Centre, where some patients have to go to the poverty line to pay the increased rates for a personal care home, their money, \$8,000 last year went from the Maples Personal Care Home Limited to the government's re-election platform.

Does the Premier not understand that this is wrong for people to put their families in homes where that money is going directly to the pockets, to the government? Does the Premier not understand that that is wrong?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I believe that it is wrong for people who have a check-off system, a government authorized system, to have to have their money go to have ads to support only certain candidates during an election campaign, ads that are forced upon them by their union leadership, ads that are paid for by checkoffs that are dictated by governments, that were put in place as a result of legislation by the New Democrats and their predecessor administrations. These are the kinds of things that New Democrats believe in. I do not. I believe in free will—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: I believe in a democratic process, and I believe that individuals who want to support good government and of their own free will donate money to our party, that is the way a democratic system works, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, perhaps the Premier can explain why the Nursing Home Association of Manitoba, a private association of Tory who-who contributors—is the person who investigated Holiday Haven where Roland Vazinet as president, where his personal care home, Heritage Lodge, gave \$6,300. Perhaps that will explain why the government is refusing to call a public inquiry into the ramifications and the dealings between this government and personal care homes in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have seen some leaps of logic in questions in

this House, but that one is certainly there because the member is trying to insinuate, because the association was used to do the investigation, that there is some collusion with the personal care home. In fact, my understanding is he brought this information to the House and their recommendation was that management be changed, and that is exactly what happened. So you cannot have it both ways, which is what the member for Kildonan would like us to believe.

Madam Speaker, we have always had a mix of personal care homes in this province. We have had some for profit. We have a large number of community-based organizations that sponsor personal care homes and of course some that are within the government realm. We have always had that mix. New Democrats have maintained and supported that mix when they were in power. The real critical issue, of course, is what kind of supervision and support we provide to ensure adequate care for the residents of those personal care homes and ensuring the best possible care that we can in a situation where care is coming at a higher level, is the challenge that we face.

* (1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the Premier explain why the government has been reluctant to investigate private nursing homes in light of the fact that Maples, that Kildonan gave \$8,000 to the Tory campaign, that Bonfam Management gave \$2,000 directly to the Attorney General, that Maples, Ed Pollock gave a thousand dollars to Gary Filmon, the Kildonan Personal Care home gave \$3,000 directly to Filmon? Does not the Premier admit it is wrong for these personal care homes where the rates have doubled for residents since 1992-93 to be putting money into the pockets of the Conservative governing party?

Mr. Praznik: By using that same logic, is it not a conflict of interest when the Manitoba Government Employees' Union, who takes by legislation money from the pockets of its members and gives it to the New Democratic Party, faces the New Democratic Party when they are in government on the bargaining table to bargain on behalf of the people of this province for wages and benefits? Is that not a conflict of interest?

To be blunt, the accusations and insinuations that the members opposite are trying to stretch to put on the floor of this House are really irrelevant to the debate. We have always had a mix of personal care home services in this province. If I take the commentary of the member, I would suggest that they are saying to us today we should be nationalizing them all throughout this province. As well, when the member says we do not want an inquiry, the Chief Medical Officer of the province has ordered an inquest, and part of that mandate is to determine any concerns regarding safety of elderly persons in personal care homes. I hope that would include all personal care homes, not just private ones. We need that information in order to regulate them.

Grade 12 Mathematics Examination Fairness

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, there are serious concerns about the fairness of the Grade 12, 40S math exam. It is not an issue of the principle of assessment but one of the fairness on an exam which counts for 30 percent of the final grade. Students in several divisions did not write the exam because of weather conditions, and they will be marked on their class work while those students who write in June will have the advantage of knowing in advance the new criteria.

Yet all these students must compete for the same places in universities and colleges and for scholarships. I would like to ask the Minister of Education to tell us what steps she intends to take to rectify the unfairness which directly affects the future of several hundred of Manitoba's young people.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I should indicate to the member that I do recognize it is important to get an apples-to-apples comparison, and that is what our goal is.

Last year we had devised a means of dealing with those few students that could not write exams with two vehicles which seemed to be acceptable to divisions at the time. This year, however, we did have, because of extreme conditions that were unusual—they do happen from time to time in Manitoba but not on an annual basis—conditions such that there were a large number of

students that could not write, and so my department began work and is continuing work on devising a way of indicating the apples-to-apples comparison that is inherent in a good standards examination.

So we are aware of the issue. We are working on the issue. It does not negate the worth or the worthiness of standards exams. As we come into the implementation of exams, we know we have short-term concerns that will rise that we can address, long-term solutions as well. We will be moving to back-up examinations in the future, and we will have a solution to this dilemma very shortly.

Brandon School Board Resolution

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the minister tell the House what her response is to the resolution passed last night by the Brandon school board to discount the results of the provincial math exam in their students' final records?

* (1355)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I should indicate that my response to the Brandon school board will be given to the school board first before it is given to others, but I would indicate, Madam Speaker, that—out of courtesy, it is a very serious matter—Brandon School Division had several concerns. The one concern the member has identified I feel was a legitimate concern as we were already aware of it and seeking to address it both in the short and the long term.

The other concerns that the Brandon School Division had were, unfortunately, inaccurate. They had indicated that the examination was not curriculum congruent; it was. It was composed by teachers who are teaching that curriculum, was sent to a review committee for extensive review. More than that, school divisions were notified early in the fall that, because last year's examination had revealed problems with problem solving, this exam would deal with problem solving, and that they should be very conscious of that in the teaching of the curriculum. Their concerns I think came about when their students did not do very well. That flies in the face of the fact that other divisions did do well.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, could the minister tell the House whether a school division in fact has the authority to take such an action or whether this action is in fact in contravention of the educational laws of Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the Brandon school board cannot act upon any motions made that violate provincial law. I believe they know that, but if the member is wanting to know was the motion legal or illegal, my opinion would be that it is an illegal motion because it does not deal with provincial law in a co-operative fashion.

Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines Relocation Expenditures

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. I think a vast majority of Manitobans would be disappointed when in fact government over the last couple of years has been cutting back on expenditures dealing with health care, with expenditures dealing with public education, while at the same time we have an expenditure in excess of \$70,000 for a moving allocation for a civil servant who is being paid \$108,000. In going through the document that the minister tabled yesterday, it is a bit confusing in the sense that the document that he tabled, that \$74,734, is that entire document related to the relocation?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, with respect to the quantum, the portion that was related to relocation I believe was \$69,000 and change. Another portion related to expense account matters. With respect to the devotion of this amount to this particular individual, a highly skilled, experienced individual in international trade with the foreign service, brought in here to try and market mining in the province, amongst other responsibilities, and also to help with the development of our energy reserves, we have been rewarded as a province partly to that contribution in the form of \$3.9 million in terms of our recent oil lease sales which went right into general revenue. We have 27 new mining companies exploring in Manitoba. The results of that kind of exploration hopefully will lead to another Flin Flon or Thompson in this province.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, understanding that the minister is saying that the travel portion of the paper that he tabled had nothing to do with the relocation, then why is it in the '95-96 expense account for out of province it is in excess of \$17,000, and he claims that it is only \$4,000, or your department claims that it is only \$4,700? Why the discretion there? Why were we not provided the full details when we requested it through Freedom of Information?

Mr. Newman: The information provided yesterday was in direct response to the question that the honourable member for Inkster had asked. The information requested under Freedom of Information was provided I believe in accordance with that request. To the extent that the information contained in the disclosure yesterday has somehow caused some confusion, I would have to have more information shed by my honourable friend on that so I could pursue it.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: I will provide that further information to the minister immediately following Question Period.

Qualifications

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My final question to the Minister of Energy and Mines is, can he indicate to this House just what qualifications did Mr. Fine have that he could not find in someone else throughout the province of Manitoba? Why did he feel it was necessary to go beyond Manitoba's borders? Does he not have the confidence from within his own department, or is there not anyone else in the province that could have done the job that this government was hoping to be able to achieve? Can the minister tell us what qualifications does Mr. Fine bring to this particular department?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I suppose we should ask the member for Inkster why his party went outside the Legislature to find its Leader when they had members of the Legislature who would normally be able to take that.

Madam Speaker, although for the most part this administration has been able to promote from within for

its deputy roles, in looking at that particular responsibility we felt that in marketing energy and mines, in particular, and some of the negotiations that had to be carried out with respect to the major negotiations on treaty land entitlement, Northern Flood Agreement and so on, we needed someone who brought a broad range of skills to the table, who perhaps had some understanding of the federal system of government, which is the major partner in the negotiations that we were undertaking, and who also had a very strong background in international marketing and trade.

I think, on all counts, as the Minister of Energy and Mines has indicated, there have been quite a number of successes, whether a framework agreement on treaty land entitlement, the progress towards a successful conclusion of the Northern Flood Agreement, a major, major expansion of the number of companies coming in here to do exploration, some 27 new companies, mineral exploration, and some very significant accomplishments in the area of oil exploration. So on all counts we believe that the leadership that has been shown was worth the effort.

South Indian Lake Water Treatment Plant

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My questions are to the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Last Thursday at South Indian Lake, once again the water treatment plant broke down. Yesterday morning, as the minister knows, I asked his office to send people to South Indian Lake to fix the plant. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful and left leaving the community of nearly 1,000 people without a source of drinking water.

Given that the water treatment plant may not be back in operation for another few days at best, what emergency measures is he taking to ensure adequate and safe water supplies for the population in the meantime?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am informed that that situation is under control, that there are people who have been at

that site over the weekend from the Department of Northern Affairs and that they hope to achieve a resolution of the problem tomorrow. My understanding is there have been communications today with the community and that there is not any need for any additional measures to be taken to provide their needs for the day in question, and the matter hopefully will be resolved tomorrow.

Mr. Jennissen: Nobody from Northern Affairs was there today, Madam Speaker.

Since the school is closed since now there is no fire protection available and there are serious sanitation and health risks, what action will the minister undertake immediately to protect the health and safety of the people of South Indian Lake?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, with respect to safety measures being taken, my understanding again is that that is in the hands of the community, the public works people in the community who are working very cooperatively with our people to try and arrive at a solution, and that just as every community that has an emergency situation like this, it requires the co-operation of the members to be prepared for this kind of situation.

We are trying to develop healthy and sustainable communities that are more autonomous up there, and we believe that the community itself through its leadership is coming up with solutions to look after itself in this respect.

Mr. Jennissen: When is this government prepared to replace the old and inadequate water treatment plant and upgrade the sewage system, both of which, as the minister knows, do not meet the requirements of the community at South Indian Lake?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, my information is that this 24-year-old plant, the water treatment plant, is in good condition and is well maintained by the local public works staff. Money has been put into this particular plant in the quantum of \$20,000, '95-96; \$20,000, '93-94; \$2,497 in '92-93 and a structural repair component of \$80,000 is committed to for '97-98. This

unforeseen situation which has arisen recently is hopefully going to be resolved tomorrow.

Northern Affairs Office Closure—The Pas

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Last week, in defending the closure of the Northern Affairs office in The Pas, the minister said that having civil servants in northern Manitoba really goes against the pioneering spirit of the North. We in the North view that move as cold and heartless, because it is throwing six or seven people out of work in an area where the unemployment rate is 25 percent or higher.

I want to ask the minister as to how he can reconcile logically closing that office, throwing people out of work, with his deputy minister trying to hire his spouse or charging the department \$799 for dry cleaning amongst other charges totalling nearly \$70,000.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, the preamble is inaccurate. I will not respond to every point, but the fact is no one is being thrown out of work. In fact, one of the people who is moving in the transfers that I described earlier from The Pas to Thompson will be receiving a promotion in that process, and she is a dedicated civil servant and an aboriginal woman whom I have a great deal of respect for.

Two other individuals are subject to being transferred. A process may be worked out to try and accommodate their personal situations if that transfer is going to cause too great a hardship for their families, and they may very well have an opportunity to continue to work in The Pas on a newly negotiated basis which is in the public interests of the province of Manitoba but also is able to accommodate those particular individuals. Another individual has been placed with the Department of Natural Resources in a job which she is very happy with in The Pas. The other individual who is affected by this, who is not from The Pas office, is being trained as an entrepreneur. This is all part of the transition process towards sustainable, healthy, autonomous communities in the North.

Mr. Lathlin: My second question to the Minister of Northern Affairs is, would he agree to put the closure of the Northern Affairs office in The Pas on hold until such things as the future of his Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs has been cleared up and decided upon?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, the answer to that question is no. That office will come to closure at the expiration of the lease on March 31.

With respect to the deputy minister, that is an unrelated issue. That will come to closure when the Clerk of the Executive Council decides what is the appropriate discipline, if any, to impose. I expect that to happen shortly. In the meantime, it is business as normal in the department, and the deputy minister continues to function conscientiously and well in the service of the province of Manitoba.

Income Assistance Work Expectations—Single Parents

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Last year, on March 12, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) made a series of announcements about welfare reform, and one of them was that single parents with children ages six to 18 were now deemed employable and that single parents with children under six were not deemed employable.

Since then, many single parents have approached me with horror stories, parents with children under six, as young as 10-months-old, about the pressure being put on them to get into the paid workforce.

I would like to ask the Premier, since he is responsible for every policy of his government, if he could confirm that it is his government's policy after all to have a work expectation on single parents with children under six.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): No, Madam Speaker, it is not. Indeed, our government went over very carefully the expectations and requirements. There are some provinces in which there is an expectation for people to go to work, with children one-year-old and two-years-old. From Day One, sometimes after birth, there is an expectation of people having to go to work.

That was not the policy, and the policy was made very clear to be only after the children reached six years of age. That is the policy. If it is not being implemented properly by those who have the responsibility, then that will be corrected.

* (1410)

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table a page from the administrative manual for income assistance which says that these obligations apply to single parents. The only exception is if they have taken any kind of training.

I would like to ask the Premier if he could verify what the manual says, contrary to what he said, because this is what the workers in income security are following, and indicate that, yes, they do have an employment expectation if they have taken any kind of training or upgrading which includes the vast majority of single parents.

Mr. Filmon: I will take that as notice on behalf of the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

GRIP Program Surplus Agricultural Research Funding

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): In the throne speech the government said that there is a need for industrial development and applied research—the need has never been greater—so urgent the government will now support development and research in all aspects of the agricultural industry.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture, given that his government has finally recognized the importance of agriculture research, is this government prepared to commit the surplus from GRIP that is now available from the federal-provincial government into agriculture research in Manitoba?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I can indicate to the honourable member that under the terms and conditions of the GRIP program that were entered into by the province and other provinces with the Government of Canada, it was the responsibility of

senior governments, both federal and provincial, to accept any potential deficits that might have been in place at the conclusion of these programs and to return to the respective treasuries any surpluses. That has happened here in Manitoba as it has happened in other provinces.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to ask this government why they are so weak when it comes to negotiating with the federal government in getting money for this province. We have seen it in other areas, and now we see that the federal government and provincial government in Saskatchewan have put their money towards the agriculture industry.

Why have you not been able to negotiate the federal money to stay here in Manitoba for agriculture research?

Mr. Enns: Known to the vast majority of our producers, we had to begin with a far superior program that paid out benefits in excess of \$800 million to the producers when they needed it in Manitoba. That is why Saskatchewan producers opted out of the program a year or two earlier, because the design of the program was not fulfilling the need.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, with respect to dedication to agriculture, I am very pleased that I am part of a cabinet and government that maintained a very significant portion of that provincial share of the GRIP premium to put towards an enhanced crop insurance program that has been very well accepted by Manitoba farmers. To that extent, the federal government contributed its equivalent share to that enhanced crop insurance program in the multimillions of dollars.

Madam Speaker, that was our choice in Manitoba. In Saskatchewan, they chose to use similar monies for different purposes: development and diversification programs. We had already dedicated some efforts to diversification, and those programs are well underway.

Woodstone Technologies Ltd. Payment of Wages

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, last night some 26 employees of Woodstone Enterprises—

Technologies now—met in Portage la Prairie with Labour Canada, facing losses of about \$110,000 in their wages, something over \$4,000 each family. That may not seem like a lot to some members opposite, but to working people who are making \$10, \$11 an hour, it is an awful lot of money.

Will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), who knows that these people are justly owed wages, that there is now an order against the former directors of the company for the payment of these wages, also knows that these directors are basically eluding their responsibilities in terms of payment, will he ensure that the first charge against the refunds from the Grow Bonds, which he is now going to send out to those directors, will go to the payment of the wages for those workers and their families who are out of work and need their income?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the member opposite that our concern has always been for the workers who were at Woodstone when Woodstone was operating. As a matter of fact, we put every effort possible to ensure that Woodstone could continue when the member opposite was sending out letters indicating that perhaps we should move Woodstone to Winnipeg, and in that way the jobs would be lost in Portage a long time ago. I do not know how now he comes forward and says how great an interest he has in the workers at Woodstone.

Madam Speaker, let me say with regard to Grow Bonds, we have to comply with the legislation that has been put in place, and we will conduct ourselves in accordance with that legislation and in accordance with the law.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Pembina Valley Language Education for Adults Program

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Pembina have leave? [agreed]

Mr. Dyck: Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending the Pembina Valley Language Education for Adults spring get-together. This is a community-based learning centre program in the Pembina constituency. This organization provides literacy training to adults and English as a second language instruction.

The program has been extremely successful. In fact, last November the Lieutenant Governor, Yvon Dumont, recognized the Pembina Valley Language Education for Adults program for its achievements in language training. The program received the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Literacy.

The program was initiated back in 1984 in response to the English as a second language needs of Kanadier in the area. Kanadier—their first language is Low German—are Mennonite people who left Canada between the 1920s and '40s for South and Central America. A number have since returned and settled in this region of the province. Many have a lack of formal education and little knowledge of the English language.

The program has since expanded to include immigrants from Bosnia, Chile, Russia, Lebanon, China and El Salvador, as well as Canadian-born students. Programming encompasses a broad range from beginning reading and writing to university-entrance courses. The program also gives learners the opportunity to enhance skills that create independence, build self-esteem, increase employability and facilitate access to other training and education.

A learner-centred approach to adult learning is the foundation of the learning environment. Individual needs are assessed initially and on a continuous basis and a program of study is designed to help the individual meet his or her needs. There are approximately 150 people who are currently participating as learners in the program held in Altona, Lowe Farm, Miami, Winkler and Morden. I would like to commend the teachers, students and others involved in making the Pembina Valley Language Education for Adults program such a success. Thank you very much.

Sisler High School Women's Centre

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Radisson have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I invite the House to join me in congratulating Sisler High School for another first. Last Friday on International Women's Day, Sisler students, staff and other members of the community officially opened their women's centre, the first ever student-initiated women's centre in a Winnipeg high school. This centre will be a home base for students to plan other firsts, other things that have never been done before.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members having meetings at the back if they would do so in the loge or outside the Chamber. I am having difficulty hearing the honourable member for Radisson.

Ms. Cerilli: This centre will be a home base for students to plan other firsts, particularly things that have never been done before by girls and women. It will offer women students a place to go that will be a resource centre and for peer support.

The staff and administration deserve recognition for supporting this idea from the students of this women's studies course, particularly the commitment and vision of Gemma Gay, the teacher of the women's studies students. Also deserving of recognition is the role of the Legal Education and Action Fund in providing financial support to purchase materials for the resource centre, particularly Betty Hopkins who was also, along with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Vodrey), at the official opening of this women's centre.

I enjoyed meeting with the students and was impressed by their enthusiasm and look forward to good things to come from the women's centre and the women's studies students at Sisler High School.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Turtle

Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the amendment proposed by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, one of the things that a lot of people in Manitoba are now recognizing is that although this government may put out nice words in press releases, nice words in a throne speech or pamphlets that the government puts out, it is when we see the actions that have come to light in issues like today in Question Period that we see the true colours of this government. The picture that is being painted here today of corruption, the picture that is being painted today of how the privatization of health care is turning money into the Conservative government political fund is astounding and I think will be seen as reprehensible by Manitobans.

* (1420)

When you etch this picture out and paint this picture, when we see that the fees that are being charged to Manitobans who have put the care of the seniors in their families into the hands of these private institutions, when they are having their fees increased by 50 percent to 100 percent in the last three years, from \$26 a day to at least \$54 a day, and then when that money in turn, when \$50,000, almost \$51,000 of that money is then in the last election into the hands of the Conservative government bagmen, the Conservative Party bagmen, people will see the true colours. I think that they will be disturbed, and they will be disgusted when you compare that in 1988 the Tory Party fund received less than \$4,000 from these private seniors' care institutions and last election that was up to more, as I said, than \$50,000.

When you look at the relationship between these institutions and this government and see that they have given over a 4 percent increase to these for-profit institutions—this is for-profit health care institutions for seniors—it is an interesting way of then having public money end up financing the party fund and the re-election campaign for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and members opposite.

The way that they try and defend this is equally as reprehensible and concerning, when they try to say that

somehow then this is justified because the NDP receives donations from organized labour, when we receive perhaps 10 percent of our donations from organized labour. They are trying to compare that to this, what ends up being the use of public funds for their re-election campaign. I do not think the members of the public will buy any of the rhetoric that was in the throne speech when they are shown this very, very disturbing picture.

I am in the process of putting together some information for my constituents on the effects of contracting out and privatization of health care, and this is an example of the worst thing, the worst possible thing that can happen, when you have private institutions receiving public funds in health care that then in turn give these very large donations to Tory candidates—kickbacks, as they could also be called.

This is going to be yet another chink in the armour, chink in the teflon, Madam Speaker, that this government has tried to surround themselves in. I can tell you that the members of the public are going to pay close attention to the government's plan for regionalization in health care both in rural Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg when they see this kind of example of privatization of health care.

I was also recently doing some research on Concordia Hospital and looking at the changes that are occurring there. They are now being forced into a situation to privatize their food services with again a nonunionized, low-wage private company that is going to be preparing meals for people in hospitals. Someone used the example for me, this is going to be a centralized agency that is going to prepare the food for all the hospitals and then ship it out. It is going to be interesting how this kind of private company is going to be able to deal with the special needs of or nutrition of residents of hospitals, the very intricate and detailed menu plans that are required by residents in hospitals.

We will have to wait and see what other services are going to be next in terms of privatization. Is it going to be human resources? Is it going to be materials supply, laundry, more privatization of labs?

It would be the same if the Legislatures all across Canada had their food prepared in Toronto and then it

was shipped all across the country, so that we would end up eating sandwiches for lunch that were prepared elsewhere. That is what is happening, in fact, in health care services, in health care residences across the country. It is ridiculous when you think of how important nutrition is to the health of patients in hospitals, that they would look to that kind of nutrition and food services.

One of the other things I want to draw attention to that is also occurring at Concordia Hospital is the release, the firing essentially, the elimination of all of the 195 nursing staff, so they are again going to be required to apply for their own jobs back. The 43 LPNs, of course, will not have a job to apply for. They will be forced to apply for either a nurse's aide position or a health care aide or a unit assistant at approximately \$5 less per hour for the starting wages.

Now this apparently is going to save \$400,000 for Concordia Hospital, and they are in a difficult situation, of course. Like all health care institutions, they have had budget reductions from this government. They have been forced to try and skimp and save and see where they can create these so-called efficiencies. We are going to have to see how patient care will suffer when, yes, there will be more staff in that hospital, but they will have far fewer qualifications and be able to perform far fewer health care functions.

Now maybe there will be two or three more registered nurses hired, but I think that they will be forced to do far more now that there will no longer be LPNs in that hospital. I know that there have been studies done on how this compilation of nursing staff has worked in other places, and there are reports that it has not been successful in improving health care services. That is for certain.

I also wanted to say just in closing that yesterday I was talking about some charts that I had discovered in a report by the Canadian Council on Social Development. The report is called Growing Up in Canada, and in the Economic Security section it clearly shows what I know I talk about often in this House: the fact that the wealth in our community, in our society and economy is being more and more unfairly distributed, inequitably distributed, but there is an increasing gap that is growing between the lower

income and the higher income, and it is coming by a stretching or pulling apart at both ends. The chart that I have here shows a comparison between the average market income for families and children between 1984 and 1994, and it shows that the lowest quintile, those families with children in 1994 that earned less than \$5,500 a year—now it is hard for us to even imagine what it is like to live on that low of an income, but there are families that struggle to cope, to provide the essentials: food, clothing, a roof over their heads, some basics, just providing the basics on that amount. But, when you recognize that since 1984 they have had a 29 percent reduction in the income for that quintile. In 1984, the poorest in our country had an income of \$7,800 and now it is \$5,500. That is the average, a 29 percent reduction, and when you think about how that will affect the development of those children.

* (1430)

This is pure market income. This does not take into account the after-tax benefits, the social programs that we invest in this country called Canada. So this makes another point, this chart makes another point, and that is how valuable and essential and important those programs are in creating some social and economic equity in this country. This chart would change, there would be a difference and the line between the haves and the have-nots will be shrunk once we account for the impact of health care, public education, social allowance and the programs for social housing, as well as any tax benefits for those lower income people. But, when you think of the fact that at the same time in the highest quintile—here we are talking about families that earn more than \$105,000 a year in 1994—their income has gone up 8 percent since 1984, so in those years those families are far better off. They were earning \$97,900 in '84 and now in '94 it is \$105,400, an 8 percent increase, so that is the picture that is being painted by this graph.

We are seeing across our communities here in Manitoba that there is this growing gap, that there is this social and economic deficit, not the deficit that this government is fixated on, but the deficit of families, of families in my constituency. I know many of them who are struggling on these incomes. The average income for the middle quintile is now \$45,100; it has gone up 2 percent. But when you look at the other graph on this

sheet, it tells the other part of the story. It tells the part of the story that when you compare 1984, 1989 and 1994, the average after-tax income for families with children in Canada has gone down. When you look at combining both two-parent families and lone-parent families, it has gone down by \$100 a year.

So I am going to include this information in my correspondence with my constituents and I am going to say to them, it is not your imagination when you find that you are not able to balance your budget at home and you are finding that you cannot have your children participate in as many recreation programs or after-school activities; it is not your imagination that your spending power is shrinking. I think it is important for them to know that because, if they listen to the rhetoric of this government, if they listen to what they put in the throne speech about how the economy in Manitoba is booming, we have to give them some information that will show what is happening in the reality of their lives, that their spending power is indeed not increasing, particularly if they are in lone-parent families. Since 1989 the average after-tax income has reduced by \$2,100 a year.

It is interesting that this government is trying to take all this credit for increases in the economy when we look at the plant closings that have occurred in this province just since the new year, just since the beginning of 1997: Molson, Rogers Sugar, P and H Foods. How many of those jobs were unionized, unionized shops where they were being paid well more than minimum wage? They had a decent income. You compare that with the jobs that the government is creating in industries like telemarketing where minimum wage or a dollar more than minimum wage, part-time work, no benefits, no job security—the turnover rate in those jobs is tremendous. I know people myself who have quit those jobs because they could not stand the pressure.

We have information from research that is being done on these telemarketing institutions. They are called the sweatshops of the '90s, the same type of working conditions that we fought so hard to eliminate in the manufacturing sector decades ago. We are now finding these same conditions in the new, high-tech areas related to telecommunications. We know that they are finding interesting ways to get around legislation so that

they can be actually paid less than what they would be paid, for example, at AT&T, because what is happening is, AT&T will contract with a personnel agency so that the funding for hiring workers will be paid to the personnel company, and they will then take a dollar off what would be the salary for those workers.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

One of the things that always bothers me about the rhetoric from the Conservative or the Liberal Party is when they talk about this so-called new economy. I was at an event on Saturday where one of the vice-presidents from a bank in Manitoba was saying that we all have to now have the attitude of an immigrant. We all have to be able to be willing to pick up and leave, leave our community, leave our family to start a new life where we can go and find work.

The lack of foresight that that shows in terms of the effects on communities, the effects on families, when we now expect people to accept that there is no job security—you hear it all the time from the Tories and Liberals. You cannot expect to have one job for the rest of your life. You cannot expect to have one company provide you with a full-time job. You have to move or go and have a number of part-time jobs.

Then at the same time they set up programs like the Employment Insurance program that limits your ability to collect and to add up your hours so that if you do have two part-time jobs, you still can only count the number of hours as if it were full-time work, one full-time job. So they are preventing people who are trying to work hard, who are trying to adapt—that is the other buzzword from these neoliberal, neoconservative parties. They are trying to still penalize them from getting ahead.

I am going to conclude my remarks there by saying that no one is fooled by the rhetoric in the government's throne speech when they look at the concrete actions, the real actions of this government, particularly as shown here today by their reductions to support for personal care homes in the public sector, their increases for their private sector friends and then the kickbacks they have received in contributions to their Tory

election fund. That is the kind of issue that will see this government defeated. Thank you.

* (1440)

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to be back in the House and to be allowed a few minutes to reflect on the Speech from the Throne, although I would like to ask for the House's consideration that I might deviate a wee bit from the Speech from the Throne today, although it is part and parcel of the Speech from the Throne.

But because of what happened to me personally and my family over the last few days, I would like to reflect. First of all, a wee bit on our health care system. I want to commend the people, all the people in the Altona Hospital for the absolute professional and tremendous service that they provided to me when I had some difficulties with an infection. The doctors and the professional way they dealt with me was second to none, the nurses and all the staff including kitchen staff and cleaning staff. I do not think you could find a better group of people. So I want to commend them for the way they conducted themselves and how they served their people.

Much has been said about the demise of the health care system in this House and much has been said by the media about our system. But let me say this to you, until you have experienced it, you know not what you speak of. I happen to believe that if in fact we are able to deliver the kind of services we do in Altona, and I have no doubt in my mind that we can and are, then very few people would have anything to complain about.

I want to also take a bit of time and reflect on some of the things that have been said about our Speaker and how she conducted herself prior to the adjournment of the fall session. When you, when all of us take a look at especially the Report by the Standing and Special Committee on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, which all of you have copies of, and when you reflect on the fact that Mr. Ashton and Mr. Lamoureux and Mr. Martindale, myself and Mr. Praznik spent two and a half years, or better than two and a half years, looking at how we could more efficiently use our time in this House, and basically

what we discussed in those two and a half years was changing the rules, changing how this House would do business. It took two and a half years before we came to a position where we actually were able to put something down on paper.

We put a proposal on paper which all of our caucuses had a look at, and I suspect that all of our caucuses had input through the representatives that were part of that committee. I have been part of that, and I know the discussion that went in that emanated around this issue in our caucus, and I know some of the concerns that were expressed about the changes that we were making within our caucus.

I know that some of those same discussions took place in both the other opposition parties, but once those debates had taken place, the report was brought to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, and the report was adopted by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections and brought to this House. I happened to be the chairperson of that Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections and tabled the report in this House, and it was unanimously received, and all of us in this House agreed to those rules.

It saddens me sometimes when I watched what happened, when I reflect on what was said during the difficult debate on MTS—and, yes, it was a difficult debate. The committee that I chaired that dealt with the MTS bill sat for around 60 hours, I believe. We spent many hours listening to presentations, some of them orchestrated, some of them otherwise, which was fair ball. I mean, that is the way this House operated, and that is, in my view, democratic. That is why we are here. That is why all of us are here.

There have also been criticisms made of the Speaker and how she conducted the last week of the session. Well, if you look at the rules, the last week of the session is prescribed in the rules, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to exactly how she must conduct herself. I would make the case that she did exactly that. She followed the rules explicitly. There is prescribed in those rules a process whereby the session must end. Under the new rules—not the old rules, but the new rules—there is a process to end the session, and it speaks to voting on all the bills before the House that have been brought before the House, debated, gone through first, second

and third reading and accepted by the House. It speaks to the exact process.

I would propose to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all members of this Legislature that the Speaker had no choice but to follow those rules because those were our rules. We made them; the committee debated them; the committee proposed them to their caucuses and the caucuses accepted them; and this House unanimously adopted them by adopting their report. Therefore, I make the case that the Speaker would have broken the rules had she not followed explicitly the way she did.

I say these things because I had some time to reflect, especially when, on the first day of the sitting of this House, I was lying in a hospital bed watching some of the media reports and some of the things that were said in this House and sort of reflecting on how we act in this House.

You see the pictures, the two-minute or the 10-second clips, and it causes a different kind of perception from where I viewed it than we normally see in this House. We portray ourselves to the general public in a manner that I was not proud of. I am not criticizing either party in this House or any individuals in this House, but it was just a general sort of perception that came through the media to us out in the general public. I did not feel comfortable as to how I saw myself as a member of the Legislature, so I said to a few people that came in to see me, maybe there is a time when one needs to do this, when one needs to lie flat on one's back and look up. It is a good way to look at the light on the ceiling.

It is also a good way to reflect on how we as politicians want to be perceived in the future, how our children and our grandchildren will view us and weigh us and value us and their children. So I think we have a responsibility that is much broader and goes way beyond the walls of this Chamber. Unless there is support of all members of this House, maybe we should pay just a wee bit of attention to raising our stature somewhat by how we conduct ourselves in the business in this House and how we portray ourselves through the media to the general public, because we are after all a democratic society. We consider this government a democracy, and I take a great deal of pride in being part of this democracy.

I welcome the debate, as you all know. I enjoy the jousting and the debating in this House. I enjoy it tremendously, but I also take a great deal of pride in having the general public look upon us with pride, and I am not sure whether I enjoyed that pride at times. This Speech from the Throne reflects in my view a commitment that was made by those of us who were elected in 1988 when we first formed government. It was a commitment, No. 1, to ensure that we could operate a government and the expenditures on a daily basis, on a year-to-year basis without borrowing huge amounts of money to supplement the expenditures, and if we had to increase expenditures, that we would have the political will to go to the people and say, we need to increase our expenditures and therefore we need to increase our revenues.

* (1450)

When we do that, that simply means if you want us to spend more money, you are going to have to put up more money without having to continually go to the bank. That is a commitment we made to the people in 1988. This budget or this Speech from the Throne basically reflects that strategy. It has not changed. It was a long-term commitment. It was a long-term plan. The long-term plan has not changed. We made a very conscious decision at that time, our government did, that we would set some priorities: health care, No. 1 priority; education, No. 2 priority; social services, No. 3 priority. Those were our commitments, and we have not deviated from that commitment. I think if we honestly look at health care, no matter how much we have criticized health care and cuts and no matter how much we have talked about cuts in the health care, when you realistically look at the health care budgets, I do not think we can honestly point the finger and say that this government has cut the health care budget in any given year. We have always expended more money year over year over year, without fail. I am not sure whether I am totally proud of that, because I think that we could have at some point in time made the decision to actually stabilize the health care spending to a greater degree than we already have.

Have we made changes within the health care system? Vast changes. Is the need for the regular care bed still as great as it was back in the early '70s? No, it is not, because I saw during the five days that I was in

hospital people coming out of the operating room and within a day go home. Operations that would have normally taken five or six days previously of hospital stay now were in and out.

There have been vast changes in technology, vast changes in the application of the medical procedures, vast changes in how we apply the knowledge that we have within the health care system. So we have set aside in many hospitals a lot of rooms that are simply not used anymore.

Do we need to make some further changes? I think so. Do we need to designate more beds to operating, those kind of things? Probably. Are we going to have to spend more money on home care if we want to allow our elderly to live in dignity in their own homes longer than they have in the past instead of institutionalizing them? Yes, we will. Those are the changes in health care that we are going to have to deal with on an ongoing basis, and, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not matter which party is in power in this province or which party is in power in Saskatchewan or Alberta or B.C. All of those governments are faced with the same problems; all of the political parties are faced with the same dilemma. Where will we go to get the information that we need to make the right decisions? Those are the real issues.

Similarly in education. I met last week, the week before I went into the hospital, with the parent council and the school board in the Rhineland School Division at Miller Collegiate. We had a three-hour meeting with the school board, and we did not come up with a huge number of answers for the school board. We came up with far more questions than we did with answers, and they had nothing to do with provincial budgeting or local budgeting, school divisional budgeting or whether we could afford or not afford. They had everything to do with giving the child the best absolute education possible. That is what the real concerns were, and it had very little to do with money. It had everything to do with the ability to get through to the child.

Similarly, when I look at all the discussion that we have had in this province on child poverty, and yes, we can all talk about child poverty. We can all talk of the huge numbers of children in poverty, but when I look at the farm situation, the agricultural community, do not

be too surprised that within a couple of years if the downslide in prices will keep on elevating, that you are going to have virtually every child in rural Manitoba listed as a child living in poverty because their parents will not have enough income to designate them as a child that is not in poverty. It is the level of income that is designated as taking a child in and out of poverty.

When I look at my neighbours and the difference in incomes within our neighbourhood, surely some of them are much better off than others. Are the children really better off? Does the dollar amount of income designate the welfare of the child? Do we do it by dollar values, or are there other values that we should include in the poverty equation? Are we teaching our children how to fend for themselves? Are we teaching our children values, or are we equating it all to dollars and cents? Poverty has a huge, huge parameter. I think someday, sometime, we might want to have the debate as to what poverty really is.

A spiritually impoverished child is poor; a child without money need not necessarily be poor. Just because we have an influx of children or young people or families to a food bank that is set up to hand out things for nothing, do we relegate that as a measurement, a thermometer, of what poverty is all about? If we do, then we are in serious trouble because the more you give, the more you are going to need. Hopefully I do not sound like a Scrooge, because I do not intend to, but that is reality. I think we need to approach some of these issues that we have debated in this House for a number of years with a more realistic approach, a more holistic approach.

We can all point fingers. Municipalities can point fingers of offloading at the provincial government; the provincial government can point fingers of offloading at the federal government. In the final analysis we blame each other for all our problems, but if we do not really look at the issue, the true issues and how to resolve them, we get nowhere. It becomes an act of futility, and certainly I do not want to be part of that kind of an ongoing rhetoric that leads us nowhere.

When you look at budgeting and when you look at throne speeches and commitments made such as we

have before us here today, you have to reflect back three years when the federal government said, we will make changes to the economic mosaic within this country. Of course, the first thing they did was they did away with the Crow benefit to the farm community, \$750 million taken out of the pockets of farmers. As it happened, I mean, no political party could ever have been luckier because, as it happened, the wheat prices rose, grain prices rose and everybody went along their merry way and said, boy, this is great, we do not need the Crow benefit.

* (1500)

I made a statement to a group of people about five years prior to that when I was still with the CFA, and I said we should be very careful that we do not do away with the equilibriums, and the Crow benefit was an equilibrium. It caused a balance. It caused many things to happen within the farm community that we paid absolutely no attention to, the Wheat Board function on its ability to equalize all costs. Our transportation costs were the same whether in Manitoba or Alberta. Our seaway costs were the same in Alberta as they were in Manitoba. When we transported to the United States or through Churchill, it did not matter; the costs were all equalized under the system, and the Crow benefit was the basis for it.

The pooling costs on the seaway were all brought into the same equitable base, and agriculture in western Canada flourished on that. The institutions built around it were part of that whole scenario, and the costs were applied equally.

I say to you in this House today that because the federal government dared do away with the Crow benefit, and we all praised them. I am not the exception to that. We all praised them. We all said, great, we should do away with the Crow. But let me remind you of one thing, that this will bring on the debate within western Canada and in eastern Canada whether we should in fact maintain supply-management structures. It will bring on the debate because there is nothing equal anymore. Our cost of production for supply-management goods are lower in Manitoba than they are anywhere in Canada today simply because of the freight factor. There is no question about that.

The question whether we should maintain the rail system the way we have until now or who should pay the cost is going to be an item of debate. Watch provinces, and eastern Canada specifically, try and maintain their industrial base in eastern Canada, and especially in Ontario and Quebec. Watch them struggle to find ways to finance and support and subsidize industries that will keep them in eastern Canada and not allow them to come to Manitoba. Just watch.

I give you the sugar industry, because the sugar industry is an absolute prime example of what happens when a federal government becomes protective of regionally based industries. It allows the primary agricultural sector to die. I say to all of us in this Chamber that because we allowed the sugar industry in this province to die, because the federal government did not look at applying a policy that is used in all other sugar-producing nations for the protection of its domestic industry, because we chose not to relegate at least some of our supplies to be domestic, because we chose not to, we might well, ladies and gentlemen, find ourselves without a sweetener industry in this province and in this country simply because all the other sugar-producing nations subsidize, and how long are they going to subsidize Canada's consumption knowing what they do now?

It is irresponsible to believe that Australia, South Africa, the Caribbean nations, Cuba will keep on subsidizing their industries in order to maintain our processing industries' refineries in eastern Canada. It will not happen. And that is the day we are going to say, what do we do now? How do we reinitiate at least some semblance of domestic production in this country and in this province?

It is irresponsible to think that anybody can build a sugar-processing plant in this province and deem it to be economically viable without some changes in our national policy. It is totally irresponsible. It would be a waste of money. It would be a waste of time and a waste of effort, unless our federal politicians are willing to recognize that if you have a similarity of policy application worldwide, we cannot exempt ourselves from it. It becomes part of the industrialized playing field. Yet we have chosen not to in this country play by those same rules.

The interesting thing is that from 1938 to 1945 Canada spent a whole raft of time and money to try and encourage a domestic industry of sugar because during the First World War we found ourselves without any sugar and it was deemed that Canada should have at least some semblance of domestic supply, and it was a policy issue. It was a policy of the federal government that brought sugar production into Quebec. It was a policy of the federal government that enhanced sugar production in Ontario and in Manitoba and in Alberta, and they even tried raising sugar beets in the Maritimes. But it was a policy decision of the federal government by the time the Second World War came around that we would have at least some domestic supply, and they deemed that 30 percent would be an acceptable amount of sugar to be raising domestically.

Yet after the Second World War we have let it all slip because we listened to the huge lobbies that were put on by the Rogers and the Redpaths and by the Atlantics, and we paid no attention when most of them were bought out by Rogers. There is only Redpath now that operates in Canada without any Rogers involvement. So who has the power? The sugar lobby became a huge, huge power in Ottawa, and they were able to convince the politicians that we did not need any domestic supplies and therefore we shut down the sugar plant in Manitoba.

Dave Elliott, the general manager of Rogers Sugar in B.C., says it is now a nonissue opening the U.S. border, because it is in their interest to keep it closed because they own very significant sugar interests in the United States, and it is in their interest to keep the borders the way they are. It is in their interest to import subsidized foreign sugar. It is in their interest to keep us on our knees as producers.

So the only industry, domestic supply that we have left is Alberta, probably roughly about 4 percent of our domestic requirement, and it is only, in my view, that Alberta is allowed to stay there because Alberta can produce sugar for Alberta, Saskatchewan and part of Manitoba. It becomes an economic factor that is totally irrelevant to the general operation of the Rogers operation.

An Honourable Member: Why can that not happen in Manitoba?

Mr. Penner: Manitoba is an island unto itself when it comes to sugar production, and therefore it was uneconomical for them. They deemed it uneconomical for them to be able to operate this plant underrealized; they could bring cheap sugar in offshore into Montreal and Toronto and ship into Manitoba, freighted into Manitoba at a lesser cost than we could process it here. I think that was a fallacy. I think that was a total fallacy perpetrated by those interests that wanted to keep the west and the east coasts closed, and they have done that.

An Honourable Member: Then encourage the workers to take over the plant and continue production.

Mr. Penner: I respect what the honourable member says. He said, then encourage the workers and the farmers to buy the plant and operate it. Under what price? To compete with 2-cent and 3-cent sugar being dumped into Manitoba, into Canada when the actual cost of production is 17, when the real price of sugar in the world and the London daily price is 14 cents and 15 cents and you expect Manitoba farmers to compete against 2-cent sugar. That is ridiculous.

* (1510)

The Alberta prices are reflective of the sales prices that are generated in Vancouver out of the Vancouver plant. That is what drives the Alberta price. It is the owner-operator that operates the plant in Alberta that keeps the domestic price up, because we have no competition from anywhere. We have shut out the American competition. We now only allow the competition in from the west coast, and Redpath out of Montreal will not compete in the Alberta market. They cannot afford to meet the freight costs. That is the problem.

I respect the Liberal members on this side being a bit sensitive. It is because it is the federal Liberals that are not acting on the policy that they should be acting on, but do not be too disheartened about this. The previous Conservatives in Ottawa did not move on it either. They did not have the guts to move on this. Neither do the federal Liberals in Ottawa today have the guts to move on it, but they will have once this country is out of sugar. Watch. Then no matter who is in government in Ottawa will move.

This is not a political fight or any partisan political fight in Ottawa. It is a bureaucratic fight, and the bureaucrats are being lobbied by the sugar lobby, which is the toughest lobby in this country, I guarantee you, and it is protected. The politicians are really totally irrelevant in the debate so, I mean, anybody taking offence to the political connotations of this discussion should not, because it is not political, but it is downright important that we recognize how vulnerable we are going to be without a national policy, without some semblance of domestic supply, and we have none right now.

So I truly appreciate your allowing me, giving me some time to put some words on record and some of my feelings on record, because I think it is extremely important to this province and to the rest of the country that we deal with these issues and that we deal with them on a nonpartisan basis, because this is a nonpartisan issue, but it is an extremely important issue from an economic standpoint so, therefore, I would ask all members of the House to do whatever you can during an upcoming federal election to make your politicians aware that what they have done in Ottawa over the last three years and what they did this year was to cause the demise of an industry that I think we will sadly miss and we will dearly need within a very short period of time. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I rise to join in this Throne Speech Debate as I have for many a year. I must say offhand that I found the speech rather disappointing, because it really did not reveal to me or to the public in Manitoba any major initiatives.

Where is the brave new world? I just do not see that image being portrayed in this throne speech. Yes, there were some minor promises made and some items that we can agree with, but they tend to be rather minor. Indeed some of them were rather misguided policies. I just mention one by way of—in the beginning here, the labour market development and training program that we are in the process of negotiating with the federal government to take this over.

And my view, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this is a policy or this is a program that should remain in the national sphere. It makes eminent sense for this to be run by a federal government where people are mobile

in our country. We are one country. We are not 10 countries and a couple of territories. We are one country, and people are mobile; in fact, they should be assisted in their mobility, if necessary. That means that we should have strong national training and development programs, but we are in the midst of our federal government giving that up. As far as I am concerned, this is another step towards weakening the Canadian nation that I knew and that I have grown up in, as many of us have developed over the years a strong Canadian government showing leadership and showing some initiative in trying to keep unemployment low by means of training and development. Now this is being given up to the provinces.

I believe this is a backward step. One of the reasons I opposed the Meech Lake Accord was because of what I saw to be the devolution of federal programs to the provinces, which I thought was a backward step, and here we have Meech Lake coming in the backdoor through these particular agreements and this one in particular.

I was rather interested in the comments made by our colleague who spoke just a few minutes ago, the member for Pembina—is it Pembina? I guess I could agree with some of the things he said about the sugar policy, but I am a little amused because I always understood that he and his party were very, very much in favour of free trade, of no trade restrictions, that let commodities flow where they might and, of course, sugar is a very important commodity and what I heard from the member just now was a philosophy contradicting free trade. Yet we have heard so much rhetoric from the government side over the years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the merits of free trade.

We on this side revealed our apprehensions. We opposed the NAFTA agreement. We opposed the original Free Trade Agreement not because we were not in favour of enhanced trade, we were in favour of fairer trade, but we did not see that there would be much fairness in just the Free Trade Agreement that the Mulroney government signed with the Americans, and we have not, to my knowledge and to my understanding, benefited. You cannot show me any benefits in terms of industrialization in this province or this

country indeed through free trade. Yet the member who just—

An Honourable Member: Wake up and smell the coffee.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, you know, I had the opportunity to speak to some manufacturers the other day, Manitoba manufacturers, who said they could not detect any benefit from the Free Trade Agreement that was signed and has been put into practice. They could not see it—[interjection] I do not know who is yelling here. I do remember we lost some, we lost a plant from Steinbach. They manufactured snowmobiles and power tractors and small equipment. We lost a manufacturer of aluminum boats from Brandon. They went within weeks of the Free Trade Agreement being signed because that particular category was freed immediately. It was deemed to be leisure products so they went as well.

I really did not want to get involved in this debate as such, but the member just spoke as though we need some kind of a protective policy to have a sugar industry in Manitoba, and I might agree with him, but I am just saying there is a contradiction there between, on the one hand, saying you are in favour of free trade, and then turning around and saying but, hey, we have got to have a national policy to protect and enhance the sugar manufacturing industry in Manitoba. It is interesting, he is right, sugar gets grown in places of the world where it is not naturally grown or produced in times of crisis. Of course, our sugar beet industry came out of the Second World War period and the original sugar beet industry in Europe came when Napoleon conquered Europe, but when Napoleon was cut off from a supply of sugar by the British, the British blockaded Europe—

An Honourable Member: You go back a long time ago.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, I read a little bit of economic history of Europe. The British successfully blockaded Europe so France could not get the sugar from the sugar islands in the Caribbean. So they developed—this is the beginning of the sugar beet industry. So you see sugar beet grown in parts of the world where there are restrictions such as occurred

during the time of the war, and that is where ours came from.

* (1520)

I am a great believer in local ownership and development as much as possible, and I firmly believe that if we had local ownership companies, by and large they would more likely remain. In spite of adversity they are more likely to remain. I think the Portage Manufacturing company is a case in point. When it was owned by the local people, they struggled along and they made it go. Then it was sold as I understand to Agra Canada, which is owned by Agra of the United States, and even though the Portage Manufacturing company is going full out, doing a great job, fully producing, employing a lot of people, yet, it is going to be shut down and moved to the United States. If I am wrong on this I would like to be corrected. But I believe that if that plant were still locally controlled there would be less likelihood of this happening.

Perhaps the Agra company can make more profits by centralizing this facility in the United States. So from their perspective this may be a logical economic move, in terms of the international corporation. In terms of course of the Manitoba economy, it is an extremely bad move. So when you get companies owned by local people they will have a local perspective and may do with a little less profit. As long as it is profitable, though, they will manage.

Of course, if it is not profitable they cannot continue. I mean, there may be a day they would have to close, but it seems to me that the chances are greater that they would stay open if the plants, any type of manufacturing plant would stay open if it were locally controlled and operated.

At any rate, I just say to my friend who just spoke that—I believe he is the member for Pembina?

An Honourable Member: Emerson.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Emerson. I apologize. I meant the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner). It seems to me the fallacy in his argument is the fact that—I mean, I agree. I am sympathetic with his position, but I do not agree with his logic. The fact is that the Rogers

corporation is doing what is good for the Rogers Sugar company, and what is good for the Rogers Sugar company is to close Manitoba but to keep Alberta open. I do not agree with his information on price differentials between Alberta and Manitoba.

But as I was saying, there are some things we can agree with, and I do not like to stand up and be totally negative, unlike the Minister of Industry when he was on this side. He was a strong member of the opposition when he was on this side a few years back and was always pointing out our deficiencies and criticizing us and so on.

An Honourable Member: A full-time job.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Yes, well, it is a full-time job, and that is why, you know, and people say, well, why do you have to be so negative? Well, that is our parliamentary system, where we look for failings, where we look for ways that may not be correct, where we look for improvements. The frustrating thing is, even though we come up with alternative policies, the government does not listen to us anyway.

But I can agree with the references to infrastructure. I think that is a good way to stimulate the economy and especially helping some municipalities who are having difficulties in building the bridges they need or the roads they need and, goodness knows, Manitoba municipalities need a lot of help with infrastructure.

I recall back in the Schreyer years where we had a massive infrastructure program, not involving the federal government but involving the province and the municipalities of Manitoba. It was a good program and we got a lot of municipal structures put in place, bridges, municipal buildings that were required and so on. We put people to work and we stimulated the Manitoba economy.

Some of that was done also during the Pawley years under the Manitoba Jobs Fund initiative as well. But as I was saying, there are some things that we can agree with. The mobile child health clinic, that is fine. Who can fault it? I do not know any of the detail. That is fine, but I do recall that there was one major initiative that goes back to the Schreyer years helping children, namely, the rural Children's Dental Program, a fine

program, that has been totally eliminated by this government. Even Sterling Lyon would not eliminate it. Sterling Lyon tinkered with it. He involved some more dentists in some of the towns, but he did not eliminate it. He changed it a bit. But this government has totally eliminated a very excellent program that provided a service that was very much needed in many parts of rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba. But there it goes.

I mean, you talk about improving the health care system. There is a good example of how we have gone backwards in our health care system in Manitoba under the present administration. I am afraid we are still coping with a lot of problems that go back to policies that were initiated last year and the year before. I am thinking of policies such as the regional health authorities, where there are several major flaws in that whole system that is being developed by this administration.

In fact, what we have seen is really a contradiction. You think, well, we are setting up a regional system. We are taking more power from the centre and putting it out to the regions, to the local authorities, but that is in many ways wrong, because what is happening, many local hospitals are losing their control, are losing their authority and having to give it up to an unelected regional authority. Even those local hospital boards were not necessarily based on municipal-wide elections or R.M. elections or whatever, or local elections. Nevertheless, they came to office by virtue of an annual meeting. Members of the community who were interested could participate and choose their boards. So to that extent you had a democratic situation.

Now what we have got is a board or boards who are being told they should hand in the keys and go out of business and turn it all over to the regional authority. So to that extent you have less local control. You have more centralization within specific regions. I think that we have to recognize that from a lot of communities we have taken away something that was very precious to them, and that is some semblance of control over their health care facility.

There are other problems with the regional health authority system that is being developed, and I think one of them is that we are seeing a bureaucracy, a

rather expensive bureaucracy, I might say, being added to the whole system. I do not know about all of the communities, but I know in Brandon the particular official that is being hired who is a very competent individual, a friend and someone I appreciate his abilities and so on, and I want to make that very clear. Nevertheless, I believe he is getting more than the Deputy Minister of Health, and I have heard of the other districts where the salaries are extremely high. I am just wondering, what are we doing, increasing the amount of money going to administration while we are at the same time cutting money for programs. Cutting beds, cutting nurses, cutting programs, but increasing monies for administration. It would be interesting to get these numbers from the government. It is just how much more it is costing us to run the health care system.

Now, unless the minister is going to get up and say, well, we are going to cut so many positions in Winnipeg; we are going to cut so many positions out of the Ministry of Health in Winnipeg so that we are counteracting that—but thus far I have not seen that. As they say, what we have got are salaries being paid that are higher than the Premier's, that are higher than cabinet ministers', that are higher than deputy ministers'—even deputy ministers'. They are higher than deputy ministers'. I just do not understand it.

Then you have a situation such as in Brandon where you would have a CEO of a hospital who makes a fair amount of money, that position is vacant at the present time, and the Brandon authority being in control of it and I suppose the nursing homes in the area, but it is not a very big area. The Brandon regional authority is virtually, like 99 percent the city of Brandon. So you have got this authority being imposed, superimposed over the board. Now there is a conflict between the board—well, there is a conflict within the board; but there is a conflict between the board and what is being set up as an authority because the board deems that it has certain responsibilities and makes certain decisions. There are many who feel that there should be an active chief administrator and, if that happens, you are going to have a CEO of the hospital who will probably be very well paid and may be very well deserving of it and then another executive officer of the regional health authority who may be very deserving of the monies. I know the present one that they have hired is quite

competent and well experienced but, nevertheless, it is a lot of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1530)

But there are other things besides. There is the whole matter of user fees. There is a provision in the legislation, I think it is Section 25, allowing for the imposition of user fees. Then, you ask yourself, well, is this going to open the door further to a two-tier health care system? Are we deinsuring some of our basic health care services? The MHO, the Manitoba Health Organizations, which is a nongovernmental provincial association of agencies, pointed that out.

In fact, the bill did not guarantee the services that will continue to be insured, so there are problems. There are questions of, well, really, are the big decisions still going to be made in Winnipeg in the Ministry of Health so that the regional authorities will really be fronts for the major decisions made by the ministry, by the minister and his staff as to which hospitals will close, which hospitals will have bed cuts and so on? It is very convenient to say, well, this decision was made by the regional health authority but, really, the regional health authority may have no option based on the budget that is given to it by this particular government.

At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of problems in this area and other areas of health. I want to refer to the hospital we have in Brandon, the Brandon General Hospital. For anyone who says, I believe the previous speaker was saying, well, there is more money in health care than ever before, well, I can tell you that is not true of the Brandon General Hospital. They had a \$7-million cut since 1990-91; 120 full-time positions, primarily nurses, were cut, and there could be another large multimillion dollar shortfall this year. You have an excellent staff there, an excellent facility, but the nurses are overworked, and there are a lot of services that have deteriorated on that account.

Then there is a whole area of capital investment and capital improvement. Where is our new hospital that was promised by the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), who is the previous Minister of Health, who had a big news conference before the election, unveiling a model and suggesting that there would be

38, there would be millions of dollars—maybe I should not quote any particular numbers—available for modification of the hospital facility, and yet nothing has happened to date? There has been one excuse after another. I guess the latest is, well, we are still deciding on where the programs will evolve, and we cannot build the hospital or modify the hospital until the programs are decided upon and, yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the only hospital of its size in the province that has not been modernized. All the district or regional hospitals in Winnipeg have been modernized over the last several years, Concordia, the Grace and so on, but not the Brandon General Hospital. Its physical plant is in bad shape. There are problems with the elevators, there are problems with leaking windows, problems of inadequacy in the operating room, and there is a long, long list of deficiencies in that particular structure.

So the people of Brandon are waiting and have been waiting ever since this government has been elected for that facility. We were on the verge of developing a modern hospital, of modernizing the hospital. We announced it in some detail. Regrettably, that was '87. In '88 we were not allowed to carry on, and Mr. Orchard, then, I believe, the Minister of Health, said, sorry, we are not going ahead with the Brandon General Hospital modification. We have to look it over; we have to re-evaluate it. Well, this has gone on for years, re-evaluating the hospital, and then along comes the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) as the Minister of Health and says, okay, now we have got some ideas of what we want to do and here it is, unveiled a lovely model, all kinds of detailed plans and so on, and yet that too fell through. We are still waiting for some action there. I say that the people of Westman are being let down by this government for neglecting the Brandon General Hospital.

At any rate, there is no question in my mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the health care system in this province has deteriorated under this administration. You can look at specific examples, as I have, or you can talk to individuals. You know, our Pharmacare program does not have the same benefits to our people; the nursing home rates have gone up to the moon and have been a great hardship to many, many families. The rural Children's Dental Program has been eliminated. Many fees are being charged now that were

never charged before. We have nurses overworked at a lot of the hospitals, and, of course, we await the next chapter. I guess the next chapter will be closure of certain rural hospitals that have thus far been spared but may be about to get the axe now that the regional authorities are being put in place. So, by and large, our health care system has deteriorated under this administration, and I do not see any end in sight. As I understand, the Brandon General Hospital, for example, is expected to cut again this year, cut again and again and again, and I do not know where it ends.

I would like to go on and talk about our concerns about education for a few minutes as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again, we have a government boasting about how great the economy is and how revenues are increasing and so on, and yet it neglects public education in this province. As has been pointed out, by the end of 1996-97 school year, the Manitoba government will have cut \$43.5 million from the public school programs and services just since 1992 and '93, and more and more is being shifted to the municipal, local taxpayer, away from the province. This in my view is a backward step. The evidence of the results of the cuts to the school divisions is seen throughout the province.

All kinds of services are being eliminated that were there previously, and you get a decline in the number of teachers. The number of teachers has steadily declined in the last several years, and they have declined in lock step with the cut in funding. So what you have is classroom sizes that have grown so that the quality of education will suffer on that account, because it is quite logical that, if you increase sizes of classes, you do not get the same quality of instruction that you do in smaller classes. In fact, it has got to the point where cutbacks have been so much that teachers are digging into their pockets to help students. They are helping them buy food, buy books and buy clothing. It sounds like shades of the Depression of the 1930s, as though we are going back—[interjection] Well, with the teachers, some are spending as much as \$1,000 a year to buy books, pencils, paper and even food and clothing for their students. This was reported just not too long ago. So this is the result of the present government's administration. This is the result of this government's cut in public education.

You have a lot of unhappiness among teachers, and that, too, I can tell you, was very well demonstrated in Brandon last year. Last fall when the teachers met in Brandon, they invited the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), who did not show up, but 900 teachers assembled at the Keystone Centre and expressed their dismay, concern and outright anger with the government of Manitoba, with the Filmon government and what it has done to the education system. What is happening, as I said, there is not only a deterioration in the quality of education standards, but you have also got a transfer of the burden to local taxpayers. So when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) comes here on Friday and boasts about a big surplus, it will be no magic to it. They have simply arrived at a surplus by transferring costs to municipalities as well as individuals.

In the city of Brandon, they have had to cut staff, they have had to downsize, they have had to reduce services and now they are going forward. The school board is going forward with a large increase request which will go through to the municipality, which has no option but to approve it and cause local taxes to go up. This is not unique to Brandon. It is to be found throughout this province, where municipalities are forced to increase taxes because the provincial government of Manitoba, to a large degree, has withdrawn its financial support from the school division. It is not providing the amount of support that the school divisions should have to maintain quality education in this province.

* (1540)

We talk about the importance of economic growth, and it has to go without saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to have a solid public education system to have a well-trained workforce, to have a literate population, a population that can enhance the quality of life and continue the quality of life in our province. So education is very fundamental and yet we are seeing it being eroded because of the policies of this government.

Another point I would like to make in the education field is the issue that was brought up today by my colleague the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) with

regard to the question of provincial exams and this fiasco that has developed recently—

An Honourable Member: You do not believe in standards exams.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) says we do not believe in standards. Well, he does not really believe what he says to us.

I would just like to read into the record a letter that was sent to me by a constituent, and this letter was sent to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and to the minister and maybe some other ministers as well, regarding the recent provincial mathematics exam. I am quoting, she says, this is dated February 20, 1997: Having attended several Department of Education forums and Brandon meetings regarding the provincial exams, I was led to believe that one purpose of the exam was to place all students on a level playing field. I have heard that approximately 42 percent of the students in the province did not take the exam because of the storm that was taking place that day. It is my understanding that these students will be graded solely on the basis of local school test. Transcripts needed by universities and other higher learning facilities will not reflect who did and who did not take the exam. It seems to me that this creates a very uneven playing field when it comes time to apply for scholarships, bursaries and university placement.

This is a constituent writing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and just a couple of paragraphs I am going to read from this letter, because it is right on the point, it is right on this issue of, and I would table this too, if you like, later: I must add that buses in the Brandon School Division did not run that day either. I took my son to school to make sure that he took this test. I am sure that his final grade would be much higher now if we had not taken him to school. If I had it to do again, he would stay at home. Considering the fact that this exam takes place in January, has no one ever thought that it might be a good idea to have an alternate storm day for the exam? Also, hearing the weather and road report on the morning of January 22, 1997, would it not have made sense for the Minister of Education to fax all of the high schools and ask them to postpone the test—a

simple thing to do, especially if you have an alternate day.

The results of the exams this year seem to be much different than last year. Does this mean that the students were less prepared for the test? Was there a 40S test last year, or was there one math test for everyone?

Perhaps there was something wrong with this particular exam. Perhaps parents, teachers, and students that I have talked to felt that the exam was too long for the time allowed. I also understand that some of the questions on the exam were difficult to understand. I can only compare this exam with the experience my daughter had as an engineering student at the University of Waterloo. She did not always have time to complete exams. The exams were two hours, not three. The class average was often below 50 percent, but at least they were marked on a bell curve. It seemed to me that maybe it is easier to be a university student.

Well, anyway, she goes on, and I am not going to read all of the rest of the letter, but she asks some very pointed questions about this. She says: Should not the Department of Education learn from this experience? Should it not decide on alternate dates in the future? Why did so many students perform badly on the exam? Is there a problem with the curriculum? Has the curriculum been changed in the last year and students are not fully prepared? And so on.

So she asked some very—but the point is that I was disappointed in the minister's response because we are not sure just how the minister is going to respond to the Brandon School Division, because they have quite seriously asked the government to back off of this, and it seems to me the sensible, reasonable, logical thing to do is to abolish this particular exam, the results of this exam, for this year at least, and go back to allowing the school division to use the various term—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: Where is that hellfire and brimstone, Len, that we used to know?

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, maybe I am getting a little more mellow, you know. I think that could be said to my friends opposite. The member for Virden (Mr.

Downey) used to be really brim and firestone too a few years ago. I think he has quieted down a bit as years have gone by.

But I believe that the way out of this is to scrap this particular method, this exam, for this particular year at least and go from here. I would hope that the ministry will see fit to sit down with the Brandon school board and work this matter out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if you could indicate how much time—six minutes more? I wanted to get onto my favourite topic.

What I am tabling is a letter from a constituent who has written to the Minister of Education and who has written to the Premier.

I just want to say that I am pleased that the last two or three months we have seen some activity in the employment field, that we seem to see some increase in jobs, finally. But before we get too carried away, I want to point out to the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey) in particular that he should not get too carried away on the results of comparing one month to another month the year before. You can do that, but it does not give you the full picture.

First of all, a monthly figure is subject to more statistical volatility than an annual estimate or an estimate over a longer period of time. When you look at what has been happening to Manitoba year by year, you will see that, yes, we did increase the jobs in 1996 over 1995, 1996 being the last year we have available to discuss. There has been an increase, a rather modest increase. Well, the increase from 1995 to 1996 was only 0.8 percent. It went from 521,400 to 525,500. So that is what, a 4,100 job increase—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: Well, 21,000 jobs is not bad.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Deputy Speaker, here we go again. The Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) is taking one month, comparing it to a previous, the same month in a previous year as opposed to annual averages. When we look at the annual averages, what is very disturbing is that while there was this modest increase in 1995, where did all the jobs

come from? The main job growth has been in the retail trade, the McJobs, the jobs that have no career path involved, the jobs that pay the minimum wage, the jobs that are part time. These are the jobs that we got in 1996. In fact, 1996 we got an increase. The biggest increase was in the retail trade. These are your own figures, 2.5 percent. That is where the increase was.

* (1550)

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we lost jobs—in the manufacturing industry we lost jobs. The manufacturing industry declined by 1 percent. The manufacturing sector declined by 1 percent. The construction industry declined by 0.4 percent. Transportation, communication and utilities declined by 3.6 percent.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

So the point, Madam Speaker, is that those jobs that have some half decent wages connected with them, that offer permanent, full-time employment, are the ones that disappeared last year. Where we got the increase, the modest increase that we did, the few thousand jobs we did get in '96 over '95 were essentially from the retail trade sector and essentially part-time jobs. That is what we got, and that is a sign of weakness, not a sign of strength. One could look at other aspects of the job market to see the weakness. You can see, and I do not have all the numbers with me, but I could easily calculate them, that our percentage of the national job picture has shrunk under this administration. We have a smaller percentage of total jobs in Canada today than in 1988 when this government took office and, in the process, the average wages of this province have not done very well either vis-a-vis what has happened across the country. So by and large we can see some very serious weaknesses in the economy.

If you look at specifics, you will see that we have lost in some excellent areas of production. We are talking about Rogers Sugar. We lost Molson Breweries because of the change in the trade agreements between Manitoba and the other provinces. When they signed that agreement, I said that was the end of the brewery industry in Manitoba. The CPR is moving 275 jobs from its Weston Shops. Acme Furniture is shutting down 55 jobs; P & H Foods, turkey processing, I

believe, poultry processing, 98 jobs, and so on. So we can point to a lot of specific areas. The Portage Manufacturing company, that is a serious one, and I hope the minister is doing everything he can to save that one, but that is going to go.

So I say, Madam Speaker, that while the government likes to bring out a few selected statistics to say how great things are, if you look at what happened in 1996, we lost jobs in manufacturing, we lost jobs in construction, we lost jobs in transportation, we lost jobs in communication, we lost jobs in utilities.

Where did we get the jobs? The Big Mac. Thank goodness for the Big Mac. We got jobs in the retail sector. We got jobs that paid minimum wages, that did not offer full-time jobs, that offered part-time jobs without benefits, that did not offer career opportunities for our young men and women to pursue in years ahead and, goodness knows, they need them. If you want to put these statistics aside, just go out there on the streets, here or Brandon or Dauphin or wherever and talk to the people about job opportunities, and they will tell you they just are not there. The kinds of jobs that should be there are simply not there.

In conclusion, therefore—I realize I am out of time—but in conclusion, I am disappointed that there has really been no major economic development thrust in this throne speech, a little bit of lip service, but nothing really solid, nothing that the people of Manitoba can have hope with, nothing that the people of Manitoba can say, yes, there is a throne speech, and there is a government that we know will produce the economic results that we want. So thank you very much.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I am extremely pleased to rise and speak on the throne speech of which we have seen excellent speeches made from this side of the House and, again, a glib attempt by the members opposite to try and bring to the people of Manitoba what is referred to in many editorials as a 20-second clip for the radio to try and do a quick job on the people of Manitoba to demonstrate that they should be the government of Manitoba—not one speech of any substance, not one speech of any direction, Madam Speaker, not one speech of any vision from the members opposite.

Madam Speaker, in fact I am extremely disappointed. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) at least used to be able to muster a little bit of enthusiasm. Does it mean that he is coming to the close of his career, his political career, that he has given up hope in the New Democratic Party? It is obvious that they have lost the confidence of their Leader, of course, clearly demonstrated in the MTS debate of last fall. Who really was running the New Democratic Party, the ship over there? Was it the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale)? Was it his buddy from—where is Gord Mackintosh from?

An Honourable Member: St. Johns.

Mr. Downey: St. Johns, Madam Speaker? Who was running the NDP party? It was obvious to see that they truly have lost their way. They have lost their purpose. They have lost their direction. They have lost—of course they did not ever have a lot of principle, but it is clearly evident, what we have here is a tired, old opposition, never to be ready to govern this province in the next decade, a tired, old opposition, but let me put it this way. Everything has to be put into context.

Madam Speaker, you know, there are times—and I will get into a little bit of this nabob of negativism from—

An Honourable Member: How high are the pyramids?

Mr. Downey: Well, they are just quite a bit taller than you are, little fellow. The bottom line is there are times in government when the challenges—[interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, I tell you, I will get on to Saudi Arabia because there are people over there that wondered what a foolish move it was that the NDP were trying to develop a telephone system in Saudi Arabia. They just shook their head as you shovelled the money of Manitobans over to Saudi Arabia in this scam of a telephone system that you and your party were involved in.

Not to be deterred, Madam Speaker, not to be deterred or the fourth, but I want to say that, as tough as it sometimes gets in government, the worst day in government is still better than the best day in opposition. I think the member for Brandon East (Mr.

Leonard Evans) would agree with that. That is maybe why he has lost his zip, that he is, as I have said, probably getting ready to close the book on his political activities.

Madam Speaker, what we have seen over the past few years of this government and again in this throne speech is a government that is delivering to the people the programs, the policies and the vision that give a future for the young people of this country, give security to the seniors of this country, give the people of this province the assurance that the government is there, not in their way, not causing them undue hardship by overtaxing them, but we are delivering the programs and the policies that provide Manitobans the opportunity to excel into the future and, of course, this throne speech further endorses, further supports the areas that this government feels that priorities have to be dealt with and put in.

I want to, just at the outset, though, Madam Speaker, put to rest the concerns of the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) when he talks about the McJobs because my colleague for Morris yesterday pointed out some of the activities in his own backyard. If he would only go home once in a while and see what is going on, there was \$233 million spent in Brandon East at the upgrade of Simplot. You could not get a motel room; you could not get an electrician; you could not get any of those people that were building that plant in Brandon this last year; and he stands up and he says, where are the jobs?

Let me take him for a little tour around Manitoba, Madam Speaker, just in case they have not had a chance or the opportunity recently to do so. Let us go to Swan River, that fine constituency in the northwest area, where there has been some \$100 million invested by whom? By Louisiana-Pacific, not by the government buying Manfor, as the NDP tried to pump up the economy, \$100 million, with probably 400 to 500 jobs related to that industry, turning Manitoba's fibre into jobs and economic activities for that region. Yes, an extremely important initiative for that community, and, yes, what has this government done to further support that? We have committed monies to bring natural gas to Swan River, if only the federal government would ante up to the table in an equal

manner so that industry could proceed and develop and play its role in the overall economy of that area.

* (1600)

Madam Speaker, let us drop a little further south. It is important that we talk just a little bit about the oil industry because we are seeing a major, major oil activity going on in southwestern Manitoba, and what do we hear the critic from Energy and Mines say? That we are helping Alberta oil companies. Goodness' sakes, what we are doing is creating an environment for those companies to come and to drill oil wells and to do what? Produce oil and employ people. Yes.

An Honourable Member: What did you do to make that happen?

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, the first thing we did was get rid of that idiotic law that the NDP, under the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and Sid Green, brought in that every oil well the province would participate 50 percent of. That was the first thing we did, and it paid off. Yes, that was the first thing that we did. I hope he has more questions as I proceed because that is the kind of idiocy that we saw by the New Democratic Party.

The next thing that had to be done, here was Howard Pawley. Howard Pawley, and I have given this speech before, was going to save every hospital. He was going to build hospitals with the revenue from Manitoba Oil and Gas, the Heritage fund. Four years later, \$16 million gone down the tubes, more employees and civil servants than oil wells, we sold the company to a Manitoba company that is now paying the province major taxes. We are seeing some of the best revenues come to our tax revenues that we have ever had in the province. We are having—

An Honourable Member: The prices are going up.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, he talks about having oil prices. They were never higher than when he was in government at \$35 a barrel. They are now \$20 a barrel. He is the great economist; maybe he should check his numbers. So we are creating jobs, we are creating wealth for the province.

Then we move into Brandon, where I have just referred to \$233 million in investment. I hope he drives to Brandon once in a while. He would drive by a new motel that is right on the corner of 18th Street and No. 1 Highway.

An Honourable Member: VLTs are good for hotel owners.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, a motel, I said. There is another one, if he would happen to drive 18th Street, another brand new motel being built on the south side of Brandon, yes, getting ready for the Canada Games. If he would look at the fertilizer business that is out on the east side of Brandon, he would see Wesco that has built a new \$22-million plant. If he had changed the hydro rates or the demand billing that was on the Canadian Oxy, things would have changed when he was in government but, no, he did not. I can tell you, we did.

Let me continue with this tour because it is important that we continue with this tour. We proceed—I actually am negligent. We should have gone further north because we look at the overall development, the money we spent in Flin Flon to help upgrade the smelter where over \$200 million spent in the development of an environmentally and friendly smelter in Flin Flon. We have three gold mines operating or about to be operating. They were all closed when he was in office and their government was in office. This government has done more to create economic activity than he had ever dreamed about as a member of government.

I have to continue on because it is important to get this tour done with, because I have so many other things to talk about. We go to Carberry, Madam Speaker, where Midwest Food has just completed a \$20-million expansion employing over 600 people at the plant.

An Honourable Member: How many?

Mr. Downey: Over 600 people at the plant. He talks about the Free Trade Agreement not helping. Where do the french fries go from the plant at Midwest? Where do they go? They go to Chicago. They went to other parts of Canada before, and under the Free Trade

Agreement, they now have access to the U.S. market under free trade.

We could look at Carberry again where we see ADM, a major U.S. company that is building an oilseed collection plant just south of Carberry, several millions of dollars. Yes, an investment in that community. Move on to Portage la Prairie where we have seen McCain's completion of a \$70-million investment, 150 to 200 more manufacturing jobs, good jobs, to export products throughout the world from that plant. Those are the kinds of things that are happening.

Let us move down the road to Elie where my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) as the MLA sees the development of the Isobord plant. How much money, Madam Speaker—\$148 million being invested with hundreds of jobs. What kind of jobs. They are manufacturing jobs.

We come to the city of Winnipeg because we have to talk about all these good things that are happening. When we look at the furniture industry, Palliser Furniture, one of the largest companies in all of Canada, has thrived under free trade. They were concerned before free trade that it would inhibit them from maximizing their opportunities in the U.S. In fact, they started an opportunity or a plant or two in the U.S. They have now moved them back into Manitoba because free trade is helping them. The garment industry, another opportunity that excelled under free trade.

New Holland tractor, what is happening with New Holland tractor? Expanding all the time.

An Honourable Member: Where do we find Lloyd Axworthy?

Mr. Downey: Where do we find him?

Madam Speaker, look at Vansco Electronics. It recently announced a plan to add some 300-and-some people to their jobs, high-value engineering jobs, high-tech jobs. They will have 500 people by the year 2,000 from 180 today. These are the kinds of jobs. I have recently had the opportunity to meet with ISM. Do you know who ISM is? ISM happened to buy the Manitoba Data Services company, and I was in government when

we formed that Crown corporation. Yes, we formed it to provide services to the people of Manitoba, because there did not appear to be the kinds of mechanisms in place to give the security, to give us the service we needed. So we started under that terrible right-winger Sterling Lyon. Remember him? Well, that was one of the things that we established. It was the right thing to do, and it was the right thing to do when we were re-elected in '88 to sell it. They had 280 employees when we sold it. Today they have over 400, and they need an additional 100 computer operators for the service that they are providing throughout the world right here from Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the other point that I should make in this regard is, it was the right thing to do to set up a Crown corporation. It was the right thing to sell it to the private sector. We are getting our services for less money than when the government owned it.

Equally, Madam Speaker, it was the right thing for the Province of Manitoba 90 years ago to set up a public telephone company, as it was the right thing last year for us to sell that public telephone company to the people of Manitoba. It was not a philosophical debate, it was a practical business decision. So all those good things.

Now let us talk a little bit about the hog industry in Manitoba, where we are seeing the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) promoting the production of hogs. What is that going to do? It is not just going to create a bunch of smell in our communities, it is going to create over 9,000 jobs. Schneiders, a \$40-million investment here in the city of Winnipeg, what kind of jobs are they? Manufacturing jobs. [interjection] Union jobs, the member says.

Now, the member makes something to do about the closing of a sugar plant, and my colleague has spoken very eloquently about that. It is not a nice situation, but all odds were against the continuation of the sugar plant here in Manitoba. We tried and are continuing to try to look for alternatives.

* (1610)

Madam Speaker, the Molson company, why did they close down? Not because we signed an internal trade

agreement with the rest of the country. It is because they had 30 percent of the market. They had 30 percent of the market operating at 50 percent capacity. Did you want us to subsidize them and pay them to sit there? I feel badly for the employees, but the cards were stacked against them.

I do not know. I saw the member, the Leader, for Concordia. I do not think he was buying much Molson's. I think he was still drinking a lot of Blue, if I was observing his habits. So much support he gave. I did not realize that when I stopped drinking that that in fact would have such an impact.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to talk to the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) further about the job situation, because all signs, our employment is at 541,000 people, continues to grow on consecutive month after consecutive month; over 20,000 more jobs year over year, 20,000 jobs; the second lowest unemployment in all of Canada at 6.8 percent, the second lowest in all of Canada.

Of course, here is a good observation. Here is a good test of the NDP and the members opposite. They have not asked one question during this session of the Legislature about the economy and/or about jobs, have not asked one question. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) dared to get into it the other day and, of course, he got slapped around pretty good with the numbers that were brought forward. Youth unemployment, third best in the country.

Just to talk a little bit about the exports because, again, it is clearly demonstrated time and time again that the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the NAFTA agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico, our trade with the United States has gone up from \$2 billion to about \$4.6 billion, a 150 percent increase in the last five years. Each one of those billions of dollars means thousands of jobs for the people of Manitoba.

Let the record show that the members opposite were opposed to it and, of course, where did the Liberal Party stand? They tried to stand on both sides of it and got split up the middle by trying to ride the fence. It is important again to emphasize that more people are

working. Our unemployment is the second best in all of the country.

An Honourable Member: Who has the best unemployment?

Mr. Downey: Well, he is going to get re-elected today I think in Alberta.

All the major indicators show that Manitoba's economy is doing very well. The important thing is that we have the long-term vision, we have the long-term discipline, to make sure that continues to happen, and we will continue to do so.

It was obvious as a province with so many talented people, so much ambition, so many resources, such a trading opportunity with the United States that we had to expand that activity, and that we have done. We are presenting Manitoba to the world. Whether it is the participation of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) on the Team Canada trips, of which we believe very strongly in Manitoba, that is the kind of face we have to put on the world, that Canada is prepared to work together to present the products that we produce so efficiently and such top quality that we have to work jointly to put it into the world market.

I agree, the federal government has done a good job on presenting Canada to the world, and we as a province want to go far and beyond that, and that we are doing.

Let me give you an example of my recent visit to two countries. The United Arab Emirates is a country that—[interjection] Madam Speaker, you know, there is a nice shot comes across from Interlake, did I take my wife with me? You know, the members opposite stand in this House, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) stood yesterday and she said, oh, they are the only party that supports families, the only party, the NDP party, that supports families. We are against families. My goodness, we take our family or our family involvement, we get the heck ripped out of us from the opposition members. They cannot have it both ways.

An Honourable Member: That is what they were doing, was family bashing.

Mr. Downey: Family bashing yesterday. So one tries to make sure their family is a unit, they are not happy. Then we are criticized because we are not for the family. They cannot have it both ways.

But let me point out two particular situations. On my recent visit to Egypt, where we had several business people with us from Manitoba, particularly dealing in the agriculture commodities but also in the structural businesses, I met with the deputy prime minister of Egypt, deputy prime minister of some 62 million people. He also has the ministry of agriculture under his responsibility. Unfortunately, the country of Egypt each day has to buy \$3.8-million to \$4-million worth of food to feed their people. Every day the sun gets up. They do not have much rain. We were told by the Canadian Embassy that they had a rain a week ago, and that was the first rain they had had since November 1994.

So, Madam Speaker, the point I am making is, there is a tremendous opportunity for the food producers and processors of Manitoba and western Canada to satisfy some of those needs. What was unfortunate, and here again is a concern that I have, and I relate it to the chief commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board. They buy six and a half million tonnes of wheat annually. The Canadian Wheat Board has not been there to sell them wheat for 10 years. And that is not in the best interests of our producers.

So I am going to be meeting with the chief commissioner and the Canadian Wheat Board to find out why they are not more aggressive. I know the first reasons they will say is that they want to buy white wheat and they did not pay for some 10 years ago. Well, today they are buying their wheat from the United States, and they are paying cash. They are buying wheat from Australia, and they are paying cash, and they are buying wheat from France, and they are paying cash. In fact, Australia is using the facilities that the Canadian taxpayers built to store Canadian wheat to satisfy that market. We subsidize them to do that.

Now, I believe we should be presenting wheat to that market, and I believe we have the kinds of wheat that they need because they are changing their eating habits, but there is one other opportunity that is far greater than the mind of the member for—where is he from again?

An Honourable Member: Kildonan.

Mr. Downey: Kildonan. They are big users of vegetable oil. Vegetable oil, as the member may know, we have a considerable industry that was developed right here, and that is the canola industry. The Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Prime Minister wants to introduce canola oil and canola products to his people. One of the reasons that they are reluctant is because the opposition in Egypt and the media have continually spread the word that they are still going to be buying high erucic acid rapeseed product. Not so, Madam Speaker. The highest quality product that there is in the world today comes from canola. We are processors of it. In fact, I miss talking about Canadian Agra. They just spent \$5 million on a new plant south of Winnipeg at Ste. Agathe. We are going to be producing and processing some of the highest quality oils in this country in western Canada.

So what we have to do is present to Egypt, to present to those leaders, a team approach, so that we can give them the assurances that the canola quality is there, that they in fact can buy the product directly from us, and that they may some day may want to process some of it to replace some of the product they are now crushing for their people. There is a multibillion dollar industry for western Canadian farmers to tap into. It is the same situation that it was in Mexico. In 1979 they did not buy any canola. Today 90 percent of the vegetable oil they buy is canola from Canada. That same opportunity lies in Egypt, and if we had not been there as a province, if we had not been there promoting our product, we may not have grasped that opportunity. So we will be advancing that opportunity. We will be putting a team of people together to work with the country of Egypt, to work with those people who want to buy our products.

So the members say that it was a waste of time. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) says, well, we did a study in our department that shows these ministerial tours do not pay off. I will show them in spades. I will show them in spades that every dollar and every bit of time that I have spent will pay dividends for the travelling that I have done. Time and time again I am prepared to do that. So the strategy is, Madam Speaker, because—you have to walk the NDP through these things fairly slowly. You cannot build a wall around

yourselves and just make the biscuits for yourself or the product for yourselves. We have a million people and tremendous resources. We have to go to the international marketplace; we have to use every tool that is available to us; and, of course, the best tool available to us is the fact that we are Canadian. We are top quality, we are trusted, and they want to do business with us. It is our responsibility to be there, and be there we will be. Regardless of the opposition criticism, we will be there.

* (1620)

Madam Speaker, it is important as well because in the greater vision of where we have to be in the international marketplace, we increase the income for our province and for our country, and when we look at the projections of where our gross domestic product is going to be and our growth will be, it is going to be from a diversified source of income. It will come, yes, from the United States. It will come from Mexico. It will come from South America. It will come from Asia. It will come from the Middle East. But each and every one of those countries we do business with, we will not only add value, we will not only improve the quality of life and assure the long-term future of every social program we have, whether it is health care, whether it is education or whatever service this province needs for its people; we are out there assuring that the revenues will be flowing to this province to give us the resources that we need to develop these programs. They can criticize. They can criticize all they like, but the important factor is, is it the right thing to do for the people of Manitoba? I say, yes, it is.

Another area that I think is important to talk about because a lot has been said in the last few days about how sincere we are about dealing with our native people, our aboriginal people in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) was the Chief of The Pas Indian reserve when it was the Gary Filmon government that signed the nurses' training program for his people in The Pas. He was the Chief of The Pas when we signed the gaming agreement with the band, the first one in Canada, the first one to lead the way, and yet he comes to this Legislature and says we do nothing for the aboriginal community.

Madam Speaker, let me, in case they forget, who remembers the Grand Rapids forebay? When we were elected in 1988, the lawyers of the Province of Manitoba said the government does not owe or Hydro does not owe any further compensation for the flooding of the Grand Rapids forebay. Our Premier, Gary Filmon, said, that is not good enough, and he charged Manitoba Hydro. He said, if we do not have a legal obligation we may have a moral obligation, and you know what? We did have a moral obligation, and we paid over \$20 million in compensation which was denied by the NDP party.

The party the member for The Pas sits with and is so proud of denied the people of Grand Rapids forebay because the lawyers said it was not the right thing to do, but it was a moral obligation to do it. Gary Filmon and this government did it, and I want him to know that, and I think he owes us an apology for his irresponsible actions and talk in this House.

Yes, Madam Speaker, every time I turn around we are doing something. North Central Hydro, those nine communities in the northeast part of this province were denied electricity off of the main power lines. They were using 15-amp service and diesel powered generators, and where was the NDP? Sitting here basking away saying, we are the greatest thing for the aboriginal community. It was this government, Premier Filmon's government, and Manitoba Hydro that have now moved to put hydro into the north central area of this country, bringing those communities into the 21st Century. It was not an NDP government.

An Honourable Member: We negotiated the deal.

Mr. Downey: Get out of here. He could not negotiate his way out of a wet paper bag, the Leader for Concordia. It was this government that did it, and I am darned proud of the fact.

Madam Speaker, Northern Flood, who settled Northern Flood? It was not the New Democratic Party. It was the Progressive Conservative Party that has settled the Northern Flood Agreement. It was this government that has settled the Northern Flood Agreement.

Where are we on land claims? Where are we on native land claims in this province? We are on the verge of having them completed. I will stand in my place and defend the settlement any day of the week, because we owe the native people a settlement on land claims, but where was the NDP party? Where was the member for The Pas when it came to settling land claims and pushing Howard Pawley and pushing Ed Schreyer? Where was he? He sat silent, sat silent and then wanted to join that great NDP party that did so much for his people.

Give me a break, Madam Speaker. Give me a break. How much of this do we have to listen to from the member for The Pas? I can tell you he leaves a lot to be desired. A lot of respect, he has lost a lot of respect from me. At one time I had a lot of respect because he was sincere. He did work well as a chief and he did accomplish a lot, but he is not accomplishing much in what he is doing these days. He has gone backwards a long way.

Madam Speaker, could you be so kind as to tell me how much time I have left? [interjection] The members make reference to the next election. I am looking forward. I always look forward to the next election. I look forward to the next federal election, because I believe—what is going to happen in the next federal election? [interjection] Well, the member for Concordia says—oh, he is really putting all kinds of qualifiers on. He said he will win more seats than we will. Then he says, in Manitoba.

I believe very strongly that what we are going to see, and we do need, the country needs a federal election. What we have to do, Madam Speaker, we need, we truly need a national party who is going to look after the interests of all of Canada. In hearing the talk from the federal Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, he brings to the public new fresh ideas for the young people of Canada. He relates to every community. He relates to every part of Canada. What has he been doing? He has been doing the exact opposite of the Prime Minister of Canada. Jean Charest has been going community to community, province to province, territory to territory, keeping in touch with the people of Canada. What has the Prime Minister been doing? Well, I do not need to spend a lot of time. I ask

you to refer back to a town hall meeting about three months ago. He clearly demonstrated just how out of touch he really is with the people of Canada. They have kept him in a cocoon far too long.

I say genuinely, it will be a very interesting campaign. I believe that the people of Canada will return to their home voting base. I believe that the regional party, the Reform Party, will lose a tremendous amount of support. After all, getting rid of your glasses and a new haircut is not going to do a whole lot to attract votes.

An Honourable Member: I would try it if I were you.

Mr. Downey: Well, Madam Speaker, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) may want to try it, but I do not have a whole lot of hair left to try too many hairstyles with.

But I say genuinely, the country needs an alternative national party, and I believe it is going to get that opportunity. I think there will be a clear demonstration today in Alberta how much support the New Democratic Party is going to get in the West. I think that will be a reflection of what may happen in the upcoming federal election in western Canada.

So I will conclude my remarks by once again saying this party, this government truly has a vision to take Manitoba into the 21st Century. We are committed to the young people of this province. We are committed to those people to make sure we bring fairness and balance to the governance of this province. I can say most of all, Madam Speaker, that you as Speaker of this Assembly, the presentations, the manner in which you continue to carry out your role, you have the full confidence of myself as a member of this Legislature. I am pleased to see that the members opposite realized the people of Manitoba were not supporting their silliness and their foolishness as it relates to not getting on to the business of the province of Manitoba.

So I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this throne speech, which I am more than pleased to support.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to rise this afternoon to reply to the throne speech.

I want to start off by saying that I am thoroughly disappointed by what the throne speech had to give us, disappointed. I also want to say that, when I was home for the weekend after the throne speech, of course, people wanted to know what was in the throne speech, what is the government going to do and is there anything there in the throne speech that you might have seen that would benefit northern Manitoba. Reluctantly, or sadly, of course, I have to tell people the truth, and that is that the throne speech was completely empty. It did not have anything to say about northern Manitoba and the people who live in northern Manitoba. So from there on people started talking about, when it comes to the throne speech, how much it plays on your mind. Definitely for the people up North, the throne speech in a very serious way, I think in a very severe way, played on the morale of the people. That was, I guess, the first time that I started noticing people saying, well, you know, like what can we expect? Like, is that it? Then people started asking me when the next election is going to be held.

So I want to start off by saying that the throne speech was disappointing. It was completely empty in terms of having meaningful proposals, programs and services for northern people. The Premier talks about having or developing a partnership, or being in a partnership, with aboriginal people. Well, to me, a partnership is a situation where people respect each other. The two parties have decided that they are going to be doing things together, that they are going to respect each other and that there is going to be a lot of discussion discussing issues that may come, and they may affect the partnership. That is how I understand a partnership to mean.

The partnership that this Premier talks about in developing with aboriginal people, I wonder if he realizes what he is saying. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) was jumping up and down here a minute ago, practically losing his voice because he was trying to yell that loudly about all these tremendous developments that he has achieved in terms of aboriginal people that he talks about. Well, unfortunately, myself, I cannot join him in his

celebrations, whatever it is that he is celebrating, because I have to face the reality every time I go North. When I go North, I see 80 percent unemployment on Indian reserves. When I go North, I see people living in conditions that are scandalous—housing, the unemployment, health, and so on. So if the Deputy Premier wants me to acknowledge whatever he has done, I cannot do that. If he also wants me to apologize for joining the New Democratic Party, I cannot do that either because there is no way that I would apologize to the Deputy Premier for trying to speak up for my people.

He talks about the unemployment or the economic growth or the economic situation in Manitoba, but every time that this government talks about the unemployment situation in Manitoba, they will not talk about the unemployment situation that they know exists on Indian reserves and in aboriginal communities. They refuse to talk about that because—do you know why?—they know the ugly truth that exists there. They know the ugly reality that exists on those Indian reserves, because even when we go to places like The Pas, Flin Flon and Thompson—I will take The Pas, for example—the unemployment situation in The Pas usually hovers around 20, 25 percent.

Now when this government, when this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his government talks about the economic situation, they are really talking about the economic situation of Winnipeg. That is why it is so misleading on the part of the Premier to talk about the good fortune or the bright economic future or the bright economic situation that he sees existing in Manitoba, in southern Manitoba, in Winnipeg.

Really what that does by the Premier deciding to exclude the statistics that tell the story of the unemployment situation on Indian reserves, it really discriminates against aboriginal people. It discriminates because, if those statistics were to be included in the overall Manitoba picture, the unemployment picture would be that much higher if those statistics were included in the Manitoba picture.

But again when we talk about statistics, the unemployment situation in Manitoba, it is like I am reminded of the time that, when he was talking about statistics on poverty in Manitoba on children when he

was being interviewed by the media, the Premier said, if only the Indians would stay up north in the bush and not bother coming to Winnipeg, our stats on poverty would look a whole lot better. So it is really the Indians' fault that our statistics on poverty are so high. That is what he said, Madam Speaker. It is right there on television. I saw him say that.

An Honourable Member: Who said it? You table that. You cannot back that up. You table it.

An Honourable Member: He was wrong. He said it.

An Honourable Member: Table it.

Mr. Lathlin: So you know, if the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) wants me to apologize, no way. Now, he talks about partnership. Well, as far as northern people and aboriginal people are concerned, he must be a very silent partner because he never says anything to us. He will not go into the isolated communities.

For example, is this partnership when in fishing we have on Lake Winnipeg 80 percent of the fishermen being aboriginal people and only a handful of the fishermen from southern Lake Winnipeg controlling fishing in Lake Winnipeg and the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources refusing to do anything about trying to create some kind of balance on how the Lake Winnipeg fishing is carried on? Is that a partnership? I do not think so, and aboriginal people certainly do not look at that as being an equal partnership; it is so one sided. The facts tell the story.

* (1640)

When we talked about Bill 10, The Wildlife Amendment Act, that was passed a couple of years ago, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources came to the House, and he introduced the legislation and said we are going to address safety. Well, we know for sure, we know for a fact that, when that legislation was introduced, it was introduced for the sole purpose of attacking treaty and aboriginal rights in Manitoba. That was the sole purpose of introducing Bill 10 because we know that previous to the introduction of that legislation the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources—and the current Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) can attest to that fact—were under a lot of

pressure by farmers in Swan River, in that area, to get after the Indians for doing all the hunting that they were doing. So that is why Bill 10 was introduced. We do not for one minute believe the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) when they said that this legislation had to be introduced because they were trying to address the issues.

Then we have programs, Madam Speaker, that are made here in Manitoba. They are paid for by the government of Manitoba and, initially, when those programs are first developed, one is led to believe that those programs are going to be universally available to all Manitobans, but it does not work that way. There again, are we in partnership with this government when, for example, the program 55 Plus is not extended to treaty Indians, treaty aboriginal people? No. It discriminates against Indian people, because whatever, you know, applies to Manitobans does not really apply to aboriginal people, especially those who are of treaty status.

Then we have the REDI program, an economic development program. On at least three occasions I worked on cases or proposals from aboriginal entrepreneurs who wanted to take advantage of the REDI program. They told me that they would approach the REDI program and that they would be told that they did not fit the criteria of the program until finally I decided to look into it. What I discovered, Madam Speaker, was, the REDI program was discriminating against Indian people because of the fact, the excuse I believe the Minister of Rural Development gave me at the time was that treaty Indian people would not be eligible to receive REDI program funding because of the fact that they are getting money from Lotteries. That was their excuse. So to me that is not partnership.

Then last week, again, I came across a situation where at Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Hydro has a program on hot water tanks. I believe the program is a rental-purchase in nature. You know, you get a hot water tank and it gets put on to your hydro bill every month until you pay it off. Well, again, unfortunately, I found out after checking it out that aboriginal people were not eligible to receive that program that Manitoba Hydro is running. The reason they gave me was, because aboriginal people do not own their houses, they

do not have title to their houses, they do not have title to the land that their houses are sitting on. Again, that is discrimination, Madam Speaker, because it does not apply to any other Manitoban. Any other Manitoban can just apply for the program and they get it.

Then we talk about the dental program. In The Pas, Madam Speaker, there are dentists who have by letter informed the director of social services in The Pas that they will no longer be providing service to people who are on social assistance. Now, the way we understand the program is, those people who live in Moose Lake, Easterville, Grand Rapids, Cormorant and the surrounding aboriginal communities, most of those people are Metis people. The treaty status people living in those communities already have their own dental program, you know, that they provide to their people. We have one in the reserve where I come from, so I do not have to go and see the dentist in town. We already have a dentist on the reserve ourselves, but the aboriginal people who are living in Moose Lake and other communities are not going to be able to get any dental services at all because most of them, as I said earlier, live on social services. The unemployment rate in those communities is around 80 percent, so a good majority of them rely on social assistance and therefore are not eligible to receive the dental services from the dentists in The Pas. So, again, is that a partnership arrangement, you know, where both parties benefit? No, we do not benefit from that program. Again, it is discriminatory.

We run into the issue of health care. Again, Madam Speaker, the health reform, or health care budget cuts that have been implemented by this government have been extremely, extremely harsh on aboriginal people. It has been a detrimental step. It has hurt our people, and even in some cases our people have expired as a result of not being able to access medical services as readily as other Manitobans are able to do. In the aboriginal communities like Shamattawa, Brochet, or Red Sucker the only way that you can travel to those communities is by air. There are no doctors in those communities. So you can imagine for yourself the state of health care or the level of health care that exists in those communities.

Then along comes health reform with all its slashing and cutting of budgets and where, for example,

Pukatawagan would normally be coming to The Pas for services. The hospital there now is having to tell Pukatawagan that they cannot send their patients there anymore because there is such a shortage of beds, and more recently the excuse has been that they do not have any doctors to provide the service to those that would have been sent there. So they phone Thompson, and the same response from Thompson. You cannot send your patients here because we do not have any room. We do not have any beds. We do not have a doctor.

Well, Madam Speaker, what are we supposed to do in that situation? Are we supposed to just go on home back to our communities and just not bother to say anything? What do we tell our people? Do we tell our people, I am sorry, this is just the way things are? You are going to have to die whenever you get sick, or you are not going to be able to access medical services? That is not partnership. Again, that is discriminating against those people who live in that area, because at least if they were living in The Pas they would still have access to whatever is available in The Pas. As bad as it is in The Pas in terms of health care, it is still a whole lot better than, say, for the individual who resides in Pukatawagan or Brochet or Shamattawa.

* (1650)

So, Madam Speaker, that is all I wanted to say, but I wanted to finish off by saying that I am not going to be losing any sleep at all from the Deputy Premier who says that I have lost his respect. I do not want his respect anyway. I do not have to go around asking people to respect me, because that is not the way it works. You earn your respect. You do not expect people to just give you the respect; you earn it as you go along in life. So whatever respect that I have been able to get from people I have been able to do that by earning and not by asking people just to give it to me freely.

So, once again, Madam Speaker, I will repeat that I am disappointed with the throne speech. There is absolutely nothing in the throne speech that would make me join the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) in celebrating this so-called bright future that they are talking about, because it sure as hell does not look that way for us who come from northern Manitoba. In northern Manitoba, it looks

pretty bleak, and there is nothing to tell me that things are going to change dramatically for the better.

I thank you for listening to me.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying what a pleasure it is for me to put some words on the record regarding the throne speech that was just presented for the Third Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature and also at the same time welcome back the pages that have served us so faithfully in the last session. Your perseverance, your indulgence and your service to the members are well appreciated. I would also like to give my full-hearted support to Madam Speaker and her endeavours and her directions that we seek from time to time, and not only as Madam Speaker, but also as a person that is so involved with her constituency that I am aware of her efforts and her directions. I congratulate her on all her endeavours that way.

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today to put some words on record regarding the throne speech. I would just like to say that it is a throne speech that sets out a plan, a direction, a blueprint, if you want to call it, for things that this government is now implementing because of its plans, its destiny that it set out back in 1988. In 1995 our government went to the people with a vision for the future. We were able to put the past behind us and make a commitment that we will continue to govern with the best interest of our children, for the future generations, at heart. This throne speech does that. The Third Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature will continue to move our government towards the future by focusing on families, children, growth and opportunity. We will continue to build on Manitoba's reputation as a great place to live, to work, to invest and to raise a family.

Manitobans everywhere have a reason to celebrate with pride and confidence in the economic well-being of our province. Manitobans also tell me that they are thankful that in 1988 a Conservative government under the leadership of Gary Filmon came into power and began to make the necessary decisions that have placed us on a strong foundation to compete in the 21st Century. Madam Speaker, in the 1980s, this foundation here in Manitoba was crumbling. The foundation was crumbling to the unbearable weight of debt that was

placed upon the Manitoba taxpayers, a debt that was placed there to the tune of over \$500 million per year spent on interest payments, and interest payments that are still being paid by this government which represent, as we stand in this House here, a payment of approximately \$57,000 per hour that we pay out in interest because of the debt that was accumulated by the former government, the NDP government.

Madam Speaker, we are usually given 40 minutes to speak, so-called, in this House. So, during the time that I am speaking, if I take the full 40 minutes, we will be paying out a debt of approximately \$38,000 just during this short brief time—a deficit that was adding to the growing debt and placing our children's future at risk.

In 1988 the people of Manitoba realized that running these deficits was morally wrong and elected a government that was committed to placing our financial house back on a strong foundation. Madam Speaker, let us never place our children's future at risk by spending money we do not have. As long as we continue to govern Manitoba, our children can grow up with the assurance their inheritance will not be one that is burdened with frivolous government expenditures. Our foundation is strong, and our foundation is ready to carry a new and regenerated and rejuvenated government into the future. If we dwell in the past, those days we should soon forget.

While we will never forget the legacy of debt that was left for our children, we must continue to ensure that our children have an opportunity to grow and succeed in a global environment. At the same time we need to ensure that we can continue to provide the essential services that we have become accustomed to. Continuing to improve a climate for job creation, modernizing the health care system and ensuring all Manitobans benefit from the success of a strong and stable economy remain the goals of this government. Our government has always had a commitment and continues to have a commitment to health care, Madam Speaker. I should point out that our government last year had a budget expenditure of close to \$1.9 billion, that is \$1.9 billion of expenditures for health care here in Manitoba. If we look at that on another scale, we can say that per day we spend approximately \$5.2 million on health care here in Manitoba. That relates to just over approximately \$217,000 per hour. As I

mentioned earlier, if I speak for 40 minutes, during that 40 minutes we will have spent \$145,000 on health care here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, our commitment to health care has always been strong, and it remains strong. In fact, if we look in comparison to what we spend per capita on our health care here in Manitoba, no other province, and I repeat, no other province comes close to spending what we spend on health care. The members from across the way chide us and say that we are cutting back and that health care is in jeopardy. If spending money were a criteria of quality, we would be No. 1, No. 1, No. 1.

Madam Speaker, our stable environment and our strong fiscal record continues to enable us to offer this type of support not only to our health care but in another area of my responsibility which is the city of Winnipeg. The challenges that have faced our great city also deserve the attention of a strong provincial government. Winnipeg is the heart of our province that is fed through the lifeblood of a strong and vibrant rural economy. I am very pleased to note that this throne speech recognizes some of the very important issues that we face in our city. I am also grateful that we have the opportunity to get on to an early start in our partnering with the city on some very successful programs. Programs such as the Winnipeg Development Agreement will realize a total of \$75 million to support long-term sustainable economic development of Winnipeg through activities designed to create long-term employment, to assist people in finding jobs, to create safe, healthy, and environmentally sound communities.

* (1700)

Madam Speaker, the province plans to continue this commitment to the city and build on the many successful initiatives that have already been announced. The challenge of the Winnipeg Development Agreement is to assist communities in bringing their ideas forward and offering them the support that they deserve.

Too often in the past we have seen numerous hours of volunteer work go to waste because government and specifically government of the other stripe, the former government, felt that they could do it best with their

initiatives. It was this type of philosophy that took on the whole new meaning of entitlement that was bred through the NDP and their spending philosophies of, if the money is there, let us spend it; if the money is not there, let us borrow it, and let us spend it anyway. That type of mentality does not create governments anymore, as we see what is happening not only here in Manitoba but throughout all of Canada in the fiscal responsibility that the taxpayer is asking us as elected officials to take forth on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba know what is best for their communities, and I am here to support them as we work together in building stronger communities and a stronger Manitoba through stronger partnerships and good-faith partnerships between various sectors. By building partnerships that work, we can also generate more resources than ever before. For example, community partnerships have enabled us to double the amount of funding that has normally gone through towards government programs.

I would like to just talk a moment about one of the initiatives under the Winnipeg Development Agreement which is called the urban safety initiative. This has proven to be very beneficial and has a high success of take-up by the community groups in Winnipeg through the Winnipeg Development Agreement. In fact, I do not have the very latest figures, but the figures that were presented to me towards the end of 1996, which was winding down of some of the applications, which resulted in a funding commitment through the provincial government of almost a million dollars, just over \$980,000, this type of funding partnered with other groups to generate over \$3.6 million of expenditures in the urban safety programs.

These were partnerships that were with the Rossbrook House, for example, the City of Winnipeg police department, the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Clubs, Downtown BIZ, North Main BIZ. Also, there was a partnering through my Housing department, through the Department of Education. These are the type of initiatives that were very successful in bringing forth work and improvement into the city of Winnipeg.

The Downtown Watch, through the Downtown BIZ patrol, is something that is very visible and very highly accepted by the downtown area. The people have had

very strong acceptance of this. It has proven to be very beneficial to helping not only the local people that are in town and people looking for a safe environment but also for tourists that come to town. The Downtown Watch is highly visible. If some of you have noticed, it is the young people that walk in the downtown area that have a red coat and black piping on. They are equipped with radios that keep them in touch, not only with their base, but also with the Winnipeg police force so that in a sense they have been able to come forth and help make Winnipeg downtown area a better, safer place to be.

You will recall also that this government also initiated funding for 40 new police officers—\$2 million per year. This has proved very beneficial, because some of the conditions, from what I understand, on that initiative were for policemen to be out and about on a patrol system. We have had very good response through Police Chief Cassels in setting up neighbourhood policing situations. We work very closely through my Housing department in the Selkirk Park area, where we were able to free up a vacant unit so that the City of Winnipeg police could set up community policing and a presence in the area. It has proven to be very, very beneficial. The tenants association for Selkirk Park were very, very in support of this. What it has done, it has put a police presence in the area where there was a high incidence of juvenile crime, a high incidence of prostitution, and it also put a sense of safety in for the seniors in the area. As Seniors minister, I was always very pleased to try to help safety and security of the seniors in that particular area, as there is a large apartment block that is predominately seniors that is very, very close to the Selkirk Park area.

It is initiatives like this where you have the community taking hold, the community taking responsibility and taking possession of their community and making directions. That is where we can build. That is where we can reinforce. This is where government money can act as a catalyst for further enhancement, for further refinement of looking for the aspect of community involvement and the safety of the residents in the area. These are the types of initiatives that we, through the Winnipeg Development Agreement and the urban safety program, feel that there is a lot of room for opportunity for growth.

There are other sectors of the Winnipeg Development Agreement that also have strong appeal for other groups. There are approximately, I believe, 15 various programs under various strategic—actually there are 25 initiatives under the various initiatives announced by the Winnipeg Development Agreement which is going to represent, as I mentioned earlier, an outlay of approximately \$75 million, tripartite between the good-faith partnerships that we have with the federal government and the City of Winnipeg. Some of the areas where the Winnipeg Development Agreement will—through the provincial government is a program through the north main economic development, urban safety that I have mentioned before, neighbourhood infrastructure programs, housing assistance for high risk groups.

There is money involved with training and emerging growth sectors. Through an innovative and preventative Child and Family Services, under the Winnipeg Development Agreement, there is a sector under there for funding. There is a sector under riverbank development. These are just some of the areas that the province has shown as an area of priority in our working with the Winnipeg Development Agreement and how we can make Winnipeg a better place to live, to grow up, and to raise a family.

Madam Speaker, as the snow melts we start to think of spring. The session heats up, I guess, and maybe this is one of the reasons why the snow is melting, because there is a certain radiance from this building that is making springtime seem closer because of the snow melting. We will continue to work on these initiatives in the city towards the security and the safety and the well-being of Winnipeg. As stated in the throne speech that was delivered a little while ago, Canadians are concerned about their children having the opportunity to grow up in a safe and secure environment, but more importantly with real prospects for a better life.

As we continue to govern towards the future, we must also take into account our infrastructure. We plan to build on the Winnipeg Development Community Revitalization Program, a program that has proven very successful in various sectors and various quadrants in the city of Winnipeg. The Fort Rouge constituency area has benefited because of the Manitoba-Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program. There is also an

opportunity for revitalization in the Glenwood area, I believe it is, and the Elmwood area. These are areas that have been identified for community involvement, and here again, it is community driven. It is a program that is designed, that is managed by the community, and it is the community that, here again, takes possession and takes ownership of the problems for solution of the problems. It is not government. It is the community that gets involved for the solution of these problems.

* (1710)

Madam Speaker, we have to encourage this type of involvement. We have to encourage this type of growth of volunteerism, because as noted before in my speaking, government is not there to do everything, and government cannot do everything in regard to trying to solve all of the problems. Community must take ownership of some of the responsibilities and try to solve itself or to work towards a solution on it.

Madam Speaker, we all need to realize that a stronger Manitoba results in a stronger Winnipeg. For example, Manitoba is, in financing for the City of Winnipeg, the only province that provides its municipalities, Winnipeg and other municipalities, with a direct access to provincial income tax revenues through the provincial-municipal tax-sharing payments. Contrary to what my honourable colleagues across the way may say, it is the strong provincial economy in 1995-96 that provided an increase in funding to the various municipalities through these provincial-municipal tax-sharing payments.

Most importantly through, the benefits of a strong provincial economy are the jobs that are created right here in Winnipeg. Madam Speaker, Winnipeg is, in a sense, a unique city here in Canada because it is the major city of Manitoba, but at the same time it benefits tremendously from the rural economic growth that is happening all around the city of Winnipeg, in the various towns, the various sectors, the various municipalities where the rural economy has taken it upon themselves to grow, to expand, to encourage new agri-food business. The Minister of Industry, Trade, and Tourism (Mr. Downey) outlined it very, very apropos in his speech a little while ago regarding the tremendous growth that we have experienced here in Manitoba that all Manitobans benefit from, not only the

people that live in Winnipeg but the people that live in all the towns of Manitoba, because this government recognized that there is a responsibility to all Manitobans, whether they live in Winnipeg or they live in the rural towns.

Madam Speaker, as pointed out, employment has risen, risen to—there is no such word as rosen—the total employment has risen to over 541,000 people. This is an increase of 800 from the previous month. About two-thirds of our year-to-date job growth has been in full-time jobs. This represents well over 14,000 new full-time jobs. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 6.7 percent which is the lowest level in nearly seven years. It is this type of record, it is these types of statistics that back up what we are doing that we are on the right track.

This is the second lowest rate in the country. I believe that deserves repeating, Madam Speaker. This is the second lowest unemployment rate in the country and continues to be 3 percent, three points, 3 percentage lower than Canada that has been under the jurisdiction and direction of another government of a different type of political stripe that does not see the importance of creating jobs and has not lowered the unemployment rate since they have been in power. That is the federal Liberal government that looks at Manitoba with great envy, great envy as to what we are doing with our economic agenda and the direction that we are taking.

Our youth unemployment is the second lowest in the country and five points below the national rates. Madam Speaker, I have just been informed by the ex-Minister of Labour that the youth unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada, lowest in Canada. [interjection] The youth is lowest. From what has just been told to me, the youth unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada.

Madam Speaker, while the federal Liberals search for answers in creating jobs, they just have to look at Manitoba. I talked briefly about the jobs in Manitoba, and I would just like to point out a few of them that are happening. We have all heard about the Schneider's plant, a \$40-million hog plant. Motor Coach Industries estimates by the year 2000 they will have local spending for their new luxury bus which could reach

\$39 million. Since 1989, employment at the Winnipeg plant has grown from 1,200 person staff to over 1,800 staff. New Flyer Industries has more than doubled its workforce in just three years to over 900 jobs. An \$11-million expansion of Vansco Electronics is expected to create 456 jobs in Winnipeg. Standard Aero is currently employing over 800 people and is growing by about 200 jobs per year. We now have approximately 2,800 people employed in the furniture manufacturing industry. We are growing, and we continue to be in the right direction.

Manitobans have a reason to be optimistic, and they have a reason to be optimistic about our future through the governance of this government. We just have to look at the private investment in Manitoba as another indicator. Private investment is expected to grow by 8.6 percent this year, and more investment means jobs, more opportunities and more opportunities for our youth. These are figures that other provinces are very, very envious of. These are the statistics that my honourable colleagues from across the way do not mention, do not look at other than to spin it in some sort of doom-and-gloom way and look backwards. They are a great party of looking to the past to see which way things should go for the future. Madam Speaker, that is the old think.

An Honourable Member: Why are housing starts so low?

Mr. Reimer: Housing starts this year are up over 200 percent. Madam Speaker, in today's newspaper—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the minister.

Mr. Reimer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know that the opposition gets a little prickly when you start to talk about the growth here, but these are figures that are not only brought forth by our government, these are figures that are researched by industry, by the newspapers, by the economic think tanks. These are figures that I do not make up. These are figures that have been brought to me by statistics. You know, these are statistics, Statistics Canada, the Winnipeg Free Press—sometimes you have to take that with a grain—but

the Conference Board, these are the ones that we look at and have given Manitoba such a glowing record.

The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was asking me about housing starts, and I am glad he did because, Madam Speaker, that is the other part of my portfolio, and I am sure that he was glad to see in today's paper that we are looking at increases in Winnipeg of nearly 200 percent increase in homes over last year. These are the best statistics for housing starts in the last seven years, and they just happen to coincide with the lowest unemployment rate in seven years. Coincidence? It is part of the direction that we are taking.

* (1720)

In talking about housing, I should talk a bit about what is happening with the housing sector. As you may be aware, back in 1993, the federal government decided that they were going to cap funding for housing expenditures in Canada. So they put in a cap in 1993. In 1994 they informed the provinces that they would no longer be partnering the development of housing in Manitoba or in Canada. So there was no federal funding there. In 1995 they reduced the funding to the housing component across Canada by approximately \$250 million, which affected Manitoba Housing also. Last year, in 1996, they announced that they are now wanting to get out of the housing portfolio completely, and they are asking devolve themselves of their housing stock and put it into the responsibility of the provinces. Madam Speaker, they have been very forthright in their direction that they are abandoning public housing, and the federal Liberal government has taken this as their cause, that the public housing is no longer—they do not want to be involved with public housing. They have cut back over \$200 million in the social sector envelope of housing for the province of Manitoba. These are some of the initiatives that we, as a provincial government, are being faced with.

The devolution of public housing onto Manitoba is a huge, huge responsibility. From the preliminary estimates that we have got from the federal government, we are talking about a devolution of well over \$650 million in their mortgage portfolio that they are wanting the province to take over. When you combine that with our portfolio of over \$300 million

that we have as a mortgage portfolio under our Housing portfolio, we are looking at assuming a debt of almost a billion dollars. This is a phenomenal offload by the federal government onto the Province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, any type of decision that has to be taken in regard to an assumption of this responsibility takes on a totally different type of meaning and magnitude. The responsibility that the federal government is abandoning is immense. I do not believe that the whole ramification and the scope of it has been realized, and I joined with the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) the other day when she was asking me about this. I joined with her in the same concerns, and I will say that I share the same concerns that she has in the fact that the information comes in dribs and drabbles from the federal government. They are playing sort of a Monty Hall game where they will make a deal with anybody, each province on an individual basis.

We are not brought up to steam as to what is happening with other provinces other than the fact that by the initiatives taken by the department to find out what is going on, that is the only way we can find out what is going on, but it is something that I think that all parties should be aware of, particularly the Liberal Party of Manitoba. The provincial Liberal Party of Manitoba should recognize that there is a responsibility that they have in public housing, and if the federal Liberals are wanting to devolve themselves and cut themselves loose from that, I believe that the provincial Liberal Party should show its stripes, either being for the people of Manitoba in encouraging the public housing sector to remain strong and vibrant or to be part of the federal Liberal plan to just walk away from this and just leave it hanging for the people of Manitoba to assume the total responsibility.

No decision has been taken as to whether there will be an acceptance of the federal position, because it has involved a tremendous amount of analysis, a tremendous amount of information that has to be gathered and fed back through the system to find out exactly the economic ramifications, the conditions that the federal government has put us in. It is like asking for an information, a telephone book where it starts with T, and they give the telephone book from A to F,

and you have to keep looking and then they give you the book from F to S or something like that.

Madam Speaker, we are very concerned about this. We are very concerned that the information that we have to make decisions on is not always forthright. I believe it is creating a fair amount of anxiety and apprehension in the public sector Housing portfolio, and I would like to just put on the record that at this time we have not made any decision as to whether we would take, accept or any type of direction that we would do with their offer, because it has, as I mentioned before, some huge ramifications as to responsibilities, and the Manitoba Treasury and the Manitoba taxpayer can only go so far in assuming the offloading that the federal government is doing here.

The Manitoba taxpayer has to be aware that these are all costs. The federal government is just burdening an offload of, like I mentioned, over a \$650-million mortgage portfolio. There is also the fact that we have a tremendous amount of upkeep involved with all these units. The federal government's upkeep responsibility is almost \$90 million a year on these units. Who is going to pay for that? How is it going to be paid for? What is the responsibility? What is the length of the duration? These are numbers, these are things that we still have to talk about. So the design on it has to be taken into account if we are going to assume any type of responsibility the federal government feels that they should offload onto us.

Madam Speaker, housing is a very important component of this government. We have always shown a very strong commitment to it. Our stock of our housing has always been of an exemplary quality. It is continually inspected, upgraded and looked after within the parameters of the budget. We will have great pride in that portfolio. At the same time, we are looking at the efficiencies that have to be brought into line. The federal government, because of their offloading, has made us look at all our stock. The member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) mentioned about—I think she referred to something about drive-by inspections. I am not too sure what she meant by that, but I do know that we have looked at all our units because we have to. We do inspections. We do analysis of these units not only for our maintenance program, but for our upgrade program, for our efficiency program.

These things are ongoing, and they will continue to be ongoing. They have been accelerated to an extent because we have to look at what type of facilities the federal government is proposing to us. A lot of their portfolio is in the rural and northern and native area of jurisdiction, so we do not know the total units involved there. A lot of the federal units are also senior complexes and the responsibilities and the contracts that they have with nonprofit agencies. These are all things that have to be individually negotiated, recognized and realized as to what type of implications that we are looking at as assuming. So the decision is still, you know, in the discussion stage. We have not made any type of decision as to how, when and what and where and if we would assume. So I would just like to put it on record that it is an ongoing analysis. It is an analysis that means that we have to recognize the total abrogation by the federal government of some of their responsibilities and their offloading to the provinces. The taxpayers of Manitoba, we as a government have to be accountable to them. At the same time the efficiencies that we look at spending the tax dollars with have to be perused.

Madam Speaker, it is a little bit of an offshoot from what originally we were talking about regarding the throne speech, but I feel that it is important that we get that message to not only my colleagues, but I feel that it is important that my colleagues are aware of some of the tremendous pressures that are being put on the Housing portfolio as to which direction it should be taking.

* (1730)

An Honourable Member: Do you know which direction?

Mr. Reimer: As mentioned to the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), no, we have not made a decision on that because it means a tremendous amount of different—[interjection]

So, Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I get a chance to put some of these things on the record, because sometimes, you know, as you listen to honourable members from across the way you think that there is nothing but that Chicken Little syndrome over there, that the sky is falling, that there is nothing

but doom and gloom, and that they have a better way of doing things. We do not know whether that is true because we do not get the creativity that we feel is there on the opposition side other than the word "opposition." You know, they feel that opposition means that there is a criticism on everything this government does. So we feel that we have set up on a course, we have set on a direction that is beneficial to the taxpayers of Manitoba, and we feel that with our initiatives of a balanced budget, our initiatives of a strong economy, our initiatives of trying to work with good-faith partnerships in the communities, whether it be with the nonprofit organizations, with our federal counterparts or the City of Winnipeg, these are some of the things that we feel that we will continue to build on. But as I mentioned, these are good-faith partnerships that we feel are of a benefit for Manitobans.

I would just like to end by saying that I feel very, very confident that as we approach the end of the speaking of the throne speech and we get ready for the budget that is going to be presented in a few days that there again we will see a strong economic agenda, we will see a positive growth direction that this government feels that it should be taking. I thank members for allowing me to get this on the record, and I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Madam Speaker, I too take this opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne opening the Third Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

Allow me to begin by congratulating the members for Riel (Mr. Newman) and River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) and also Morris (Mr. Pitura) for their recent appointments to cabinet, and I want to thank the member for Riel and also the member for Morris. There are a couple of issues that we have worked together on and we have been able to find some resolution to the issues that I brought to their attention, and I thank them for that.

In my culture, there are four principles in a concept of how First Nations relate to the natural law of life and also to our Creator. The four principles of this concept are: the human part of life; the animal life; the plant life; the earth life. As well, these four worlds remind us of our dependency of one another, our respect for

mother, our mother the Earth. Mother Earth provides also for our nourishment and, ultimately, life to the plants, the animals and humankind, all providing and respecting each other for our daily needs. That is where I would like to begin, the whole notion of respect, especially with the comments and the remarks that were made by my colleague from The Pas. He is absolutely right, that it would appear that aboriginal people in this province have not received any respect by this government with the recent throne speech that we all heard from. I listened with caution and I listened with great interest to the comments made by not only my colleagues but also by the members on the other side.

I noted a portion of the throne speech where His Honour said: "While Manitobans and other Canadians are justified in being encouraged by our economic progress, we must acknowledge that an important group in our society has been largely by-passed in realizing the benefits. The Royal Commission on Canada's Aboriginal Peoples provides a number of recommendations for dealing with the bleak futures facing far too many aboriginal Canadians." That is entirely true.

I recently had the opportunity of working with Chief Margaret Cowstachin (phonetic) of the Shamattawa First Nation on a very serious issue, and that is dealing with housing. We have 827 people as of this date living in that community, and we have 122 housing units, half of which do not have plumbing. Out of that 827, we still have 345 people that are defecating in a bucket and we have, simply put, Third World conditions in our own backyard.

What First Nations and other aboriginal people have been calling for is working arrangements, partnership arrangements in dealing with the severe conditions that exist in northern Manitoba communities. It is often frustrating for the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and I to talk about these issues because we came from that environment, and for the most part First Nations and other aboriginal people have not even caught up with the 20th Century. In the meantime, we are going into the 21st. In the meantime the opportunity is there for this government and also the federal government to establish these working relationships with First Nations

and other aboriginal people and how to deal with them in a proper way.

I will take one example as well while I am on Shamattawa. We have at least one medivac in our community a day either to Thompson or to Winnipeg to medivac an individual, and for the most part the health problems are caused by the bad drinking water in the community because there is a high methane count, and you can actually light a flame under a faucet of water that people drink each and every day. I was very disappointed when I wrote to the Chief Medical Officer for this province and he wrote back and said it was more of a federal matter. I thought that people in Shamattawa were Manitobans, as well, all this time, Madam Speaker, and I was very disappointed when I was redirected back to the federal government. I thought that the natural route would be to do some connections on the part of the Chief Medical Officer of this province and also with the federal government. It goes to prove the point that my colleague from The Pas was trying to make is that aboriginal people for the most part have been used as political footballs for a long time.

I know that many in this Chamber probably have not had to live in those conditions that I am describing, but I certainly have, and certainly the member for The Pas has. We were very delighted in our community when we finally got running water in the early '70s and also indoor plumbing, but the conditions are drastic and our people are dying. We were told recently by Sandra Delorande, (phonetic) and I had the opportunity of talking with her—I was somewhat encouraged by the meetings that she has had with the new Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) and gave this group some hope on how they are going to address certain issues in the time to come. So I was very happy to hear that. She brought up an issue here about the respect for elders and the respect for aboriginal people not being there by this government, and she made a reference to showing respect to people that are retiring, people that are seniors and are elders in our communities no matter where we may be from. She said, while the non-Indian world or the nonaboriginal world can look forward to retirement at 55, people like you and I and others, you know, we do not have to look forward to that because we probably will not live beyond 55 because of the studies that have been done

which indicate that we probably will die a whole lot sooner than most Canadians because of the conditions that we are faced with, and certainly the constituents that I represent in this Legislature are faced with these situations each and every day.

Another example is that we have 10 people from the community of Garden Hill that have had to relocate to Winnipeg and have had to leave their loved ones and their families and come to a strange environment, something they are not accustomed to, to live in Winnipeg in order for them to have access to dialysis treatment. I do not think that is fair because it not only dislocates them from their community but also to a degree, you know, they find themselves in further despair with loneliness and so on.

* (1740)

If we are talking partnership, Madam Speaker, I am offering some suggestions here, and I would recommend that the government listen, because these are recommendations that are, I think, attainable. The Island Lake area, for example, has an area of about 7,000 people. If we are indeed saying we want to engage in a partnership with aboriginal people, then, you know, the provision of a dialysis machine is not out of the question, in my opinion, in the community of Garden Hill.

I refer to the 10 people—there could be more now—who live in Winnipeg because they are unable to attain that service in their community and who are now living in loneliness without their families, without their grandchildren, for the most part, living in the city of Winnipeg, and I do not think that is fair in this day and age.

We also have a number of other issues that we have talked about in the past. I want to begin with the repeated claim by this government that aboriginal people living on their reserve is not their responsibility, and many of the cutbacks have directly or indirectly impacted on reserves and Metis communities more severely than in Winnipeg. Well, my response then would be, I would recommend—and the government, certainly I open the door for them to take that opportunity by working with such groups as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Aboriginal Council

in Winnipeg and addressing that issue collectively with the federal government.

I mean, oftentimes I am told that we are a party with no ideas; we are critics and we are critical, and we have no meaningful solutions. Well, here is your opportunity to listen to a few. Northern Manitoba, as well, has had major reductions in support for highways over the past seven years making travel in the North more difficult, and roads like 391, 373, it has been repeated here many, many times. I think that what we have to do is turn the budget around and allocate more money, so that some safety is given to the travellers of these northern communities, northern roads.

My colleague again referred to them as trails, and that is exactly what they are in many of these communities. I can make reference to Oxford House. Again, I contacted the Chief Medical Officer to check out the conditions in that community. Again, I did not receive a response because it was causing breathing problems for the elderly in that community and also the young children because of the dust and because they do not have the equipment and also the materials they need to upgrade that road. There again, we can enter into a joint arrangement with the federal government, and I am sure the federal government would be open to that sort of idea.

The provincial government certainly should grab that opportunity to make these arrangements, because after all these people, First Nations people, are considered to be Manitobans as well as Canadians. So if indeed we are going to show that respect to aboriginal people, then we should make every effort to do that. That is a recommendation I would like to make to this government in how they could develop these so-called partnership arrangements that they are talking about.

Another area, of course, is the Access program. It has been cut repeatedly. In 1994, for example, the program was cut by \$2 million, and a further cut was made in 1995 by \$1.4 million, so students who were in the middle of the program were told that they would no longer receive funding. As I understand it, they have taken the government to court, and the judge ruled that the provincial government had broken its contract with the students. Of course, the province is appealing, and

this appeal will be heard in a few days, on the 14th of March, as I understand it.

The Northern Development Agreement was not renewed by this government as well, and many of us here will remember the ERDA agreements we used to have in northern Manitoba which were meaningful and gave employment to a lot of people. We do not have that anymore, and again I reiterate what my colleague from The Pas was saying, in some of these communities when the labour stats come out, it paints a good picture for the Province of Manitoba but does not say a thing about the aboriginal communities in this province where 95 percent unemployment is the norm in many First Nations communities. I invite colleagues to come with me on one of my trips to one of the Third World communities that we have in our own backyard.

The Northern Youth Corps Job which hired 500 young people across the North each summer ended in 1989. We know that. BUNTEP and the northern Bachelor of Nursing program provided aboriginal students with an opportunity to become teachers and nurses were also cut. New Careers which many were graduates of, the most successful training program in the country with a 93 percent job success rate was eliminated, and again my colleague for Point Douglas was a graduate of the New Careers program.

In 1993, this government ended funding for Manitoba's 11 Indian and Metis Friendship Centres by \$1.2 million. Also in 1993, the province eliminated the grant to the MKO of \$78,500 and the annual grant to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs by \$325, and in June 1994 payments for foster parents who care for relatives were halved from \$20 to \$10 a day. This reduction is particularly significant for its impact on First Nations communities since 80 percent of aboriginal foster care placements occur within extended families.

Many will realize in this House as well that the cost of living in northern Manitoba communities is sometimes three, four, five, six times greater than it is in the southern part of this province, and particularly Winnipeg, and in 1993 the province cut funding to the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance Program, which devastated the northern fishery that depended on the assistance to ship fish to the southern area of this province. Also, cuts to northern hospitals have had

major impacts on First Nations communities which depend on these hospitals, because for the most part what Indian people are turning out to be is an industry. When we get sick, well, naturally, somebody has to take care of us. The whole system, Madam Speaker, has to be thought out, and we have to reconsider perhaps ill-made decisions that have been made in the past, because First Nations communities count as Manitobans as well, and they also depend on these hospitals.

The Native Education branch of the Department of Education has been cut from 13 staff to three. That was a very meaningful program which brought about awareness to many people that did not have an awareness of their aboriginal culture. I am going on here, and it is unfortunate.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report was released in August of 1991. At that time it was the Deputy Premier who—and I remember that because I was, at that time, the president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg—said it would not become a doorstop. The Hughes report, amongst others, pointed out the failure of the government to act on this blueprint for action. What we proposed at that time was that a secretariat would work with the provincial government in dealing with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, the Indigenous Women's Collective, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and the Manitoba Metis Federation to work in partnership with the provincial government to address the issues, because a hundred of the 294 recommendations contained in the AJI directly related to the provincial government. Again, we have not seen any significant movement. Yes, we know about Hollow Water. Yes, there have been good things done there, but in the meantime Hollow Water is suffering from a lack of funding right now as well.

We talk of the St. Theresa Point youth justice program as no longer operational. I know that a brief that was made to the government of Manitoba in March of 1996 just about a year to this day. At that time the Premier responded to the delegation of the conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario of the United Church of Canada, saying that he was not present so he could not—because the Minister of Justice at that time was not present at that meeting—say for sure but felt that

over 100 of the AJI recommendations had been looked at seriously, and his government has initiated and funded many of these recommendations. Well, if that indeed is the case, certainly the aboriginal community has not seen that unless there has been a recent initiative I am not aware of, and I will stand to be corrected if indeed that is the case.

* (1750)

Again, as First Nations and other aboriginal people have told this government, the delegation from the United Church also urged the provincial government to move immediately to act on the AJI by first of all indicating to the people of Manitoba that these recommendations should be accepted, and detailing strategies and dates for action. We have not seen that happen yet, and also clarifying that those recommendations that need federal approval be done in a way that we would be able to bring in the federal government as a partner in an arrangement in order to deliver the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. Again, we have not seen any action on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

Recently, of course, we had the tabling of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report in late 1996. Again it reaffirmed the many fine recommendations that were made in the AJI; again, reiterated many things in relation to justice, and this is an opportunity that this province can take; again, I noted in the throne speech that there was no mention of the question that I asked the First Minister with respect to developing some kind of arrangement and being able to deal with these cross-jurisdictional issues that were contained in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

But certainly that opportunity is there, and I would highly recommend to the new Minister of Northern and Native Affairs that perhaps he takes that issue on and be the first off the mark to really try and deliver this time on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; because to a degree aboriginal people are tired of being political footballs, of being thrown back from one jurisdiction to another. The fact is aboriginal people have been Manitobans way before Manitoba was created to the way it is now and also have been Canadians way before the boundaries for Canada were made. That is why aboriginal people, an element of

them, relate to themselves as being First Nations people. I would strongly urge the government that these issues be considered.

I was referring earlier to health care, part of the health reform, Madam Speaker, especially for Metis and non-Status Indians. I am sure this was raised by the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Northern Association of Community Councils when they met with the new Minister of Northern and Native Affairs. I do not think it is fair. One example I would like to give is that one elder who is 83 years old now had to take a 16-hour bus trip from Cross Lake to Winnipeg. I do not think that is fair. The roads, first of all, are not maintained. As it turned out, this elder from the Cross Lake community was diagnosed as having lung cancer when she came to Winnipeg. Added to that is the fact that she had to come all the way down here on a bus. I do not think that is showing respect—and I have heard “respect” talked about in this House. Certainly that is not an indication to me that there is any respect.

We have been often referred to, including my Leader, as the dean of doom and gloom. We on the other hand are making some very intelligent recommendations here on what the government can do in establishing nation-to-nation relationships with the First Nations and with the federal government. This is a beautiful opportunity for this government to get the parties at the same table on how we start dealing with these issues, the federal government on the one hand, the First Nations and other aboriginal organizations. This is a grand opportunity for this government to begin dealing with these long-standing issues that we are all very familiar with.

Before I conclude, Madam Speaker, I just want to say that the sentiments that were expressed in the throne speech are belated admission that the nine years of this government have meant a deterioration of the quality of life for First Nations people and the reduction in opportunities for First Nations people. That is what it says to me. The throne speech joins the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Hughes report, and the Royal Commission in noting that the current system is failing aboriginal people. We will watch of course with anticipation to see whether the sentiments of the throne speech are matched with any commitments to restore

the funding of the Access, New Careers, Northern Youth Corps, the fish freight assistance program, MKO, AMC—I read out the list earlier.

So we will eagerly anticipate whether or not those programs, meaningful programs that certainly I am proud that this party was instrumental in creating, will be restored, and then perhaps, you know, we will not be deemed to be the party of doom and gloom. But we have to be shown that there is indeed some interest in aboriginal issues in this province. Aboriginal people are a reality and our population is growing, and we are going to continue expressing many of our thoughts.

So I hope that my comments, Madam Speaker, are taken seriously by this government because this is an opportunity. They should grab this opportunity to act upon some of the recommendations that we have just made, act on them, and I believe that it will be beneficial for all concerned. We are not interested in bashing the federal government. Yes, they are responsible for a lot of action, but this government should also take some responsibility on their inaction. Thank you.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to address the throne speech. Let me say, first of all, and on behalf of people that I represent in my constituency, that we would like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, in the way in which you handled the matters of this House in the closing days of the last session. Indeed, we all understand how difficult it was, but you carried out your responsibilities in accordance with an agreement that was signed on behalf of both parties of government, and that is something that has to be taken very seriously.

Unfortunately, there were some members in this House who saw it differently, and indeed the opposition party felt that an agreement such that was signed by both parties, or all three parties in this House, could be broken. That is regrettable because it does mean that there is a question about trustworthiness and about what one's word means. Nevertheless, I commend you on behalf of the people that I represent and on behalf of the members of this House in the way that you conducted your affairs as the Speaker of this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I represent a rural constituency, and my responsibility as Minister of Rural Development takes me into many parts of this province. As such I have an opportunity to speak to people right across this province who work and who conduct their affairs in small communities. In addition to that I have the opportunity to also dialogue and to converse with people in the larger centres of our province whether they are in Brandon, in Winnipeg, in Portage la Prairie, Thompson, Flin Flon, in all of these communities. I cannot believe when I listen to the comments that are made from the opposition about the bleakness that they portray in their remarks and the attitudes that they convey about this province. The experiences that I have in meeting and in discussing matters with people in this province are quite different from what we hear

from the opposition party. Now I understand that their role and responsibility is to criticize policy that the government may put forward, and they in fact from time to time vehemently disagree with the direction of government. It is fine to be negative and it is fine to criticize, but what alternatives has the opposition offered in any of the matters that we conduct in this province?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) will have 37 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

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