



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CIOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 6, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Forest Fire Conditions

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I have a brief statement for the House on the current fire situation, followed by a statement on the presentation of the trees.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report this afternoon, with the general rain and cooler temperatures, that conditions are ideal to fight fires throughout the province. At this time there are still 52 fires that are burning. We have had a total of 177 fires to date, and they have covered an area of 37,000 hectares. The weather forecast continues to be favourable, however. It indicates we will be receiving precipitation in the next few days including Manigotagan and St. Theresa Point which have been hot spots. The fire at Manigotagan remains the main area of concern and it is being held today by 261 firefighters along with 33 bulldozers and skidders.

As I indicated yesterday, the rainfall has been timely. The good news is that with the much-improved situation, we are now seeing the evacuees return to their homes. The equipment that we have had from neighbouring jurisdictions, the water bombers from Northwest Territories have gone on to Ontario and the air tankers from Alberta that are presently at The Pas will be returning to their bases. I believe, Madam Speaker, that everyone shares the feeling that our firefighters have done an excellent job. On behalf of all Manitobans, I want to express our appreciation.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for keeping us updated on the fire situation in northern Manitoba. It is also nice to

know that many of the residents of Manigotagan, Seymourville and Hollow Water have made their way to their homes. Unfortunately, there are problems that come along with these, given the power that was off for several days in many of the communities in Bloodvein, Berens River, Poplar River, Little Grand Rapids and Paungassi. Unfortunately, many people went back home to find that their food had been destroyed or had spoiled as a result of no power, so this is an added problem, added stress, to an already stressful situation.

* (1335)

I join the minister in thanking our firefighters from the Department of Natural Resources, as well as the many volunteers from the different communities. I think we only have to reflect back 10 years ago in 1989 when the major forest fires occurred in the province of Manitoba and a lot of credit has to go to the community residents of those communities that were involved in the fires back then.

Chief Reggie Mason of the St. Theresa Point First Nation informed me this morning that 11 homes had been burnt in their community, and in the pathway of the fire were a hundred homes. So it is only with luck that there was not further damage in that particular community. He also advises me that things like outhouses and sheds, equipment, boats, snowmobiles have been destroyed in their community. Eighty-two people in all from that particular community are still outside of their home community and are in places in the city of Winnipeg. Certainly our elderly and children and people who have respiratory problems, as they are not allowed to go home in Manigotagan, Hollow Water and Seymourville, these people with similar health problems are not allowed to go back to their homes in St. Theresa Point. So we have, as of this date, Madam Speaker, 82 people who are out of the community.

But we should commend the volunteers, not only the ones on the front lines but indeed the

volunteers in Pinawa, Pine Falls, Bissett, the people from the community who have extended a very helpful hand to the evacuees. As I indicated the day before yesterday, these situations are often stressful and stressful on the little children. We want to give thanks, as well, to the City of Winnipeg, Mayor Glen Murray, Councillor Lubosch, for the assistance they provided and to the staff of the Winnipeg zoo by accommodating the children from Hollow Water, Manigotagan and Seymourville by allowing them the opportunity to visit the Winnipeg zoo, and for the first time the children got to see just exactly what is there.

So I believe, in spite of the bad situation that we are faced with throughout this province with the forest fire situation, there are many people who have to be thanked for making the people's lives just a little more comfortable. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources, with an additional ministerial statement.

National Forest Week

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I have a statement on National Forest Week.

It probably is quite appropriate, given the report that I just gave, that we are now celebrating National Forestry Week. All the members obviously have their spruce in front of them, compliments of the Forestry Association, so it is a good time to remind us of the importance of our forests and the quality of the plants. Before I officially read into the record my statement, I want to assure the members, those who appear to be a little bit disadvantaged, that this is not a subliminal message.

* (1340)

If I could build on the good nature in the House today, part of this campaign is to help Manitobans become more aware of this special week. Manitoba Forestry Association has provided seedlings to all members of this Legislature. As one of my colleagues once remarked, he now has a row of spruce as a result of having celebrated Forestry Week, and I am

sure there are other members in the House who can say that they had the same benefit. It is an important symbol.

The forest industry generates more than \$470-million worth of sales in this province and employs about 6,000 Manitobans. It is a significant contributor to our economy. This past week I had the opportunity to participate in a grand opening of new facilities at the new sawmill at Spruce Products Ltd. at Swan River. Spruce Products has operated sawmills and pulpwood operations throughout our province since 1942. In the past three years it has invested more than \$10 million, with future plans to invest another \$3 million. The forest industry in our province continues to grow and prosper to the benefit of all Manitobans as demonstrated by that investment.

During the celebration of National Forest Week, it is important to note that in the past 10 years Manitoba Natural Resources and the forest industry have planted more than 125 million trees. This is an accomplishment that everyone can take pride in. National Forest Week is a special time to celebrate our forests, and I congratulate the Manitoba Forestry Association for its efforts every year for the past number of years and for reminding us about this valuable resource.

Manitoba Natural Resources continues to support the forest industry association through its participation in its very successful programs. The forest education teacher's workshop, the Envirothon competition for high school youth, the Youth Ambassadors' program, all help to increase Manitobans' understanding of how important forests are to the economy and to the environment.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in the support of this effort, and I am pleased, on behalf of the forestry industry, to encourage you to care and nurture the tree in front of you.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I am very pleased to join with the minister today in celebrating National Forest Week. I thank him for his statement to the House, and I want to thank the Manitoba Forestry Association for

providing us with the seedlings that I am sure we will all put to good use building our wood lots in the back of our properties over the course of years.

The minister very rightly talks about the expansion that took place at Spruce Products near Swan River. Not so long ago, the MLA for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and I had a chance to tour through that facility and meet with Mr. Dick Walker and the people who work there at Spruce Products. I must say that we were both very impressed with the expansion that took place, and I am sure the people of Swan River, who will benefit from that local boost to the economy, appreciate the work that Spruce Products is doing. We also had a chance to talk with Mr. Walker about some of the sustainable forestry practices that Spruce Products are employing in that part of the world, and we encourage Spruce Products and other Manitoba forestry companies to employ some of those common-sense practices in the forestry industry.

I also want the government to take this week to reflect upon some of its own policies in the area of forestry, especially the public participation in decision making. The Manitoba Forestry Association is doing a good job in raising the awareness of the public of the importance of trees, the importance of our forest, the importance of the ecosystems that live and operate within our forests. I think this government should do the same thing, particularly when it comes to First Nation involvement, before agreements are signed. This government does not have a good record in this regard. It has a chance to do the right thing on the east side of Lake Winnipeg before a memorandum of understanding has been signed. I think the government should take some positive steps in including First Nations and other members of the public before agreements are signed.

*(1345)

So, with that, Madam Speaker, I want to wrap up by thanking the Manitoba Forestry Association for the white spruce, our provincial tree, and assure them that it will be taken care of in my backyard and be put to good use. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Do I have leave to make just a few remarks—

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to make some remarks?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave. Leave has been granted.

Mr. Kowalski: I just would like to thank the Manitoba Forestry Association for these. I think it is so appropriate that the weakest, the bent, are given to the two Liberal members because we do not give up on anyone. We will nurture it; we will make it strong, just as we could take any individual and never give up. Thank you very much.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon nineteen Grade 9 students from Victor Mager School under the direction of Mr. Larry Patrick. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Native Affairs and Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman).

Also, twenty-eight Grade 11 students from Nellie McClung Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Grant Caldwell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

We also have sixteen Grades 12 and 13 students from the Dryden High School in Dryden, Ontario, under the direction of Mr. Jim Black.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities Food Services—Conditions

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, on April 15, 1998, the Minister of Health told this Chamber, dealing with the

frozen food, that this plan was developed by the nine hospitals. In April of 1999 the Minister of Health stated that they support the objectives of the economy of scale of this food preparation project. I would like to ask the minister whether any conditions came from the government down to the urban hospitals to force Winnipeg hospitals to join Filmon's frozen food in urban hospitals in Winnipeg.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The member is correct in identifying that the Urban Shared Services Corporation is a corporation of the nine urban hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg. The CEOs, the chief executive officers, of those nine hospitals serve on the board of that corporation. I believe there are a few citizen members appointed at large as well, Mr. John Bullman, for one. So that is how the entity was created.

The objectives are certainly to provide quality food, to provide nutritional food and to do it as efficiently and effectively as possible to avoid additional capital costs and obviously to improve efficiencies in terms of the delivery of the food, and any savings that can be achieved through that process can be left in the health care system to provide other much-needed services to Manitobans. So that certainly has been the objective throughout the entire process, and that certainly is an objective worthy of support.

Mr. Doer: The minister did not answer my question. I asked whether there were any top-down conditions to force the urban hospitals to join this Filmon frozen food initiative. I would like to quote from a memo from the Department of Health in February of 1998 where a clear condition for dealing with the hospital deficits, deficits of course that were established with reductions in operating grants from the province—clearly condition 7 was that you must utilize the services for all of the frozen food services.

I would like to ask this minister: why has he purported to say that this was an initiative of the Urban Shared Services and hospitals when it was a top-down condition of this government?

* (1350)

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the issue of the centralization of food delivery services has been an issue that has been around for several years, and the Leader of the Opposition is certainly well aware of that. This issue has been talked about for several years in terms of the implementation, the thinking behind the implementation, the rationale in terms of what I have already outlined in terms of avoiding capital costs, improving efficiencies, saving those dollars, redirecting them into health care, and continuing to focus on quality nutritional food. So it is not an issue that just originated a year ago. It has been an issue that has been under review and consideration with the support of those nine urban hospitals for quite some time.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the government cuts \$40 million out of the operating grants to hospitals, lays off over a thousand nurses, has hospitals run up deficits and then makes one of the conditions of dealing with the deficits the Filmon frozen food. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) sends out a letter to his constituents—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I have listened very carefully to the honourable Leader of the official opposition. This is the second time. All honourable members in this Chamber should be recognized as honourable members or by their ministerial portfolio. This member has not been recognizing that fact.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for St. Norbert, indeed the honourable member does have a point of order. All members in the Legislature are to be referred to not by their surnames but by their constituencies.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Well, I can understand the sensitivity of wanting to have the member for Tuxedo's (Mr. Filmon) name not mentioned in this House.

We will look forward to looking at his signs, but we will also look forward to taking his strong support of the frozen food back to his people in St. Norbert. Shame on him.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) indicated in a letter, in fact stated in a letter, this was an initiative of the Winnipeg hospitals. Will the Minister of Health now have an honest explanation of the fact that this was a condition of the provincial government, the members opposite, this was a condition from the government down to the hospitals and, given that the taxpayers have paid for the Minister of Justice's letter, have the record cleared in an honest way for the people of this province?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to just do a little more research on this issue, and he will find that back in 1994 the Winnipeg hospitals decided to create a central food service to replace some increasingly outdated and expensive kitchens. They were concerned about the many problems of food costs, quality, and complaints by patients, so they chose to establish a central facility that had the potential to provide better food more economically. Those are certainly objectives that we support and we have continued to support through the last few years.

Health Care Facilities Food Services—Conditions

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, it is very clear from the letter that we have a copy of that was sent to Mr. Roy Brown, Deer Lodge Centre, that the conditions are set forth in point form, and they are very clear. They must, if they want to have their deficits paid, utilize the services of the Urban Shared Services Corporation for all appropriate system-wide initiatives, including food services, laundry services, logistics and group purchasing, including capital equipment. It is a condition, a coercive condition.

Will he not acknowledge that this was not a free choice on the part of the hospitals but was government policy imposed by a government that even hid the decision in 1994 from the people of Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): I have already outlined for his Leader the history of the establishment of the Urban Shared Services Corporation. It goes back to 1994. It was done with the support of the nine urban hospitals. Some seven hospitals here in Winnipeg are on that service to date. As we know, two have not come on that service yet because they have to do some capital improvements and have some other issues to address. Certainly the objectives of this whole initiative are very clear: to provide quality food, nutritional food, and to do it as efficiently and effectively as possible. I know those are difficult objectives for members opposite to support or understand, but we certainly support those objectives. Although this corporation has had a year where they have had some transition costs, Madam Speaker, those are still the objectives, and those objectives certainly can and will be met.

* (1355)

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, how does the minister then explain the letter from Concordia Hospital of February 26, 1998, which says your letter was discussed today at this month's regular board meeting and, to say the least, we were disappointed in the intimidating tone of your letter?

Madam Speaker, does he still maintain that these hospitals were not coerced into the frozen food disaster?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I guess for the member opposite I have to be repetitive because that seems to be the only way he might understand the history of the establishment of this corporation. This is not something that just happened last year.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, as I was reminding the member opposite, this goes back to 1994, some five years ago, where hospitals decided to do this kind of a setup to centralize food services to avoid some \$15 million in capital costs is the estimate, to save dollars

through the centralization and co-ordination of delivery of food services, so those dollars will be available for the health care services in a whole range of other areas that are important to Manitobans, and to continue to focus on quality nutritional food. Certainly we have shared information with members opposite that shows the approval ratings in the facilities that are on this new system continue to get higher and higher and higher, and the approval ratings today are higher under the new food service system than they were under the old food service system. So the objective of quality nutritional food done as efficiently and effectively as possible to save resources is certainly one that we support.

Food Services—Information Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, if the minister is so certain of the quality of the food and the savings that are being achieved, will he not now then simply table the plan, the audited statements for the first period? What is he hiding and why is he afraid of letting Manitobans know what it costs, what has been saved, if anything—and, of course, nothing has been saved—and what the loss was in the first year in some detail? Why will he not table that information?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the Urban Shared Services Corporation themselves just put out information in the last week or so about their financial performance to date, and they did clearly acknowledge that in their first year of operation they did incur additional costs having to do with transition and some one-time costs. That year-end statement has just been completed. They are going, I believe, through their audit of that statement, but they did release the preliminary results which show that they incurred some additional costs. Their objectives, over their 20-year plan of this initiative, are to save capital costs, which they can and will do, to continue to improve efficiencies and provide this food on a more economical basis than would have been the case under the old system, thereby saving dollars that go directly into the health care system, and to continue to focus on quality nutritional food. Again, those are certainly very important

objectives. They are objectives that we support, that I believe Manitobans support.

The member for Crescentwood, I would question his accuracy on most issues that he brings forward, recognizing just a couple of weeks ago when he brought information relative to Deer Lodge his accuracy was about 10 percent, and that is pretty pathetic.

Education System Physical Education Curriculum

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, we have been raising this government's disregard for physical education and youth fitness for years. The Brandon School Division's reduction below the 180-minute requirement in the curriculum is part of a province-wide trend. I want to table for the government a copy of the chart prepared by the University of Winnipeg which shows, at the worst, Grades 1 and 2 students across the province are—70 percent of them—likely to be receiving less than the curriculum recommendation of physical education. I want to ask the Minister of Education with regard to his comments in the House the other day when he said: "Whatever it is that is mandated by the provincial authority is something that needs to be carried out. I would certainly want to take that up with the school division." I want to ask the minister if he has had time to look into the situation, and what is his assessment.

* (1400)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I have indeed been looking into the situation. It is a matter of some concern for—certainly in the Brandon School Division, a number of parents, students and teachers have been expressing concern, and they will be doing so, as I understand it, at this coming Monday's school division meeting.

I have not yet determined that I want to take the approach advocated by the New Democrats, which is to do away with school divisions and move in and take over all the decision making for school divisions. I have not gone as far as the New Democrats in that regard, Madam Speaker. I still respect the autonomy of school

divisions. We have guidelines laid down from the Department of Education and Training. We monitor the situation with the school divisions but ultimately school divisions, these being guidelines, have decisions to make. In this case, I know the concern being raised by people in Brandon, and I know it will be thoroughly canvassed at the school board meeting on Monday night.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, what we want to see is this government take some responsibility and accountability and realize and admit it is their example of showing that phys ed is expendable, with their cuts to phys ed, that is leading school divisions to believe that they can set requirements that are below the curriculum. Will you admit that and acknowledge that?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I was reminded very effectively this morning with my colleague the honourable Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) as we visited with a number of daycare and kindergarten age schools, as we addressed the issue of safety with those children. The next generation of children will benefit from the program announced today by the Manitoba Public Insurance, the minister, and myself. It was truly a privilege to be in the presence of all those kids, but it reminded me of my responsibility and the responsibility of all of us when it comes to issues like physical education and, in Brandon's case, music.

The Department of Education and Training is indeed committed to the development of quality physical education and health education curricula, but I think what I am having trouble with is the position of the New Democrats that they have no regard whatsoever for elected school trustees throughout this province. On the issue of taxes, they want to change that, no role for school trustees. On this issue, no role for school trustees. We will make all the decisions right here on Broadway Avenue. That is not acceptable to me, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Education acknowledge that it is his department that sets curriculum, that there are 180 minutes required in his curriculum? Can he tell the House, with the more than \$15 million of new money in their assessment division, what is

going to be in place to ensure that the curriculum requirements in Manitoba's curriculum are met in school divisions?

Mr. McCrae: Again, Madam Speaker, I share the concern of the honourable member, as do the people of Brandon as they will be addressing that to their school division. The Brandon School Division is very aware of these guidelines that are laid down by the Department of Education and Training as well, so those matters will be canvassed on Monday night. The first proposal was the subject of a very close vote in the Brandon School Division, and the matter is going to be canvassed again this coming Monday. I expect that the right thing is going to happen. Whatever that is going to be at the end of it all, there has to be some kind of respect for elected people in this province. The New Democrats daily remind us of what their hidden agenda is, and that is to get rid of school boards. That is not the agenda on this side of the House. Every time something comes up—it happens with my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) almost daily—they want the government of Manitoba to run every minute detail of health, education or any number of things right here from this building. I cannot think of a more arrogant, dictatorial approach than that.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, there is a cartoon in the Brandon Sun this week which shows three students lining up for the race for the only history textbook in the school. But the real point that the cartoonist is making is that this is not just a race for the textbook, but this is going to be the only phys ed they are going to get in the Brandon schools. I would be happy to table that for the minister if he would like to see it.

Education System Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I would like to ask the minister whether he is prepared to be accountable for the guidelines which his department sets or whether he is prepared to see schools across Manitoba cut by 50 percent, others by 75 percent and others by 25 percent. Is that the kind of education you want to see?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Accountability is the reason that we are all here in this Legislature, the reason that I sought office to be a member representing people so that we can serve, not lord it over them and not rule from above like honourable members opposite, but to serve people as humble servants of the people. The honourable members do not want accountability because they simply cannot handle the truth.

The truth is that education spending, when New Democrats had a chance, plummeted in Manitoba, and since their replacement in 1988 by the present administration, funding for education in Manitoba has climbed to 19.3 percent from the sorry 17.7 percent left by the previous administration. So, when it comes to accountability, I look forward to accountability. Honourable members opposite are not interested because they simply cannot handle the truth.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister confirm that in fact the effect of his lack of accountability for his own guidelines is that what is happening across Manitoba is unequal education, where wealthier divisions can have music and physical education according to the guidelines and poorer divisions cannot? This is a complete reversal of education policy in the 20th Century.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member knows very well that with the so-called equalized funding formula that was operated by the government she supported, one Jerry Storie and others, there had to be exceptions made in virtually every single division across this province. The honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) knows all about this because he made up the numbers as he went along.

The formula was changed back in 1992 to bring about a fairer equalization system. Education funding in Manitoba is based on an equalized system which provides for a base level of funding for each and every pupil everywhere across this province. What is the honourable member talking about, because if it is about the commitment of government to education spending in general, I will compare the commitment of this government to the commitment of the previous government any day of the week?

Physical Education Curriculum

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My final supplementary is to the Minister responsible for the Children and Youth Secretariat. I would like to ask that minister to confirm that her government's policy of allowing such severe reductions in physical education in some parts of the province will undermine the health of children and will increase the health risk for those children already at risk.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question. There is no government that has made the commitment to children and to early intervention like the present government under our Premier's administration, Madam Speaker. I want to indicate to you that there was over \$20 million in last year's budget and another \$25 million in this year's budget for children and for early intervention programs that go a long way to ensuring—

* (1410)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear. "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

I am beginning to wonder if the sound has been turned off on that side of the House because the question was about the reduction of physical education time in our schools, and the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) and now this minister are not even close. If they do not want to answer the question, they should sit down, instead of putting this kind of dribble on the record.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson—

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that members of the opposition, when they ask questions, do not want to hear the answers about what government is doing to support children and families. They rise on a point of order when in fact they do not like to get the information on what is happening and the good news in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I indeed will take the matter under advisement to carefully peruse the transcript from Hansard.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Family Services, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is no question that all of the early intervention programs like BabyFirst, like EarlyStart, like the Women and Infant Nutrition program that puts more money into the hands of families that are struggling to make ends meet, when they participate in programs that are going to get their children off to a healthier start to life, more ready to learn when they enter our school system with the greater ability to graduate from high school and take post-secondary education or enter jobs that are available—all of those things contribute to healthier children, healthier families, and we on this side of the House support that.

Rosewood Village Use of Electric Scooters

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

We all recognize the importance of mobility for our seniors. In fact, many of those seniors who go into personal care homes rely on things such as electric scooters in order that they can have some sort of independence in being able to get around the facility.

Earlier in the session we had reference to the Rosewood Village as a private enterprise, and recently we got a call from someone in Winnipeg indicating—and the question to the

Minister of Health is if he could comment on whether or not the government has a policy for the private home cares with respect to the electric scooters. In this particular case, Rosewood Village has indicated that they will not allow for mobility through electric scooters. Is the Minister of Health even aware of that?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, the member referred to the Rosewood initiative. It is one of four supportive housing projects that are underway in the province of Manitoba. Three of them are done by nonprofit organizations; one is done by the private sector. The Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority is working with those four projects to provide home care services to people in those facilities. Again, I think that is something that we would all support in this House, recognizing that home care is an important service for those individuals. Certainly we have significantly expanded our Home Care program, now \$147 million compared to about \$45 million 11 years ago. The specific aspect relative to the utilization of scooters, if he is referring to the Rosewood facility, I am certainly prepared to look into that issue.

Personal Care Homes Use of Electric Scooters

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would suggest to the Minister of Health, in looking at it, that the Minister of Health be aware that the Deer Lodge personal care facility does in fact allow for the electric scooters.

The question to the Minister of Health then would be: would he ensure that there is consistent policy, whether it is not-for-profit or for private, that this sort of mobility be consistent in all facilities?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, the member is comparing two different types of facilities. He referred to Deer Lodge which is a hospital and a personal care home facility versus Rosewood which is a supportive housing facility. The other similar supportive housing facilities are Rimmer House, Arlington House and the Fred Douglas Heritage

House which will be coming on stream and is scheduled to open in September of 1999.

I have indicated I am certainly prepared to look into the specific issue relative to the utilization of motorized scooters for individuals in those facilities, but he is comparing different types of facilities, and certainly the need to provide home care to supportive housing is something that we support and again provides that much better health care services to all Manitobans.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I look to the Minister of Health to acknowledge that both these have personal care facilities attached to them. I am asking the Minister of Health to ensure that there is consistency in policy in terms of mobility, that individuals should be able to use these electric scooters so that they can actually have the opportunity to get out and about within a facility. Consistency of policy is what we are looking for from the government.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I think it is important that the member understand the difference between personal care home facilities and the supportive housing projects that are underway, and I have referred to the four that are underway. What they do is they combine apartment living with the various supportive elements in terms of home care and other support for the individuals in those facilities.

In terms of the concern he has raised about the utilization of scooters in those facilities, I have indicated I am prepared to look into that entire issue. But you are comparing different types of facilities when you compare a personal care home facility to a supportive housing facility.

Rural Ambulance Service Reduction/Elimination

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): This government's cuts to health care are forcing regional health authorities to propose scaling back rural ambulance service in many communities. Citizens of Manitou, Neepawa, McGregor, Grandview, Gilbert Plains, just to name a few, are worried that there are plans to eliminate or reduce their vital volunteer

ambulance services. This government has established an Emergency Medical Services working group whose mandate it is to recommend to this government directions for rural emergency medical services.

My question to the Minister of Health is: will the minister assure rural Manitobans that their ambulance services are protected by telling the RHAs that any proposals to reduce or eliminate ambulance services will be frozen and subject to recommendations expected from this EMS working group?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, the member refers to the Emergency Medical Services working group which has representation from the regional health authorities. I believe there is municipal representation on that review committee as well. I actually asked this morning for, at a minimum, an interim report, if not the timing very shortly of the full report, because this is a very important issue right throughout Manitoba, particularly, obviously, rural Manitoba.

I have met with different RHAs, met with some communities discussing that issue. We are certainly looking at continuing to build what is an absolutely outstanding volunteer system in the province of Manitoba when it comes to providing ambulance services, so it is an important issue, and I have asked for, at a minimum, a status report and update so that we can continue to ensure that proper and adequate ambulance services are provided to each and every region of our province.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. What is the use of having a working group if the minister allows the RHAs to close down rural ambulance services before hearing the EMS group's recommendations?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I have indicated to this member that we have asked for a report from that group immediately to see where they are at—whether we will be receiving their full report shortly or at a minimum an interim report—to ensure that those kinds of things do not happen. We want to ensure that ambulance services are

provided to the communities that require them and that they are not terminated or cut off.

I know there have been one or two communities where there have been some concerns, and the RHAs are working diligently to ensure that those communities continue to get ambulance service. We are committed to do everything we can with the RHAs to ensure that communities continue to receive ambulance service.

* (1420)

Mr. Struthers: Well, in that case, why will this minister not simply move to freeze decisions that the RHAs could make eliminating ambulance services to small, rural communities? Why will he not provide that level of comfort to places like Manitou, Gilbert Plains, Neepawa, McGregor and Melita, and the list goes on and on? Why will he not do that?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, I think the member for Dauphin has sat beside the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) far too long because he is adopting the same scare-tactic approach that happens from the member for Crescentwood. Obviously, the RHAs, the regional health authorities, which have citizens from communities throughout those regions, are just as concerned about ambulance service to those communities as the member for Dauphin is, just as we are just as concerned about ambulance service to all those communities.

They continue to work diligently to take all steps necessary to ensure that those communities continue to receive ambulance service while this group, which has representation from the regional authorities, from the municipalities and from other health care providers and the fire commissioners, does their work to provide us with a model that can continue to provide quality, excellent ambulance services right throughout Manitoba.

Forest Fires Emergency Assistance

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): I would like to just point out again that there has been tremendous stress on many people during the forest fires in the last few days. I brought to the

Premier's (Mr. Filmon) attention yesterday circumstances faced by our people, including spoiled food in freezers and fridges. We have had reports from people who have gone back to Hollow Water, Manigotagan and Seymourville. Hollow Water, this morning a resident called us from there who just went back to their home and found that all their food was spoiled. So we are faced with another crisis situation, not only in those immediate communities but the secondary communities that were affected by the fire.

I know that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) gave me a positive response to my question yesterday. I would like to ask the Premier again today how fast we can get officials to deal with these people who are faced with this crisis currently.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question. It gives me an opportunity, too, to thank all those people who gave us a great deal of co-operation and understanding when they were asked to be evacuated. Also a thank you to the host communities who really opened up their homes and their hearts to everybody that came into their community, and I would like to thank them for that.

The response, specific to the member's question—I am advised by the MEMO department that there will be staff up there starting on Monday, and Monday is slated for St. Theresa Point and all of the communities along that area, including communities such as Poplar River, Poplarville, Berens River, First Nation Berens River, Paungassi, Little Grand Rapids, Bloodvein and Loon Straits will be visited by MEMO staff to take a look at the impact of the power outage and to assess damages.

Mr. Robinson: I appreciate the minister's response to my question, and I am sure that the people I represent will equally be happy with the response; however, I stress that we have a crisis situation in many communities. I wonder if the minister could dispense his staff much earlier than Monday because obviously people are going to be in dire need before the next two days expire.

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, just in response to the member, I can certainly look into the

possibility of getting those people up there much quicker. I am advised that there will be emergency social services people in the area tomorrow in Manigotagan and in Seymourville to meet with people there in regard to their evacuation expenses and money that they may have spent for food and clothing and shelter.

I would also like to advise the honourable member that, with the individuals who are still in an evacuation status as a result of their homes being destroyed by the fire, everything is being put into place to look after them in regard to temporary accommodations in terms of housing, furniture and home repairs, and that is going to be assessed in co-operation with Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

McPhillips Street Station Waste Disposal Policy

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are very concerned about the proper use of public funding and in particular when we hear of cases of public waste. We have seen this over and over again, Manitobans' commitment to dealing with these issues, by example, adopting recycling programs. Much of this stems from our ability to deal with tough times like the Great Depression and the Lyon-Filmon years from the past 11 years.

My question to the minister responsible for casinos: how can the minister explain the wastefulness by the McPhillips Street Station of the disposal of trees still dressed with the decorative lights, double-wire, heavy-duty outdoor lights still on the trees?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, years of experience in this Chamber has, I think, taught us on this side that when members opposite come forward with allegations such as these, they should be thoroughly investigated because they do not normally turn out to be what members portray them to be. I will take the question as notice and investigate the matter.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, will the minister perhaps tell the House whether they have a government policy of kicking the lights

out or throwing the lights out at McPhillips Street Station, and will he examine the disposal policy at the McPhillips Street Station and Club Regent?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the member has attempted to be very humorous. Perhaps she would like me to arrange for an audition for one of the shows at the casinos.

As I have indicated, I will endeavour to find out what the situation is with respect to the Lotteries Corporation.

Gambling Facilities Renovation Costs

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, once again I ask the Minister responsible for Lotteries what the cost of the renovations of the two casinos in Winnipeg are. What are the total costs of the additions and the renovations for the renewed casinos, McPhillips Street and Regent? What is the total cost?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, if I remember correctly, those matters actually were discussed in the public realm. The Lotteries Corporation indicated the exact numbers when the matter was raised on a previous occasion, and they are in the public realm already.

AIDS Prevention Service Organization Funding

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, over the past several weeks, the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) has promised money to just about everybody, palliative care advocates, midwives, birthing mothers, those who are suffering from MS, and the list pudding should go on. I guess we should have an election every year.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose her question.

Ms. McGifford: I noticed that one thing the minister has not offered money for is AIDS services, so I would like to ask the minister today, who knows that his government's record

has been far from stellar, when he will be funding or making a funding commitment to the Manitoba AIDS services organizations.

* (1430)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we certainly contribute significant amounts of money in support of AIDS prevention and AIDS treatment and, again, the member may have seen recently an announcement of the coming together of four clinics here in the city of Winnipeg. The provincial government is contributing capital dollars to make sure that that happens. As well, we are providing additional operating dollars towards that initiative, again, to provide the appropriate service to individuals having to deal with AIDS.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Women of Distinction Awards

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to pay tribute to the Women of Distinction whose names were announced last night at the annual YM/YWCA Women of Distinction Awards dinner. The winners are as follows: Rosa Walker is the executive director of Taking Charge Incorporated, an organization that helps single parents on social assistance enter the labour force and become self-sufficient. She also worked as part of a team that developed and implemented policy and procedures for a workforce diversity strategy for the Bank of Montreal to increase representation of employment equity target groups.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experienced difficulty hearing the honourable member for Charleswood. I wonder if I might ask those members having private meetings to do so in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mrs. Driedger: Carol Shields, Professor of English at the University of Manitoba and

Chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, is a world-renowned author and recipient of many prestigious awards honouring her work. In addition, Ms. Shields has been an active volunteer in a variety of organizations such as the Canada Council and the Prairieaction Committee Against Family Violence.

Dr. Lindsay Nicolle is head of the Department of Medicine, University of Manitoba Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface General Hospital, and Medical Director, Winnipeg Hospitals Authority Medicine Program. She is the first and only woman appointed a full professor in the Department of Medicine and the first woman to head the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

Josie Hill is Executive Director of Ma Mawi. She has developed and implemented many programs addressing the needs of aboriginal women and families. She fostered the construction of two new transitional houses for aboriginal women and is a powerful advocate on behalf of the Native Women's Transition Centre.

The Council of Women of Winnipeg has been working for the advancement of women for over 100 years and represents a wide range of organizations and individuals working to attain common goals. They have actively promoted women's equality, appropriate health care and education for women and children, to mention but a few of their endeavours.

Each year the Women of Distinction Awards include the Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise established to honour Gerrie Hammond's many accomplishments throughout her long and distinguished career in politics. As a volunteer and as a mentor and role model for women, this year's Award of Promise was given to Sarah-Amarylla Bector, a student at Gordon Bell High School, where she served as president of student council for four years. Sarah has already demonstrated her care and concern for her fellow students through her many volunteer activities. Please join me in honouring the Women of Distinction and all of the nominees as we wish them continued success in their endeavours.

Virtual Classroom Competition

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I believe that it is a good policy to brag about the accomplishments of young people in our communities, and I think it is a good policy to talk about the good things that are happening in the schools.

Madam Speaker, AT&T, through the Internet and throughout the world, sponsored the Virtual Classroom Contest '98. The students' task in this contest was to design an Internet home page in collaboration with two other schools. The focus of the topics within the home page was the environment, culture and children's rights. There were about 7,700 students worldwide who participated in this contest. It is with a great deal of pride, and I am very pleased, that the Ukrainian bilingual elementary school in Dauphin, the Smith-Jackson School along with a school in New Delhi, India, and a school in Tallahassee, Florida, won the competition and will be travelling to Hong Kong to accept their award on May 18.

Madam Speaker, I want to pay particular respect to all of the 12 students and their teacher who participated in this. The students were: Andreja Frykas in Grade 6; Jordan McLaughlin, Grade 4; Joey Smilgelski, Grade 5; Jolene Showdra, Grade 6; Travis Prytula, Grade 4; Scott Tokaryk, Grade 5; Alyson Sametz, Grade 6; Brent Hancharyk, Grade 4; Andrei Dandridge-Evancio, Grade 4; Larisa Matwee, Grade 5; Melissa Zabiaka, Grade 5; Allan Bernat, Grade 5. Their teacher was Mr. Stephen Jaddock who put a lot of time in with these young people. I would also like to thank the parents for their support of their students as they pursued this event.

A.J. Frykas and Jordan McLaughlin had their names drawn out of a hat and they, along with Mr. Jaddock, will be travelling to Hong Kong on that very special day. So congratulations to the Smith-Jackson School. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Women of Distinction Awards

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I, too, rise to commend the organizers of the YM/YWCA

Women of Distinction Awards that I attended, along with yourself, Madam Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Vodrey), and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed). I guess the official opposition were too busy campaigning to come out to the event, but I want to give special note of the Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise to Sarah-Amarylla Bector, nominated by Barbara Hirt for Gordon Bell High School.

Sarah is a strong believer in the empowerment of today's youth. Sarah is a young woman of vision and action. In August 1997, Sarah initiated a project at Pritchard Park Recreation Centre to address the needs of high-risk youth, aged 3 to 16. The program included theme days, a soup kitchen, a literacy program and a clothing bank. Sarah recognized the needs and led the project to fruition. Sarah also founded a mentorship program at Gordon Bell High School where she served as a student council president for four years. The program paired junior and senior high females to provide role models, personal support, and encouragement to stay in school.

Active in many extracurricular activities at her school, Sarah is also a dedicated community volunteer. She has volunteered more than 3,890 hours over the past five years, including service to Amnesty International, Rotary Youth Camp and St. Mary's the Protectress Orthodox Church.

In 1998, Sarah represented Manitoba as a youth ambassador travelling across the country representing the province. I think too often we point out the youth that are in trouble. It is nice to celebrate a youth such as Sarah. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1440)

Great-West Life

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, members opposite have in recent months attempted to remake their image as a fiscally conservative pro-business party. They no longer talk about their 32-hour workweek policy; that is, according to the Thompson Citizen, a formula that will drive industries right out of our province. But no matter how the NDP

try to repackage themselves, we still see the old antibusiness bias creeping into their continuous rhetoric.

In Manitoba, we are fortunate to have a number of industries that lead the nation. One of these businesses has integrated with London Life and together forms the largest life and health insurance organization in Canada. This company has assets of over \$75 billion. This company was founded in Winnipeg in 1891 and has become an international corporation with thousands of employees. This company is a source of pride for not only Winnipeg but also the province of Manitoba.

Who is this company? Well, according to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), it is known as Great Waste of Life. For the record, this company is actually called Great-West Life, and we are proud that they are headquartered here in Manitoba. This disparaging and unwarranted comment made by the member for Crescentwood again shows the antibusiness colours of the NDP, and I ask he put forward an apology. If he does not, I say shame on that member. Thank you.

Friendship Centres

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to attend a press conference in this building announcing the signing of an agreement between the province and the 10 friendship centres located outside of Winnipeg. The province will dedicate \$550,000 to the Partners for Careers program. This amount of funding will double the size of the program. While we welcome this much-needed funding for a worthwhile program, we must take a look at the historical context in which this funding takes place.

In 1993, this government cut all core funding to the Manitoba friendship centres. For example, the Flin Flon Friendship Centre lost between \$80,000 and \$90,000 annually after 1993. In other words, the \$550,000 today aimed at the 10 friendship centres is roughly equal to what was lost by one friendship centre, Flin Flon. You took a dime and you gave us back a penny just before the election.

In 1993 when Manitoba friendship centres were forced to lay off staff and curtail programs, they attempted to raise funds locally. But of course, because of VLT activity in the communities, that proved very difficult. So, in effect, the friendship centres were hit with a double whammy.

Now in 1999 just before an election, the government is finally attempting to patch up some of the damages they have done in the past. We welcome all help to the friendship centres, but it is still a question of too little, too late. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has 21 minutes remaining.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I left off yesterday talking about a comment from the budget made by the Finance minister, and I quote again: "Manitoba enjoys unsurpassed transportation links." When we left off yesterday, I was wondering about those unsurpassed transportation links. As I bump my way up to Lynn Lake on that rough 391, the word "unsurpassed" does not come to mind. Some of those bumpy landings on those northern airports, "unsurpassed" certainly does not come to mind. When this government kind of stood at the sidelines while in 1996 we were about to lose both railroad lines—the Sherridon line, as well as the Hudson Bay line—I did not see anybody talking about unsurpassed transportation links.

The fact is this government plans to put \$180 million into infrastructure programs, specifically highways, but that is over two years. When we take a look at the record that this government has in highway construction in the North, it pales in comparison to what the New Democratic Party did when they were in office; in fact 391 was built when the NDP was in

power; so was the Easterville road, and I believe the Moose Lake road, 280, and so on and so on.

Most of the northern airports were built under the New Democratic Party administration as well. So we are talking about unsurpassed transportation links. I just do not buy it. I particularly do not buy it when I go to other countries, namely Europe, and I find the fine roads and railroads that actually run on time that they have in Belgium, Holland, Germany and France, and so on. We do not have anything like that in this country.

We certainly have not put into northern airports what we should have put. Since the Schreyer years, we basically ignored them. There is \$300,000 on the books for improving lighting, but that comes from the federal government. So, when we talk about unsurpassed transportation links, I do know we have lost 6,000 railroad jobs, I believe it is, over the last number of years. I am somewhat saddened that we still pretend that there is no infrastructure deficit out there when the ministers themselves, not only this minister but the previous Highways minister said we have between \$1.4 billion and \$1.5 billion infrastructure deficit, and this is basically regarding roads. So, when you put in roughly \$106 million a year for projects, that is roughly 10 percent of what is really needed.

The end result is that our roads are going downhill much faster than we are patching them up. So we ask questions about what is going to happen to those northern roads and the southern roads where the emphasis is a little bit more on ridership on nice smooth roads? We would just settle for decent roads. What happened to that \$90-million promise in 1995 about the Repap expansion and that \$90 million would go to northern roads? That never happened. That \$90-million investment was cancelled even though Repap and Tolko did expand. We are still looking, of course, for a bridge at Cross Lake. In fact, we are still looking for a decent road to South Indian Lake around the lake itself as part of the flood agreement. That, of course, has not been mentioned for a long time.

So we are not taking this government terribly seriously when they are talking about

unsurpassed transportation links, although I do admit in the core of this province, in Winnipeg, we do have a decent and improved airport. In the capital region, yes, and in the south there are some decent roads and decent airports, but I am talking northern roads and northern airports, and much more needs to be done.

As well, the loss of the Crow has really impacted negatively upon our roads in rural Manitoba. I did not see this government fighting very hard to stave that disaster off. As well, this government has offloaded many of the municipal roads, has offloaded onto the municipalities so the municipalities get stuck with the bill.

Now there is a slightly encouraging gleam on the horizon that Mr. Collette, the federal transportation minister, has hinted that he is willing to put in \$3.5 billion into rebuilding roads and infrastructure, basically roads, and that provinces supposedly can opt into this program on a cost-share basis. That would mean roughly they would put in \$150 million, and we would put in \$150 million, but I think that is just at the preliminary talking stage.

We certainly could use a national highways program. We talked about that very often, and I think all sides of the House agree with that, that the federal government puts virtually no dollars derived from gasoline taxes into highways, and they certainly should be doing that. I think we are the only industrialized nation that does not, on a federal level, put billions of dollars into highways. It is done south of the border, and their roads are far superior to ours.

So again, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) uses words such as "Manitoba enjoys unsurpassed transportation links," I must take that with a grain of salt. He must have had a momentary lapse because I do not think that is correct.

An Honourable Member: They have had an 11-year lapse, actually.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes. The honourable member says the present government had an 11-year lapse.

We are happy to see that there is some tax relief in this budget. We are happy to see that there is more for health care and a little bit more for education, but we are still not over the fact that in 1995, after the election, you scrapped the \$769 million promised for health care projects. You seem to pinch the pennies between the elections, and then you loosen the purse strings just at election time. That makes Manitobans skeptical, certainly northern Manitobans. It makes them just a wee bit skeptical.

The question becomes: Can this government deliver, or will this government deliver? Perhaps it is a question of will. They do not have a good track record. The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) put some figures in perspective the other day, in the proper perspective. I always enjoy it when the member for Brandon East talks about the economic situation in this province, because he seems to have a good grasp of numbers and figures. He pointed out that, in '88, when this particular government took over from the New Democrats, we left them a surplus of \$59 million. Now they managed to, of course, borrow \$200 million and pretend there was a deficit, but that was not really the case. They made it look like a deficit, but there was really no deficit. They just tried to make it look like that. It was only in 1995 that the Tories seemed to become sort of born-again, balanced-budget people. They discovered balanced budgets about that time.

* (1450)

Now the member for Brandon East has also pointed out earlier that, when you take a look at historical context, the ups and downs in economies, we have not fared very well in the last 11 years. In fact, the weekly wage for the Manitoba wage earner is down \$12 on average from 1988 in real money, in real income, whereas the Canadian average is \$12 above that. So this government likes to brag that it has done us a lot of good service, they have done a lot of good things for us, but when you take a look at the clear, hard figures, that is not the case.

The government, of course, always likes to brag that it has not increased taxes in 11 years, and I presume next Tuesday they are going to repeat that same mantra one more time, but we

are tired of the refrain. They may not technically have increased some of the taxes, but certainly there have been property tax increases. The property tax increase has almost doubled. Yes, they are huge, and they have gone from \$200 million to \$400 million. The education component of that, 60 percent, I believe, means 8 points on the income tax. So we talk about huge tax increases that this government has successfully hidden. They have called them by different names.

As well, Madam Speaker, there have been numerous fee increases. I do not have time to list them all. They go all the way I believe from marriage licences to land title searches, and so on. Camping fees were increased 70 percent to 100 percent not too long ago. There were increases in camping fees for seniors, 153 percent, and the park entrance fees have gone up. The free passes to parks for seniors have been eliminated, and so on.

While we are on that topic, I find it, in a sense, disgusting that the senior citizens of this country, the elderly people, do not even get a break, do not even get a little perk. At one time, if you were over 65, you would get a free fishing licence, but apparently that is not the case anymore. They have to pay so that we can balance the books, apparently. In fact, this was brought home to me the other day by a friend of mine, a Mr. Jan Akkerman, who happens to be not only a Flin Flon resident and a good participant in the Flin Flon choir, but also a Dutch compatriot. He complained to me about how this, in the year of the elderly person, elderly people have so few perks, so few privileges, that you even have to make them pay for a fishing licence or a hunting licence for chickens or for grouse. This is not acceptable. This is not the way to treat our senior citizens.

Now, when we take a look at this budget, the particular gripe that I have is that this budget is not only not balanced, although the government is trying hard to make it look balanced, but that it does not have a whole lot for northern Manitoba. In fact, the North is conspicuously absent in this budget. The North has been hurt by the Tory government and continues to be hurt by the Tory government. I could refer back to the member's statement I just

made a few minutes ago that, even though the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) did announce the Partners for Careers program this morning—it is a most welcome program, and I do not deny it is very positive and, you know, the money is much needed—it is still a little suspicious that it happens just before an election. We like to put it in the context of the massive cuts that were made to the core funding of the friendship centre starting in 1993.

I will use the example again of Flin Flon. In 1993, when Flin Flon lost \$80,000 or \$90,000—in that neighbourhood—of its core funding, if you cumulatively add up all those \$80,000 or \$90,000, that total comes close to the \$550,000 announced today. So one friendship centre has lost as much as is being reinstated to some degree today. Now do not get me wrong. The money is very welcome. It is just a little suspicious. It comes a little late, and it is not quite enough.

There have been other cuts, Madam Speaker, in the North—the BUNTEP program, New Careers was phased out, Access programs, they were cut. Talking about Access programs, I was very pleased two Saturdays ago to be able to attend a BUNTEP graduation in my home town of Cranberry Portage, and 21 graduates were involved in that graduation. I am very proud of them; in fact, I taught at least six or seven of those people who graduated. If it was not for the BUNTEP program, those people would not have graduated. Those are necessary and vital programs for northern Manitobans, for all Manitobans, but particularly northern Manitobans, and particularly for aboriginal people because aboriginal people are still the most disadvantaged people in this province.

So, when the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), as he did again today, asked for some kind of support, or some kind of compensation for those people who have lost their food supplies because of the forest fires, I think the government should indeed pay attention. But I know the history of this government, because we have had forest fires before in Leaf Rapids where people lost their homes and EMO was not forthcoming, this government was not forthcoming in helping to address the problems of those people caught in forest fires.

The bitter sayings in northern Manitoba were, if this were a flood and farmers were involved, there would be instant compensation, but these are northerners and they are burnt out, and, boy, you have to fight for every penny. In most cases, you do not get a cent. So we feel that there is a double standard, one for the southerners who tend to vote a certain way, and one for northerners. We are not happy with that particular approach. There is too little for the North.

I am particularly angry that the \$90 million promised for northern roads was never really on the drawing board. It was interesting to listen to the former Minister of Highways, the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay), the other day who blamed a lot of his government's woes on Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Actually, Mr. Trudeau is no fan of mine either, or I of his, I guess I could say, because I remember—[interjection] Oh, yes, well, Mr. Trudeau took a swing at me once in Regina when I held a placard. It was in French; I was not sure what it said. It probably was not a nice thing. I did not appreciate him taking a sock at me. I must admit he was very quick, and he had a lot of Mounties to help him.

An Honourable Member: You were lucky. If it had been Chretien, he would have got you by the throat.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, I was lucky, as the honourable member says. If it had been Mr. Chretien, I could have been choked or pepper-sprayed or something.

But the member for Springfield was basically again using the Tory refrain, which means that if there is a problem, it is your fault. I mean, you guys did this 10 years ago or 11 years ago. How long are you going to blame the New Democratic Party for your deficits? You raised the biggest deficit in this province in '92-93. It was your deficit, not ours, but somehow the mantra out there is we spend like drunken sailors. This is absolutely not true, Madam Speaker, absolutely not.

If you want a Tory government that spends like drunken sailors, I suggest you go to the Grant Devine government in Saskatchewan and have a good look at what Tories do when they

get into a spending mode. I suppose the members opposite would like to run the Grant Devine government again, but we cannot get that same gang out of jail right now. But I am sure one of these days, they may take another crack at it, perhaps even under the Progressive Conservative label. I think now they are going under a different label. It is sort of like the Tories' campaign last time, big signs and the Filmon Team, but you could not find Progressive Conservative unless you had, you know, large eyeglasses or whatever. You had to look very closely.

At any rate, it was interesting listening to the member for Springfield blaming Trudeau or blaming the socialists, and he said that the social experiment is over, and I think he even went so far as to say only in—

An Honourable Member: Gerard, you are not getting any respect.

Mr. Jennissen: Just like my wife, eh. That is not on record, I hope.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I forgot for a while where I was.

The honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) said the social experiment is over, and he said the only government he appreciated was Saskatchewan because of its pragmatic social democratic approach. I would venture to say, though, to the honourable member, Saskatchewan right now is a logical outgrowth of what happened before. Now the member is trying to make them look as if they were born-again Tories, but that is not quite true. If Saskatchewan did balance the budget, and they did before Manitoba, well, Tommy Douglas always balanced the budget. I think, if I am not wrong, if my memory serves me correctly, Schreyer balanced the books six times out of eight. I think in 1988 we left you \$57 million. I mean, we obviously had some money in the kitty.

* (1500)

So I guess what I am saying is do not give me this holier than thou, that we are the only

fiscally responsible party in the country because it is simply not true. I think the people will decide, and I think we are going to have to listen to the people. We are going to have to go to the doorsteps, and I think many of you are already doing that as you are gearing up for next Tuesday. As you are lacing on your blue suede shoes over there and gearing up for your doorstep knocking next Tuesday, listen to what the people are saying.

What are the people saying when they go to the doorsteps? What am I hearing? I am hearing: deliver what you promise. You know, this is a very important thing, and I have heard others say it. I heard the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) say it. Deliver what you promise. This government has not done that. They have not delivered on a lot of things they promised, and that is what makes us so sceptical about this budget, not the content but the people who are going to deliver the content. Will they be trustworthy? Do we believe them? Do Manitobans believe them? How many times do you have to make the same announcement about opening a personal care home? Four times? Seven times? Ten times?

What else do people in the doors say besides deliver what you promise. They say: fix health care and not elections. Fix the health care system. So the government is funnelling some money to health care, belatedly, but one could argue better late than never.

What are people saying? Properly fund education, especially in northern Manitoba. We have some problems. When our kids go to post-secondary, they go south. It costs an arm and a leg. Those trips are very expensive. Those medical trips are also very expensive, and there is still that onerous \$50 user fee that is hanging over our heads every time we go south, every time some elderly person from Flin Flon has to get on a bus for 12 hours to go to the city to find out maybe the appointment was even cancelled with the doctor. They are only getting paid for I believe one night in the hotel and for three meals. It is just not acceptable the way northerners are being treated.

We have crumbling infrastructure. We need to seriously address the deteriorating state of our

roads, not just in northern Manitoba but also in rural Manitoba. Rail line abandonment has not helped matters any either.

There are serious concerns with this budget, and others have those concerns too. I could read you some of the headlines from the Winnipeg Free Press. They say as follows: Personal tax cuts modest while business levy slashed—that was Winnipeg Free Press, April 30; Storm of criticism greets rainy day fund, Winnipeg Free Press, A8, Friday, April 30; Budget leaves councillors cold, Winnipeg Free Press, April 30; PCs on a spending binge. Another one, Madam Speaker: New money already spent; Hike in health spending slammed as attempt to cover Tory soft spot; Social activists decry trickle of help for poor.

In fact, if I can just quote a little bit: "University of Manitoba economist John Loxley called the increase an insult.

"'There's virtually nothing in this budget for any of those groups,' he said of the poor and disabled. 'Tax breaks give individuals earning less than \$10,000 a year a \$6-a-year tax break, where a person earning over \$100,000 a year gets 58 times that amount,' he said."

Working people cheated, critics charge, Winnipeg Free Press, April 30 again: "Neil Cohen Community Unemployed Help Centre executive director said governments should balance fiscal and social objectives, and this budget does little on the social side.

"Cohen said poor people—especially aboriginal people—need income supports they didn't get."

So the overall question is, the \$64,000 question is: Can we trust this government? We have had a lot of broken promises in the past. The content is one thing, but who will deliver it and can we trust those people that will deliver it? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): I am very pleased to speak this afternoon, Madam Speaker, in support of our 1999-2000 budget presented by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer). I

would like to also congratulate our previous Minister of Finance for his leadership role in the past. I am very, very happy to see that we have presented such a solid document for the future of the people of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, this may be my last formal speech in the Chamber, due to my retirement at the end of the session after nine years, but I would just like to say for the record that it has been an honour to represent the people of Fort Garry constituency. Those people of Fort Garry have supported me. They have confided their concerns in me. They have also brought forward to me the things that they have liked very much about this government and the initiatives that they have supported in this government. I was very happy to support Fort Garry in the Filmon government.

My constituency, Madam Speaker, contains very important institutions to our province: the Victoria General Hospital, the University of Manitoba, the Fort Garry School Division, numerous community clubs. My community is characterized by very active families. When those very active families offer their support to the direction of this government, then I believe we can count on the fact that we are going in the right way.

During the last nine years, Madam Speaker, I am also very proud of the direction of this Progressive Conservative government. We could not continue to live with the huge debt and the growing deficit that had been built up by the NDP. Changes had to be made. This government had a vision. We have now put that vision into action, into operation, and we have now been bringing forward balanced budgets.

We are reducing our deficit and we can see that the human services agenda continues to be a priority for this government. Even in the most difficult of times, the human services agenda still took the highest percentage priority of our budget and a much greater percentage of our budgets than was ever seen in the budgets of the NDP. So do not ever let the question be raised or any doubt be cast that this government has not put our money and our priorities in the right place. We have, Madam Speaker. The figures speak for themselves.

In the area of health care, I am very pleased that they have increased the proportion of the budget in the area of health care; that we have done very important things that mean something to people in our province, that we have increased our diagnostic services; we have reduced the waiting lists in the area of diagnostic services.

I am particularly impressed that we have done that in the area of mammography, where we have made the opportunity for mammography more available all across our province. This is one diagnostic which can save the lives of women and can reduce the kind of pain and anxiety that women themselves and their families suffer if they do not have the opportunity to have that screening.

We have reduced the waiting lists in the area of surgery, particularly hip and knee replacements. This has made a great difference in the mobility of Manitobans, because those Manitobans are able to have the surgery that they need and then able to carry on and live a normal life, whatever their age.

I have a friend, Madam Speaker, she is in her 40s, who has had to have two knee replacements. It was very difficult for her, with a young family, to try and continue with her severe arthritis, but now, thanks to the reduced waiting lists, the increase in surgery opportunities, she has had those knee replacements, and she is able to live an active life as a mother and a member of the community.

Madam Speaker, we have increased accessibility—that is probably the best word to describe one of our health care initiatives. I am very pleased to be a part of a government that has been able to do something which has made such a difference to Manitobans.

We have also been looking at ways to improve our community care. We have set up the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority that deals with a number of initiatives, both home care and care in the community such as audiology, that people would find can improve their quality of life. I believe that the creation of that particular authority will, in fact, assist Manitobans, and also make, again, more accessible the kind of care that they need.

Care in the community, Madam Speaker, is really important because sometimes the institution is a very frightening place for people to go; but, when they can have that same approach in the community, in a storefront, in the area where they live, they are more likely to seek the service.

* (1510)

In the area of education, Madam Speaker, I would say one of the most impressive actions over the past few years has been that of standards and standards testing. One of the things that parents wanted was to make sure that, wherever they lived in this province, their child who was a student had the benefit of an education that was equal to any other place in the province. Standards testing also allows for diagnostics, particularly at the Grade 3 level, so that where there is a young person who needs some special attention, he or she can receive the standards test. The diagnostics can be made, and the remediation can begin. That remediation begins at a very important time in a child's school life, so that has made a very big difference and has been very important to parents and children across our province.

We have increased parental involvement, Madam Speaker. I am very, very happy with the development of the Parent Advisory Councils across the province. I can tell you in my community those Parent Advisory Councils have been extremely active. They have been active in all areas of education. I have had the opportunity to meet with them. The past Minister of Education has come out to at least two meetings in my community to meet with my Parent Advisory Councils, and they become an important voice that so long did not have a voice in education. They certainly were never given a voice by the government opposite.

We have revitalized the curriculum, Madam Speaker. We have co-operated with provinces in western Canada to develop a curriculum which will also allow mobility. That is a development that has occurred in the years of this Filmon government and will make it very important for families. It has also put expertise, from across the country, to developing a curriculum.

Madam Speaker, we have also identified technology as a pillar in education, our fourth pillar in education. We have put money behind that pillar so that we have been able to provide technology grants to schools so that our children in those schools will have the development of technological education, and will be able to continue to develop that. The whole area of technology is moving so quickly that young people have to become involved early. They have to become engaged in technology, and then they have to continue to develop with it.

In the area of Family Services, Madam Speaker, we have provided a focus on the early years. Unlike members opposite, who, in their term in government, focused on, not jobs, not training, not intervention, but simply welfare, nothing proactive and only a passive support, our government has put forward a very active support for families. We have, first of all, said that a job is the most important security for a family, but then we have said that sometimes families need extra help. We have focused on the early years with programs such as Women and Infant Nutrition, BabyFirst, EarlyStart, and we have recently announced a very vigorous and aggressive strategy against fetal alcohol syndrome.

As Minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission, I am very pleased that the Liquor Control Commission has been able to work with its partners in the community to assist in the war against the fetal alcohol syndrome in an effort to provide education to people who are consumers in our various establishments.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to spend a little bit of time this afternoon on some of the details of the budget from the point of view of two of my current responsibilities. I would like to, first of all, talk about the status of women and the effect of our most recent budget on women, because I think that there is some very good news for women in Manitoba. I also think there is some very important news, so that women across the country will look at Manitoba and say that province has had women in mind in the developing of their policies.

First of all, in the personal income tax reduction, personal income tax rates in Manitoba

will be reduced by 3 percent by January 1, 2000. A reduction in personal income tax rates leaves more income to spend for personal needs. Madam Speaker, for example, a single senior with an income of \$15,000 will now have \$423 more income by 2000 and will pay no Manitoba tax at all. Since approximately 56 percent of senior women are considered low income by Statistics Canada, this is a very positive measure for this group.

The small business tax reduction contained in the budget, small- and medium-sized business tax will be reduced by 1 percent July 1, 1999, and 1 percent until 2002 when the rate will be down to 5 percent. That is a total decrease by this government of 50 percent, from 10 percent to 5 percent since 1994.

Madam Speaker, women start small businesses at a greater rate than do men, and five years after the business start more women-owned businesses are successful than those owned by men. Therefore, reducing the business tax provides greater resources for women running businesses to use for reinvestment in their businesses, to hire more staff or to increase their own resource base, an important step towards economic self-sufficiency for women.

I think those figures are very impressive in Manitoba, and I credit a number of programs which are being made available through this government, particularly through Industry, Trade and Tourism and Rural Development, which have been a stimulus for business owners and particularly for women business owners as well.

Also, on the increased health care funding, there has been an overall funding increase of 10 percent over 1998-99 to \$194 million. Since 1988, the funding has increased by almost \$800 million. Some of where this funding has gone and what it means to Manitobans, particularly women in Manitoba: \$5 million to purchase additional equipment for specialized or basic equipment to meet clinical and patient care needs; \$62 million to expand the surgery capacity and to provide more services, particularly in the area of mammograms, as I spoke about, hip and knee replacement and dialysis; doubling the size for the centre for cancer treatment and research; \$1.3 million to

increase radiotherapy treatments by 30 percent; \$55.5 million for medical services including anesthesiology, orthopedic surgery, cardiac care, obstetrics, intensive care and physician resources; \$7 million to encourage former nurses to re-enter the profession and for upgrading.

Since many of those nurses may be women, that is a very important step in terms of women's economic security, as well as an important step for our health care system; \$32.5 million to fill 650 nursing positions; \$2.8 million, Madam Speaker, for primary health care centres, nurses, dietitians, mental health workers, physiotherapists and physicians who will be delivering care in one location. The first site is at the St. Boniface Hospital which was opened recently. I spoke about the importance of long-term care and home care: \$20.5 million for increased funding for home care services, and that includes home care, companion care, personal care, home services, community and mental health services.

Madam Speaker, in this budget, palliative care was identified as an important support service with \$3 million going to palliative care service and enhanced support for families. In the area of palliative care, I think almost everyone in this Chamber has had a relative, a friend or someone they know well who has had to be moved into a palliative care unit, often from intensive care. The needs within palliative care for comfort, for pain control and to assist the person with dignity for the last days of their lives and to assist their families as they are observing this most difficult process is I think very important. I am very pleased that our government's budget has recognized this, and I am very pleased that Health has recognized this as an important pillar.

Madam Speaker, all of these issues are important for women because they are users of the health care system. They are often the caretakers for their families, and they are often the workers in the system. Particularly important is the increase for support of families who are providing care for ailing elderly and, as I said, palliative care. Typically, this care is provided by women who may have to quit their jobs or work reduced hours in order to provide this type of care. The stress of working and caring for the elderly is significant.

Madam Speaker, also important to women will be the availability of care in primary care centres, and that avoids them travelling to diverse centres for a spectrum of care. As I said, the hip and knee replacement as well as the increased availability of mammography testing will be positive steps for women, and hopefully it will save lives for women in Manitoba.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, there is also \$123 million in this budget for capital funding directly related in some instances to women's services, obstetrical and neonatal intensive care unit at the Brandon regional health centre, Gimli hospital, community and primary care services. So I think that in the area of health care, it is clearly a human service that this government has recognized, and we have put our money forward to the issues that Manitobans have identified to us.

Children and families are also very important to all Manitobans. The ChildrenFirst policy, I would like to speak about just in a little bit more detail in relation to the budget, because it is very meaningful for women in Manitoba in particular. This policy sets out a plan for prevention services, for early identification and intervention, and for ongoing support to families, an additional \$25 million to identify problems early and to provide supports that will help families better meet the needs of their children.

My colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) spoke about that this afternoon in Question Period. So, Madam Speaker, some of the details that were within the budget: \$1-million improved diagnosis and treatment of children with FAS. Fetal alcohol syndrome is a very significant issue in Manitoba, and it is a significant issue both in health care and also in education. We need to work with the community and with families to try and reduce fetal alcohol syndrome.

Madam Speaker, \$1.1 million to expand the BabyFirst initiative across the province. This BabyFirst initiative provides home assistance and education through public health nurses to ensure stimulation and care for infants. The

Women's Advisory Council has held a number of lunch-and-learn sessions to make sure that this program is well understood. They have been held during this past year, and some of the nurses who are providing the program have spoken about this program, a very intensive support to families. It also involves the support of volunteers within this program, and it should help people who are in some way identified as "at risk" by hospital personnel, by the community or their families, to actually have a successful first year of parenting, when it is so vital that there is a bonding between the parent and the child and that the security of both the child and the mother are considered.

Madam Speaker, in the budget \$400,000 to the EarlyStart program providing home visitor services to families with children aged two to five who are identified as being at risk. It is emotional support, it is parenting skills, and it links to the community.

In this budget, Madam Speaker, money towards early literacy programs. The importance of early literacy, the involvement of parents with their children in terms of literacy, the ability for families to have support in the area of literacy, is being supported by dollars within this budget. There is also within this budget money to help schools provide supports for children who have emotional and behavioural disorders. Having worked with a number of those children for years in the school system, I can tell you that that dollar amount and that prioritizing for those young people at risk is going to be very welcome within the system.

Madam Speaker, there is also money to introduce innovative special needs programming for preschool and school-aged children. A number of those special needs children do need to start at the preschool years and to have their program then continued on into the school years. There is money for children with disabilities, particularly allowing for child development assistance and counselling, but also respite care which many of their families have a very strong need to have assistance with.

There is \$1 million for speech language and audiology services in rural and northern Manitoba following up \$420,000 previously announced for Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, women generally have the primary responsibility for care of children. These services which are being supported by our budget, which have been announced as a result of our budget, will benefit those women and their children, and it will give them a healthy start.

In the area of child care in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, there are additional supports, and there has been, as I think the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) has spoken about, a very good study done and work with the child care community. Brought forward from that study, again supported in the budget, are a number of changes, 500 additional subsidized spaces, and operating grants for a full-time child care centre, infant and preschool spaces are going to be increased.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of details in the child care area, and I think that a number of the changes which are announced through this budget, as I said, are going to satisfy people who did take the time to come out and speak to the child care survey and study that was done, the task force that was done, carried out on behalf of the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

In the area of Education and Training, Madam Speaker, there are a number of benefits in this budget for women. There is additional funding to keep students at risk from dropping out of school. Sometimes when the decision is made to drop out, it is very hard to go back in. There is an increase from \$10 to \$40 per pupil. The information technology grants to provide computer software and hardware, curriculum-based technology requirements and wiring and cabling of schools, it is up to almost \$8 million.

Madam Speaker, this focus is particularly important for women in rural and remote communities who are trying to upgrade their academic qualifications and who may not have access to or the time to attend regular classroom instruction. The development of technology has really meant that across Manitoba there is an opportunity for people to upgrade their skills and to involve themselves in education.

I can just say, too, Madam Speaker, we announced on International Women's Day, this government, the program called Power Up, which is a program that is being done in partnership with a community group where women will have the opportunity to actually work with a computer for the first time. There has been a curriculum developed. There is a home study program as well. I can tell you that the program has just been so well subscribed to by women across the province. I believe there have been over 600 women who have subscribed to the program already. It seems that in areas where women are saying that they are interested, 10 or more women, we are able to get that program working. We really look forward to women taking this opportunity, through Power Up, to become familiar with computers, at least get a basic knowledge, so that then they can go on and further their training and that they do not have to feel that they do not want to be a part of that technology.

Madam Speaker, in the budget is the Learning Tax Credit, the only one of its kind in Canada, and it provides up to \$15 million in support to post-secondary students and their families in the coming year, and it is up to about \$700 per student per year, the only one in Canada. That is a commitment to education. Scholarship and bursary initiative: there is money to support student loans and bursaries, and there is also the interest relief and debt reduction programs.

These four initiatives, Madam Speaker, are very beneficial to women who often do not have access to those higher paying jobs between school years and need some assistance in supporting their families, and some of them may be single-parent mothers.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the Women's Directorate will continue to administer the Training for Tomorrow Scholarships Award Program. It will provide 50 one-thousand-dollar scholarships to women entering two-year diploma programs in science, math and technology related courses at the province's community colleges. This has been in place for a number of years, and I am very pleased it has been continued in the budget. It works with the labour market to determine high-need

occupations so that women can have assistance to enter into a high-demand occupation, receive the training, with the very strong opportunity to become immediately employed following their training.

There is money for the college's growth plan, which will create new spaces at our community colleges, money to help post-secondary institutions support the ongoing costs of developing new and expanded programs, and money to further expand the in-school apprenticeship program.

* (1530)

The Women's Directorate is working with the apprentice branch and Employment and Training Services Branch of Education and Training to develop Trade Up to Your Future, an initiative designed to encourage women to enter trades training. So, Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that on behalf of women, the Women's Directorate has been able to work with other government departments, and we are able to make sure that women are considered in education.

In the budget, as well, there is money to support youth employment programs. There are three new programs introduced last year: Business Mentorship, Youth Serves Manitoba, and Part-time STEP to generate career-oriented employment. There is the Employment First focus in which there is money within this budget devoted to Making Welfare Work, opportunities for employment and Taking Charge! and also Employment First, which provides education, training, and job search services to enhance employment prospects of income assistance recipients.

Employment support programs have substantially benefited women, who are the predominant single-parent recipients of social assistance. In addition, we continue Partners for Careers, the aboriginal education strategy to improve graduation rates from both high school and post-secondary institutions. I know the details of that strategy are going to be developed, and my colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) has been very active in the development of that strategy.

There are adult literacy grants, a total of \$1.1 million, 2,500 adults participating in community-run literacy programs, and again, dollars for income assistance for Disabled Persons program and Adult Services programs to support adults with mental disability living independently.

When I began on this area, I said that human services is a priority for our government, and in covering the range of initiatives which I have spoken about, particularly in relation to women, you can see that the human services needs that have been brought forward by the people of Manitoba to this government in all areas of support to families, support to families with special needs, special needs children or Adult Services programs, that they have been considered and are being supported through this budget.

Safe communities are also important for women and all Manitobans, Madam Speaker, but I am very pleased that within this budget there is increased funding to Citizens on Patrol. There is continued support to the Urban Sports Camps and the Urban Safety initiatives. I can tell you that the Women's Directorate has served on a working group with the native alliance to help establish On the Move as a part of the Urban Sports Camps and to establish On the Move at the YM-YWCA.

The Women's Directorate also developed and continues to deliver workshops on Keeping Safe at Work, which is a program designed to educate employees and employers on making the trip to work and the workplace safer, preventing the crime from happening. In that program our partner is CIBC, and we have had tremendous support from the police services. We are very pleased that that program is in fact operating here in Manitoba. It was developed a few years ago, and it does deal with the safety and security of women. [interjection] The member across the way suggests that it was a program also delivered in British Columbia. You know, Status of Women ministers meet at least once a year, and we have the opportunity to share the good things that we are doing in each of our provinces and we can share the adaptations. This is, in fact, a very good one. It is good news that the other side did not think of, never thought of and could not be bothered to do.

Madam Speaker, this time in the budget we have Take Back the Streets initiatives that my colleague the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) has spoken about. We have \$2 million earmarked to continue funding for 40 police officers for community policing. We have worked very hard in the implementation of the Lavoie Inquiry Action Plan. That was a terrible tragedy that led to an inquiry which has led to an action plan which is involving the community. Partnerships have really been the basis of, I think, the best planning. I am pleased to see again that our government continues to support initiatives, which, in fact, assist the community in being a part of all of the work that we do.

The initiatives address many of the serious issues of violence against women both on the streets and in family violence, an ongoing concern of women's groups. In terms of the Lavoie Inquiry Action Plan, I know that the recommendations have been worked on or are being implemented and are being worked on with the community.

So, Madam Speaker, in the area of support for women in this budget, I am very pleased that there has been a focus and that the needs of women have been integrated into the policy development and into the budget planning of this government, something that, again, I can say this government can be very proud of and that I am very proud of having been a part of this government.

The second area that I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about is Culture, Heritage and Citizenship because this budget and budgets during the nine years that I have been here have really been very important in addressing this particular sector of Manitoba. In culture, the first word I would use for our government's support is sustainable because across Canada during the very difficult years of the '90s many government decided that that was an expendable area and they reduced their funding. In this government's view, they were sustainable in their funding to culture because they recognized that culture and arts are an important economic sector. Culture and arts add to the quality of our life, and they recognized that culture and arts are an ambassador for us as Manitobans all around the world. The project,

The Light Within, which was the work of women artists in Manitoba, went on a trade mission to Mexico. It is a way of telling about ourselves to the world.

We have a very ambitious immigration plan in Manitoba. We would like to attract people from around the world to come to Manitoba to live and we would like them to stay here, but one of the things that we have to do is tell people around the world about ourselves. By being able to tell people about our arts and our culture, it often makes Manitoba one of the most attractive places to move and to stay.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize some of the highlights in the budget. As you know, a year ago in the budget \$550,000 was added permanently to the budget line of the Manitoba Arts Council. In the past it had been a special grant. This year there is also a special grant for the Manitoba Arts Council, which is to be paid out over three years. I believe the Manitoba Arts Council has worked with the community and has determined some priorities from the arts community so that this spending will be able to enhance the arts community in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, in addition, I would like to speak about the role of arts and culture in the revitalization of downtown. I am an MLA that represents a city riding. We recognize that the revitalization of downtown is important for us. We would like to draw people downtown, and we recognize that one of the biggest draws for people to come downtown is in fact arts and culture. It also enhances the image of our downtown by making it a very vibrant place and a place where people want to come. The arts is emerging as a cornerstone of the strategy to enhance our downtown.

One of the plans that I understand has been put forward is an artist's village. The artist's village will look at both residences and studios for artists. So we will see how this plan may be integrated within some of the planning for downtown, but I think one of the important messages that I would say is that it is clear arts and culture has a place in the revitalization of downtown.

* (1540)

In the revitalization of downtown, too, we have to have an appreciation of heritage. Because my department on the heritage side is very active across the province in looking at recognizing heritage sites, in looking at how to protect and preserve heritage sites, we are working as part of a three-level task force in the downtown area of Winnipeg co-operating with the city and with the federal government, the three levels of government, to look at an area of downtown and to try to say what is the best way to use that downtown area. I am very happy with the co-operative nature of this particular initiative. I know that there have been some meetings, and I will look forward to following the actual development of this task force and their recommendations on the revitalization of downtown.

I would like to speak also for a moment on the film and sound industry because this is probably one of the most exciting initiatives for all Manitobans, because we are in the movies and, as the Premier said, we are now the Hollywood of the Prairies. We have so much film activity going on within our province. We have in fact increased our film activity from about \$1 million a few years ago to about \$50 million this year to what is projected to be about \$100 million next year. That is just amazing for a city our size, but we are in fact film friendly Manitoba. When I was at the opening of one of the big new sound stage area development earlier this year, it was suggested that our licence plates should now read not just Friendly Manitoba but Film Friendly Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, in dealing with this industry, our government has moved ahead. We have named a board for the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation, and we are very committed to the industry. Through our budget, there was clearly a statement that we are extending the film tax credit. The film tax credit has returned \$5.5 million in two years accruing to benefit Manitoba film producers for reinvestment in their company and also for the employment of Manitoba artists and technicians. We have also attracted training institutions such as the National Screen Institute and Film Training Manitoba where I just was very pleased to attend an opening the other day.

Madam Speaker, I know my time is short, so I would just like to say that our government will continue to support our arts organizations. We will continue to support the growing sectors, economic sectors of our arts area. I would like to mention in particular the publishing industry which has grown 600 percent since 1983 to an economic sector of over \$3 million, Visual arts and crafts marketing program, to make sure that our arts and crafts artists are seen around the world.

I have to end finally on a positive recreation fitness and wellness. I would like to invite everyone to SummerActive, which will take place on May 26. We had about 2,000 people last year. When we did WinterActive, we had between 12,000 and 15,000 people at The Forks. This is a day when Manitobans can truly get out and appreciate our wonderful weather, physical activity, and health.

This is a thoughtful and considered direction of our government in this budget. It is a direction that provides Manitobans with confidence. It is a direction that will show Manitobans that our children can stay home and be successful and invest in their province. It is a budget that will attract Manitobans home again, those who may have left. It will keep Manitobans right here because there is so much to look forward to.

Madam Speaker, I support his budget, I support this government, and I support our Premier (Mr. Filmon). I am looking forward to my continued involvement as a citizen of Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on the budget for a short period of time and to congratulate the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), who has spoken on her nine years in public office and to wish her well as she moves to a new career. I understand that she is planning to go back to the university and to become involved in other community activities, I guess, ones of her choice. I would also like to congratulate her on the SummerActive program and the

WinterActive program and, I hope, to take up her invitation to be part of those.

But in a way she ended on that note and it did put me in mind of some of the difficulties that people have with a budget which, in many ways, is deserving of consideration. Programs like WinterActive, like SummerActive, like some of the pilot projects that are in the Children and Youth Secretariat are certainly good initiatives. They are ones that I think they have wide public support.

The problem is, at the same time the government is creating the situation and allowing the situation to continue where some schools will now be cutting 50 percent of their physical education hours. Now, that simply does not make sense. And the thing is, Madam Speaker, that we have raised this issue many times before. We remember a previous Education minister, Clayton Manness. Mr. Manness put in place two policies: one, a funding policy, and the other a timetabling policy which forced many schools to begin to cut not only recess but physical education class time as well, both policies undermining the kind of arguments that this government wants to make for itself as, at least in the months leading up to an election, of a progressive, small "p" government.

Madam Speaker, it is that kind of puzzling situation which I think underlies the reaction of many people to this budget. This is a government which may well in the years before an election, in the last 12 months, sometimes in the last six months, or even as we are looking at it at the moment and perhaps in the last week before an election, wants to spend a lot of money, wants to convince people that they are a government of the centre rather than a government of the right. And yet, if we look back and if we remember, and you do not have to have a very long memory, you can have the short political memory and you can still see where this government's true colours are.

They are prepared, Madam Speaker. It was quite evident from their answers today, both the minister who is supposed to be the advocate for youth and children and the Minister of Education, who is responsible for equal

education opportunities across Manitoba. Both of them were not prepared to deal with the issue of one school division cutting by 50 percent the amount of time devoted to physical education or indeed the issue that my colleague for Radisson raised, and that is of a general situation, it is not just Brandon, a general situation of continuing decline of physical education in our schools.

On the other hand, the government wants to make much of the money that it is contributing. I commend it for contributing money to the research project at the University of Manitoba, part of a larger national project on the physical fitness of young people. But, Madam Speaker, you cannot expect people to believe you, you cannot expect people to trust you or to have respect for your government when at the same time you are undermining the very bases, the very foundations of physical fitness, health, and a good start for children in this province.

I think it is that sense that this is a government which only moves on expediency which underlines the kind of reaction that we have seen across the province to this budget, as well as to the one-a-day announcements that we have seen from the government. It must be very frustrating for them. Those flags that they are carting back and forth across the province, those green baize cloths that they are signing these agreements and proclamations on must be getting pretty worn out.

They announce several million dollars of road spending, and it takes two days to reach the back page of the Free Press. The announcements before the budget on education I think were not met with an overwhelming enthusiasm but in a sense were met with a reconstruction of the record of this government in education. The announcements in health that we have seen since the end of the Monnin inquiry, many of them well worthy of consideration, in some cases very specifically the kinds of spending that we have called for, yet have been met with a skepticism, Madam Speaker, which I have not seen accorded to any budget in this province.

* (1550)

So there they are, carting the flags and the baize cloths across the province, making

announcements, making policy commitments, making announcements about the future. I think even the Oakbank personal care home is featured again in the announcements of the Conservative government.

An Honourable Member: It is coming.

Ms. Friesen: It is coming, the minister wants to tell me again. Well, we all certainly hope it is, but the trouble is that a reannouncement simply reminds people of when it did not come to pass. That is the issue, is that they do not trust you. So you must go back with all those flags and green baize cloths and rev up the engines again, try a different colour sweater, try a different car, go for the youth image. It is a bit difficult for some of us, and I include myself in that. [interjection] You might try the canoe again. You are right. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is suggesting they might try the canoe again, and, Madam Speaker, indeed they may. They do seem to have certainly run out of ideas of ways of presenting the kinds of announcements they want to make, and it must be, indeed, very frustrating for them.

The underlying response of most people, not just the Free Press, not just the Sun, not just the minister's favourite radio station, CBC, but it is quite broadly across Manitoba a sense of skepticism and a lack of trust in a government which seems expedient and which is prepared to spend lavishly—at least in terms of paper announcements—in the months before an election and to undermine other principles, I think, which are shared by Manitobans, whether it is physical education, whether it is palliative care, whether it is strategies to deal with different kinds of problems that Manitoba is facing in the health care field such as AIDS and diabetes as well as FAS, the idea that you can neglect these year after year—in fact, pour scorn on the opposition for raising them—that you can scorn the people who raise them, that you can neglect them and that you can then expect people to believe you after year after year after year of this kind of behaviour.

So I think the government has to look to its own behaviour because what that behaviour has done, it is cumulative. It has made its impact on the population, and I think people are responding

appropriately. I do not know whether the government will be surprised when it goes to the real polls. It has done enough polling—according to people I have been talking to over the last few weeks—to, I would think, measure pretty closely what the end result of an election is going to be. We will see whether they call it on Tuesday as to what result they believe that they can achieve.

So, Madam Speaker, the issue of trust I think is a basic one for this government. It is their own behaviour and their own activities which I think have led to this skepticism on the part of the people.

Now, it is true that there is a general skepticism of politicians across the country, but I would argue that one of the reasons for that was, in fact, the kind of hyperbole, the kind of manipulation, the kind of spin-doctoring that we saw from governments like Brian Mulroney and which, in many ways, the Filmon government has followed.

In the early years, I think governments were able to get away with it. More recently, I think we have a much more skeptical and a much more, certainly a more skeptical and perhaps a more media sophisticated public who are able to analyze, to criticize, to evaluate the kind of spin that they are being presented with. So in the long run I think the kinds of governments which have relied upon that kind of discussion will find themselves at a disadvantage, and I think we are seeing the beginnings of that with the response to this budget.

This is in spite of the fact, Madam Speaker, that I say there are many good things in this budget. There are many areas of spending that we have called for, but the issue really is going to be trust. The government has looked at health care. It has looked at the kind of outcry that we saw not just this Christmas, but the Christmas before and the Christmas before that. They have looked at the hallway medicine that has developed in Manitoba. They have apparently finally heard from those particular groups who have been very badly hit by increased Pharmacare charges. They did not actually seem to hear the call from the North of the \$50 user fee that has been imposed on people in the North. That did not seem to be in the budget,

but then there really was not very much on the North in the budget at all. In fact, I think you would be hard put if you put it through a word processing count to find the number of times that the North was mentioned. That is something perhaps their spin doctors might want to pay attention to. It is like the family—

An Honourable Member: Was the south mentioned?

Ms. Friesen: Pardon?

An Honourable Member: Was the south mentioned?

Ms. Friesen: Was the south mentioned? I think locations of places in the south were mentioned.

An Honourable Member: The mayor of Brandon had the same criticism.

Ms. Friesen: The people in Brandon made the same criticism, did they? Yes. I see. I think there certainly are areas of health care spending which are going to be seen in Brandon and in the south, but that \$50 user fee seems to be not something which the government has heard.

Of course, what it does is to remind people in the North of the many cuts which they have faced over the years, the tremendous imbalance that we have seen developing over the 10 years of Tory government in road spending in the North. You do not have to travel very far in the North, whether it is to The Pas or whether it is between The Pas and Flin Flon, to know the very difficult conditions that northerners face in road transport. Yet year after year the discrepancy and the gap between the spending in north and south under this government seem to increase. So, of course, this budget reminds people of that and it reminds people of the past.

They are reminded too of the cuts in spending to Access programs. The government has made a number of policy statements, or at least it calls them policy statements, about aboriginal people lately. I will come to those in a minute. Each time they do this, what it does is recall for both the newspaper reporters and the people who are asked to comment on this, it

reminds them of the \$6 million that is being cut every year out of Access programs.

Year after year the number of students who could have been selected, and families indeed, because that was one of the bases of the Access programs, we have not been able to expand the Access medical programs, the engineering programs, the forestry programs, the legal programs for aboriginal students. So what we are seeing is a very good program, but one that has not been expanding at a time when the aboriginal population and indeed the needs of the aboriginal population have been expanding greatly.

Madam Speaker, it seems to me that that is one of the great missed opportunities of this government, and I will come later to look at some of the other missed opportunities, but that refusal to expand the programs of secondary and post-secondary education for aboriginal people I think has been one of the great missed opportunities of the last 10 years. Manitoba, 11 or 12 years ago, had some very good programs. It was one of the reasons that we were able to lead the West, not just Alberta and Saskatchewan, but British Columbia as well, which has a very large aboriginal population.

It was Manitoba which was leading in the production of the academic leadership, the doctors, the dentists, the nurses, the social workers, the teachers, all of whom had been coming since the mid-1970s through Access programs. There was only one other university in the country which was even beginning to approach Manitoba's. Many others have caught up, and I think that is a good thing, but what Manitoba had was the basis for leadership, and that is what has been lost.

So those cuts to the BUNTEP program, to the Access programs, to the New Careers programs are all brought to mind whenever this government talks about aboriginal issues, and that great loss, I think, is one that we will be feeling for a long time.

I remember coming to this House in 1990, and we looked at one of the first reports produced by Winnipeg 2000. It was that one that had for many people the startling conclusion

that one in four, and it is often repeated now, that one in four in the labour force at the end of the 1990s would be aboriginal.

* (1600)

We have now had two more reports from the Winnipeg Economic Development agency, Winnipeg 2000, which say exactly the same thing. We have had reports from consultants. We have had reports comparing the Winnipeg workforce to the Minneapolis workforce. Over and over again, the same point has been made, yet this was a government which refused to budge on Access, which continued to cut aboriginal programs, and now they want us to believe that they have a policy.

An Honourable Member: A strategy.

Ms. Friesen: You are right, a strategy. They have a strategy, but they do not have a plan. This strategy involves—and I am sure the flags were there and I am sure the green baize cloth was there and—

An Honourable Member: Was there a cannon at this one?

Ms. Friesen: Oh, God, there better not have been a cannon at this one. I will not tell you what it sounded like. The strategy involves, and I am quoting, Madam Speaker: a fundamental shift in the thinking and practice of the Manitoba government.

It is groundbreaking, but you know what it is, Madam Speaker? Well, No. 1, it is a holistic and cross-sectoral approach to community development.

An Honourable Member: Now is that not great?

Ms. Friesen: Well, I would like to see the minister take that door to door in Point Douglas, door to door in West Broadway.

It is going to be, Madam Speaker, developed in partnership with the aboriginal community, an action plan. So here we are, after 11 years, and report after report from Winnipeg 2000, after an aboriginal strategy in 19, whatever it was before

the '95 election, which cost you over a quarter of a million dollars, never saw the light of day. You then went into another strategy, or was that a plan, another strategy which got you to the next election without spending a penny and without doing anything. Meanwhile, that population grew and the programs for aboriginal people in the city of Winnipeg and in the North declined.

What have you got now? You come to 1999. We are practically on the cusp of the new millennium, and what have you got? A plan to develop a plan. That is absolutely pathetic, and the Minister of whatever—no, you are not a minister. If you were minister, I could ask you a question and I would. As a matter of fact, I have several for you.

An Honourable Member: I would answer it, too.

Ms. Friesen: And the minister says he would answer it. Well, that would be the first time. He only had one page in his briefing book and that was blame the NDP. I think we will frame Jim Downey's—sorry, we will frame the member for Virden's briefing book, because you could certainly do it in one thin piece.

So here we are in 1999, and they are going to think about, in partnership with the aboriginal community, an action plan designed to increase the effectiveness of, and I am quoting again—I could not come up with these words myself: designed to increase the effectiveness of programs and services and the full participation in them by urban aboriginal people. To meet the intent of this strategy, there will be a provincial strategy implementation committee established.

Well, I wish the minister well, but, Madam Speaker, there is nothing in there that changes the conditions of life for the people that I represent. Ten years from now, should there be an implementation committee established—and you never know with this government, one thing before an election and another thing afterwards—should there be a strategy, should there be an action plan, and should there be some dollars attached to the implementation of this, there might be a difference. But, Madam Speaker, all this calls to mind is the cuts and the lost

opportunities that Manitobans as a whole have faced as a result of the 10 years of this government.

So, Madam Speaker, the result of their budget I think must be very puzzling for the government. People are saying: Can we trust them; can we trust Filmon? I noticed today with great interest the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) rise and ask the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) not to mention the word "Filmon."

Interesting, Madam Speaker, and it will be interesting to see if we have those blue signs with the Filmon Team on again. I think perhaps there is some indication in their own polls that the name "Filmon" has become a liability. That may be the first time in 10 years that that has happened; it may not be. I am not privy to their particular polls or the way in which they ask the questions or the series of questions that are posed, but I did think that the member for St. Norbert's intervention was an interesting one and clearly an attempt to take away from the characterization of this particular group of Tories as Filmon Tories.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about education. It is an interest of mine, and it is another area where the government has increased spending this time. Now, the government claims in the area of K to 12 that they have increased funding I think by more than 2 percent, but, in fact—and this announcement, of course, was made in January, although the government has tried to make a little more of it this time by reannouncements. They really are quite shameless on the reannouncement. You know, repetition as a weakness of policy really never seems to have made its way through this government. So repeating promises, which I think is counterproductive—it simply reminds people of how many promises they have broken, but, nevertheless, they do want to rev up the engine and repeat this promise again that they have spent more money in education.

Of course, Madam Speaker, what this does is immediately alert parents who are raising money for textbooks, raising money for asphalt pads, for basketball nets, for electric outlets, for resources for school libraries, for playground

equipment, for chairs for the classroom in some cases, a wide range of materials which we used to see as essential but which under this Tory government have become frills. So all those parents who spent their time accompanying their children on dark nights—I see the former Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism is playing his violin here. I guess he has heard this before. I guess he has heard this from people in his own constituency. I bet the people of Arthur-Virden have indeed been selling chocolates for textbooks, chocolates for basketball nets, as well as chocolates for field trips which I think is a common practice.

So, Madam Speaker, each of those members on the other side must have heard these issues from their constituents, as we have from ours. In fact, when we sent a survey to parent councils, we had a reasonable response. I certainly would have liked to have heard more, and we are having more surveys that come in. But of those people who responded, and we had close to a hundred responses, a great majority of them—I have not got the number in front of me, but I think it was over 75 percent—said that they were fundraising for what they considered to be essentials. So when the government says it has increased funding for education, immediately those people think, well, what on earth was I raising the funds for? If there has been more money in education, what was I doing?

So they go back to the books, and they go back to look at the FRAME report which is the government's basic accounting mechanism, relatively clear to most people—once you have read one year's, you can understand the subsequent years—and they look at the money that has been put to the public schools of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, leaving aside the issue of inflation, leaving aside the issue of proportions, which the minister always wants to talk about, the actual dollars which have gone to the public schools of Manitoba have been reduced by something like close to \$30 million. They are actually getting \$30 million less for the basic classroom functions than they were when this government came to power.

Or let us look at it another way. If we were to look at the purchasing power, if we were to

look at the issues of inflation, then what has happened to the funding of public schools is that each classroom teacher now or each school or each division, however you want to look at it, is getting close to \$500 less per student in purchasing power. Now that is an enormous amount, Madam Speaker, and it begins to account for the difficulties that schools have in finding adequate numbers of textbooks, in updating and renewing their textbook resources, in providing enough resources for software, for the hardware, for the actual wiring of computers, for finding materials for playgrounds, for buying a new basketball net. That is why they are having difficulty. It is equally true to say that certainly there are some areas of education where the costs have risen considerably, in fact, have outpaced inflation, and certainly books are one area of that. That is important for any government to consider, particularly one which is rapidly introducing new curriculum.

Some areas of computer materials have come down in price, some have increased. Of course, the difficulty with introducing technology into schools is the rate of change and the desire of every parent and every teacher to have the latest, the best, and to prepare students for a world of work and to prepare them for the kind of equipment and materials and expectations that they will have on the job, and that costs and it is an increasing cost and a rapidly increasing one.

* (1610)

So those two things are obvious, Madam Speaker, and so for a government—and I could also add, I suppose, fuel. Transportation costs particularly in rural divisions, but not just in rural divisions, are a considerable part of an education budget, and that is another cost over which schools and divisions have very little control and an area where the cost has been rising. Some of those things are beyond the control of a government. They are beyond the control of all governments, that is true. But under that situation, under those considerations, surely a government which has reduced the spending power of divisions by \$500 per pupil should not be boasting about an increase of 2 percent, especially when that increase of 2 percent comes on the heels of zero and zero and

minus 2 and minus 2.4 and zero. From the perspective of divisions and classrooms, the underlying problems that they are facing in education financing—and I have given you a number of ways to think about it—are coming from those cuts which in many divisions, not all, but in many divisions were very, very deep, and that is the problem.

When you go to that kind of unpredictable, unsustainable I would say type of funding, then what you are doing is placing your fundamental public institutions in a very, very difficult place. A 2 percent increase—in fact, it was not a 2 percent increase; it was basically a 1 percent and the others were tied amounts which benefited some divisions but not others, but even that kind of an increase is not going to make the kind of difference that you need after the years of cuts. So when parents see a government which wants to proclaim its progressiveness in an increase in funding, they go back to this and they realize that the government's words do not match the government's deeds. That is where the lack of trust begins and in many cases that is where it ends.

Madam Speaker, education funding is only one area that I wanted to talk about.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member has 12 minutes remaining.

Ms. Friesen: So little time, so much more, right?

Madam Speaker, I talked about education funding, but I do want to put some comments on the record on post-secondary education funding, which is another area where I think this government has really undermined the services and the institutions and the opportunities for youth in this province. Again, it is a difficult situation for the public when they see a Premier and a party which wants to portray itself in terms of opportunities for youth and which has the Premier (Mr. Filmon) gingerly holding a football in his, I do not know. I guess it was not an election leaflet. I guess it was a pre-election leaflet.

An Honourable Member: That is not true. . . . he rebuilt the entire Faculty of Agriculture . . . a

\$14-million . . . enrolled students every year in the Faculty of Agriculture, all under the benign leadership and stewardship and benevolence of one Harry J. Enns.

An Honourable Member: Sit down, Harry.

Ms. Friesen: Is this coming off my time or his, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) would like to talk about the new Agriculture faculty, and well he may, because I remember bringing up in Estimates the proposals of the Dean of Agriculture, Dean Elliott, for a new bachelor's program. They got nowhere with this government. It took them another four years before they paid any attention to the Faculty of Agriculture. By then, Saskatoon had taken the lead. That is the problem. When you talk about technology and the information highway in the same case, New Brunswick took the lead. For a small province, New Brunswick did what we should have been doing, and we did not. The same thing in agriculture. [interjection]

Throw money at it? Well, I digress, but I think those are two areas where in fact we were outpaced, outflanked by other provinces, and quite unnecessarily. The Dean of Agriculture was new. He came here with good proposals. He knew very well what was happening across the country. I have spoken to him on a number of occasions. He knew very well that Saskatchewan was about to pull ahead of us. Still this government did nothing.

So it is a lot like the budget, is it not? They tend to portray themselves in a progressive manner, but it is very late. I hope this is not the case with agriculture. I hope that we are able to create the position for ourselves in research and in education and training that we deserve to have, but I am very worried that the inroads that Saskatchewan has been able to make and the speed with which they were able to do it, the kind of partnerships that they created in the industrial park at the university far faster than this government was enabling Manitoba institutions to do, in fact, was putting the lid on

things, turning away the Dean of Agriculture when he was proposing that bachelor program.

The members wish to disagree, but I think that they will find that their memories are very short. I remember quite clearly that the proposals for that bachelor program were not given a very strong welcome by this government. Perhaps they have lived to regret it. I hope so, because I think it was a good idea.

In post-secondary education, I think what we remember as we look at the increase, and it is an increase in this area, but what it does is remind people of the \$22 million that was cut last year from the post-secondary budget. It reminds them of the \$22 million that was cut from the year before's post-secondary budget. In the case of the University of Manitoba, it is \$13 million each year.

There are deans at universities in this province and at the colleges too. In the case, for example, of one of the deans at the University of Manitoba, he has never in the years of Tory government had to face anything less than over half a million dollars worth of cuts, and that is in a very small area. That is just one faculty. That is the implication at the classroom level. That is the implication at the instructional level of the cuts that this government has made.

So, whereas they may want to put on the record this time a \$12-million funding of universities and colleges, we support them in that, but it does remind people of that \$22 million that has been cut in each of the last two years as the government required universities and colleges across the province to pay their own taxes and stopped the pass-through that had come through municipal affairs. I remember that quite clearly. The members may want to forget it. What struck me most about it—and I have since seen many other indications of this level of arrogance. It was Bill 34, a municipal bill, and it was actually making a tremendous impact on the ability of colleges and universities in the province to meet their mandates. Yet no one in this government, not the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) or the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), who have universities and colleges in their bailiwicks, not the minister, not the deputy minister, not the Council on Post-

Secondary Education, nobody in this government picked up a phone and spoke to anyone in any of those institutions to say that this was coming.

Madam Speaker, I thought that was no way for any government to deal with any institution, but we saw it again when the government came to deal with the changes to the Board of Governors at the University of Winnipeg. The University of Winnipeg is an institution which began as a Methodist institution, became one of the premier institutions of the United Church of Canada. The government, by fiat, by decree, by law, was going to change the composition of that board. We supported the new University of Winnipeg Act, but I was shocked and I should not have been shocked because I know—should have known—the way in which this particular cabinet and government operates. They were actually going to change the number of people from the United Church who would be represented on the board of regents. Nobody, not one person, in this government had talked to the United Church about it, neither here in the local presbytery nor had they talked to the education committee of the United Church nor had they talked to the church whose head office is in Toronto. No one, no one.

* (1620)

Here is a church which has given so much to post-secondary education in this province, and yet again they could not be bothered to pick up the phone and say we are thinking of changing it, do you want to come and have a meeting? Would you like to talk to us about this? We are probably in agreement. As it happened, I think many of the church members were but nobody spoke to them.

That, and the institution is in my riding, I feel quite strongly about that. That was really not the way that a responsible and respectable government should deal with an institution which has given so much to this province.

Madam Speaker, I have talked before about the New Brunswick example of the way in which a good partnership, a healthy partnership and a good sense of respect exists between universities and colleges and a government. I do

not want to belabour that. I do actually notice that in the last few years, the government has involved the president of the universities and some of the college presidents in trade missions, that it has begun to recognize that there is an expertise there. And so I was really puzzled by the member for St. James's speech the other day when he talked about college and university teachers, but I think he meant primarily university teachers as dream-stealers. I will not belabour the point here. I am sure that he did not mean Carol Shields. I am sure he did not mean Professor Lee Clark of Brandon. I am sure he did not mean Professor Derek Hum or Professor Norm Cameron, so there must be a different list that he has in mind. So the member for St. James does have a list. He does have a different list of people whom he believes are dream-stealers.

Well, Madam Speaker, the member will have a chance to speak later and to respond. Perhaps he will put his list on the record because it did not seem to me to be appropriate to call Dean Elliott in agriculture, Professor Mott at Brandon University, Tim Anna in the history department, a world-renowned Latin-American specialist. Perhaps he meant Professor Robert Young at the University of Winnipeg, a national award winner as a teacher—also a dream-stealer. It was a very, very odd speech and a very odd representation of our universities and the kind of education which proceeds in those universities for thousands of people. I think perhaps it derived from a particular personal experience, and it may not be something that necessarily should be put on the record, but that is obviously up to the member for St. James.

One of the things which—

Point of Order

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Wolseley has referenced my remarks, and she has raised some names of professors that I have never heard of. Maybe she wants to use this as a form of notifying these professors and to supply them with a copy of her remarks to imply that I have something against these professors.

I would ask you to maybe bring her to order because of the fact that there is nothing further

from the truth, and I would not want her to imply that I am suggesting anything. If I want to provide my list, I will do it on my own. We will leave it at that, but she should not imply that I am saying that these people who she referenced in her remarks are dream-stealers.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Sturgeon Creek did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Ms. Friesen: I thought I was clear in saying that these, in fact, were not the people who he would be talking about. One of them, I believe, they have just appointed to a commission. I know that there are good relations between the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and the Dean of Agriculture. So what I was doing was in fact providing the names of people who, I think, are seen as exemplary, who indeed are most valued by generations of Manitobans who have taught at the universities. I was very distressed to hear of the term "dream-stealers" applied to a broad-scale group of people who, I think, work very hard and work in the interests both of Manitoba students and of Manitoba. The member can rest assured that it was not my intent to send this out, merely to draw attention to the term that he had used and the expression of sentiment that it represented of "dream-stealers."

Madam Speaker, what has concerned me about the Council on Post-Secondary Education, I think, has been clearly made reference to in this House many, many times, a council and a minister—not always the council. It certainly has not been in existence as long as we have had ministers of Education. But the ministers of Education have, since 1993, promised on a regular basis a report on fees and a fee policy, and yet since 1993 what we have seen is fees across the board in universities and colleges rise to a very high level. What we are seeing, I think, is a difficulty in many families in anticipating that college or university is part of their future, and it is that sense I think of—what is the term I want? It is not alienation but a sense of disappointed expectations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, I see that you are rising. But I am concerned about that sense

of disappointed expectations among that generation of Manitobans who may see post-secondary education to be out of their reach.

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Northern and Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate on the budget which I very much support. As the MLA for Riel, I know my constituents will be well served by what I have called the health and fiscal fitness budget. The balance has been achieved amongst competing interests, interests such as taxpayers' desire to pay less taxes and have more disposable income, desire for more frontline caregivers, reduced waiting lists, a review of all taxes, a package of taxes in Manitoba, including the special levy and other real property tax supports for our schools to ensure the competitiveness of our province in a highly competitive world where there is competition for tax rates and other kinds of environmental benefits for effective entrepreneurship. Competing also and balancing desire for healthy, sustainable communities and respect and understanding of community-based solutions, the kind of thing that the urban aboriginal strategy does respect and will respect. Balancing things like desire for sustainable wealth generation ecosystem to provide the financial revenues necessary to sustain our very successful health system, justice system, education system, family services, culture, heritage and citizenship, and other important aspects of our lifestyle and the healthy sustainable communities in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I have become quite exercised by some of the statements that have been made by honourable members opposite in this debate. The only consistent, repetitive attack on the budget mounted by honourable members of the official opposition is the following, I submit, two unfounded allegations. One, the government did not keep the promises about health care construction made prior to the April 25, 1995 election. The other allegation is they cannot trust the Filmon MLAs, because Chief Justice Monnin, in a general statement which we as lawyers used to call a throw-away statement or obiter dictum kind of statement, called some witnesses a four-letter word beginning with L and ending with R. He did not say which ones or how many, just more than he

had encountered in his experience in any court case as a judge.

There is a clear and decisive, honest, irrefutable answer to both of these allegations. First, the government, of course, will keep its promises. It is a timing issue. It is also an issue that is impacted, and every commitment is impacted, by external forces or circumstances which bring about changes which make a promise or a commitment less than relevant or less than possible or not desirable. Only three MLAs, as I understand it, testified, to my knowledge, in the Monnin inquiry: the honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. C. Evans), the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon). The only honourable member who had his credibility validated by Chief Justice Monnin was the honourable member for Tuxedo. There were dozens of witnesses, and many, of course, were not members of the Progressive Conservative Party.

* (1630)

The impartial transparent process was created by my government. The opposition parties were given every chance to make political, legal and moral points through lawyers in an adversarial process lasting months. Not one PC MLA has been touched in the report. Having failed in that process, the NDP continues to use innuendo, exaggerations, cherry-picked evidence in transcripts to try and build a case of lack of credibility in relation to the budget. Those Tories whose actions were unacceptable according to Chief Justice Monnin have been cleaned out of the party, unlike the NDP. We have cleaned house in a dramatic and decisive way, absolutely in compliance with Chief Justice Monnin's recommendations.

We are stronger and better because of it. Look at our new team. Look at the people who want to run with us in the next election. When is the last time the NDP cleaned house? I certainly see a lot of tired, old faces in the NDP organization, who have never been subjected to a Monnin kind of inquiry. Many of them are hard-nosed union activists whom I have encountered in my labour relations career, union organizers who are accustomed to recruiting

members in less than angelic ways. These hard-nosed, practical people are celebrating the humiliation and damaged reputations suffered by a few unelected Tory member casualties of the Monnin process, but now they are gone and their positions are filled by people of character and competence.

The NDP, I submit, has no case. What is being done now door to door and in speeches in this House by the honourable members representing the official opposition, I submit, is the worst and lowest kind of scaremongering and malicious character assassination, not based on facts or findings of fact by Chief Justice Monnin.

What a disappointment it is to me that honourable members opposite have stooped to this level. Desperate for power, using these tactics, they bring back many bad memories. I remember when NDP members in the Law Amendments committee, when they were in government, disrespectfully and distrustfully questioned Plymouth brethren and other people with profound and sincere religious beliefs about the genuineness of their religious beliefs. It was a telling moment for me. I had not seen that kind of inhumanity or that sort of disrespect for humble, sincere people in my career. That was a milestone in my life, because I then saw what kind of people formed the New Democrat government in those days in the '70s and the '80s.

They retroactively passed legislation to reverse a case which my client was successful in before the Labour Board. They sought to impose time-and-three-quarters overtime on businesses, regardless of the impacts on the ecosystem of employment, as a universal minimum wage. They imposed final offer selection under The Labour Relations Act, which my efforts in the courts on behalf of clients led to a front page article in the Winnipeg Free Press quoting a member of the Manitoba Court of Appeal in much the way they rely on quotes from judges, Judge Monnin. That judge, in a throw-away, by-the-way comment, said that this was fascist legislation. What it was was in effect a denial of the right to freely negotiate renewal collective agreements. It demonstrated a lack of appreciation for the concept of the freedom of contract, which, along with private property

rights and along with the rule of law, have built the economies of the western world in ways that are envied by less democratic countries with less freedom of enterprise in them.

The NDP government in those days created government-funded, taxpayer-paid jobs rather than meaningful private-sector jobs by creating an attractive work environment. They treated what they did as success, they still to this date. They interfered with Manitoba Hydro in political ways, even imposing people there that did not operate in accordance with independent business judgment. Tritschler records all of this in his report. They interfered with the forestry industry and the mining industry in ways that to this day negatively impact on the reputation of this province in the world because of the disrespect for the environment by the NDP, the disrespect for indigenous peoples, disrespect for private ownership and land tenure.

I could go on and on, Madam Speaker, but I think I have made my point about the lack of credibility of the position of the New Democratic Party, about the credibility in relation to the budget and a commitment of this budget of this government that I am a part of.

It also points out the New Democratic Party has not changed. They scare the elderly and disadvantaged and the trusting with alleged horrors about hospital food, now out-of-date, line-ups in hallways in the process of being eliminated, waiting lists in the process of reduction. They do not seek support with constructive alternatives. They do not seek support with facts. They do not seek support by showing the alternative to our budget. They seem to be supporting our budget.

Honourable members opposite, I submit, you are deliberately frightening people into supporting you, not unlike union organizing tactics practised in days gone by as a matter of course. Misrepresentations were permitted as long as fraud was not proved by a member being solicited, a very difficult task for an individual member to prove fraud by a union like the Teamsters or the retail-wholesale department store workers or some of the major unions. Fraud, of course, means a deliberate intent to mislead.

I mean, do you have a code of ethics, members opposite, prohibiting such tactics? Why not? Honourable members opposite are appealing to negative emotions, not reason. Honourable members opposite with Ph.D.s, clergy members, teachers, all people who should know better and have unused capacities to know better are not using reasoned arguments or constructive policy alternatives. I submit, honourable members opposite, you are endorsing our budget and saying trust the NDP to implement it.

The Filmon government budget is a budget for '99-2000. So the big question is: What will the New Democratic Party, if they ever assume government, what would they do for the next three or four years?

An Honourable Member: They do not have a clue.

Mr. Newman: Not a clue. So what is the road map? What do you go by? You go by past performance. The NDP, it is submitted, has not demonstrated it can make a budget that is generally acceptable. Can you trust the NDP to be different in 1999 from the way they were in the '70s and '80s? What have they proposed that demonstrates any such competence, integrity or alternative content? What have they shown?

* (1640)

Let me take a moment, Madam Speaker, because I heard the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) saying things about the North that are contrary to what I submit are major achievements for the benefit of northerners. You are depriving them of the opportunity, with those kinds of comments you make in this Legislature and you write about in the northern newspapers, of the opportunity to hear of the accomplishments, because you do not want to recognize accomplishments. You do not want to recognize the accomplishments for people of the North which they could build on. You just take a negative approach designed consistently to generate negative emotion. That is the whole strategy. What an empty, bankrupt strategy, I suggest.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Energy and Mines and of Northern and Native Affairs, I am very encouraged by the positive effects I believe our budget measures will have on our mining industry and the people of northern Manitoba. They will stimulate the well-being of mining, the North's most important industry, at a time when the industry's prosperity is being held back by low world metal prices.

I am pleased with the strengthening of the competitive position of the North, particularly the Port of Churchill as a transportation gateway and link to world markets. The elimination of the motive fuel tax on fuel purchased in Churchill by international shipping will encourage shippers to refuel at our port. This incentive will focus attention both on our northern seaport as an international gateway and the railway links between the port and the rest of Manitoba and western Canada.

Our northern communities and the northern economy are entering exciting but challenging times. With these budget measures and especially the reductions in Manitoba's income tax, they will have both the support they will need to prepare for the new challenges ahead and additional disposable income for use for family and individual expenditures. [interjection]

I hear the honourable member for Crescentwood criticizing people that earn over \$100,000 a year, presumably some of the great people that have built Manitoba, have contributed to the wealth and the revenue of this province because of their efforts and because of their generous contributions to this community. Many of them have become rooted here. This is their home, and we have the honourable member for Crescentwood, a person who uses comments like, when referring to one of our head office companies in the province of Manitoba, he calls it Great Waste of Life. He did it right in this Legislature. Great Waste of Life. What respect for a company. This person was the critic for Industry, Trade and Tourism.

But, when those things come out it, demonstrates the kind of mindset, the kind of attitude, the disability that afflicts the honourable member for Crescentwood in his approach to these kinds of issues. They are the kinds of

things the public of Manitoba should be exposed to, not negative emotion.

I would like to offer some budget-related comments on several key issues affecting the North, its people and its economy. We have a Team Manitoba concept. The Team Manitoba concept grew out of the aspirations and requests of the people of the North and the communities of the North. We listened, and we listened with sensitivity and great interest. We captured that enthusiasm by putting together a skeptical team. They were skeptical about whether we were really committed to building a team. We put together a team and we secured the funding and we had them accompany us down to the Prospectors & Developers Association conference in Toronto, one of the biggest conferences of its kind in the world, where explorationists and major companies participate and network and share ideas and get to know communities and evaluate communities. It was a proud moment to see the booths of our northern communities, to see them beside or at close connection with the booths of Energy and Mines.

I was absolutely delighted to receive a letter from the mayor of Leaf Rapids, Mayor Barbara Bloodworth, saying how proud she was to represent a mining community in Manitoba. She acknowledged that prior to the convention she did not fully appreciate the great strides our province has taken in meeting the needs of the mining industry. Comments were constantly being made, she said, that the "Friendly Manitoba" licence plate means more than just friendly people, it refers to a government attitude toward the industry. That kind of acknowledgement, that kind of appreciation has inspired her and other leaders in the North to want to participate more and more in those kinds of opportunities in a team way because they can bring the knowledge of the local economy, the strength of the people and the local support services to the industry, they can bring them face to face with the people who are considering Manitoba as a place to live and work and invest.

As the Minister responsible for the Communities Economic Development Fund, I am very pleased that CEDF, Communities Economic Development Fund, now called the

Development Fund, is maintaining its record of contributing to existing and emerging local economies in the North. The fund provides viable economic enterprises, access to capital that they might not be able to attain from other sources. Its services and capital have been particularly useful to the commercial fishing sector, which is an important economic and social underpinning for many northern communities.

Our government has broadened the fund's base of operations to include larger loans. We expect this initiative will increase in importance as northerners increase their participation in capital-intensive industries such as forestry. I would like to say that we have recently asked the board and management of the fund also to develop a program for microenterprise lending that is suited to the needs of northern communities. It will be a Manitoba solution, a Manitoba model, and especially those communities that are moving towards self-reliance.

The program will be called TEAM, and they expect the program to be developed during this fiscal year. The program will provide a way for microentrepreneurs to obtain credit and technical assistance for business development within a supportive environment of teamwork. Microenterprise development is a tested method for nurturing emerging and transitional economies. TEAM will adapt the best practices of many programs that build community service and the commercial sector to support healthy sustainable communities. Madam Speaker, we believe that such a program will make the decision to move towards self-reliance more attractive for several communities, as well give local entrepreneurs a wide range of business options and reduce the problems of community transition for both the local government and the business sectors.

As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) has said, our mining sector has suffered from low mineral prices this past year. We are confident that reduction of the mining tax rate, 18 percent of mining profits from 20 percent, will act as an incentive to the industry through the expected savings in the next few years and over time and confirm our

government's commitment to the industry's well-being.

In addition, there is good news all the time, and the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), does not raise this and share this with the North. Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting have just announced a \$25.8-million expense for smelter spill gas project due to start in July '99. It will involve 20 jobs in 1999. It will involve 60 to 80 jobs in the year 2000.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the industry in northern Manitoba were given good news about three weeks ago when the government granted new mine status to two Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company projects, the Chisel North and Triple Seven mine sites. This is part of a teamwork approach towards 2012, the longest period there has ever been a commitment to continuing operations in Flin Flon. New mine status makes these projects eligible for a mining tax holiday. It exempts the projects from the mining tax until the profits equal the capital outlay needed to develop the sites. The granting of new mine status will make the continued development of these projects more feasible in the difficult times the industry is going through.

* (1650)

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

These projects have an investment potential of nearly \$200 million and between now and 2008, it is possible, it is predicted, it is forecast, that we might be talking about a billion dollars in capital projects because there is a third development which is going to be necessary to fulfill the 2012 commitment. Together, this could help maintain more than 200 jobs in the Flin Flon and Snow Lake areas, as well as improving employment stability and economic opportunities for the two mining districts.

Subject to a contract being signed, approved by the Board of HBM&S, we have also agreed to extend the repayment of the \$27-million loan from June 2000 to June 2008 at a cost in the first year, in this budget year, of over \$5 million because that is the way the accounting has to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are proud of our balancing of support of the mining industry with adherence to sustainable development in mining. Our government's 1992 Mines and Minerals Act was the first in North America to incorporate the principles of sustainable development. It provides the legal framework and obligation to implement sustainable development in the mining industry. We have been working with Inco and the steelworkers' union in partnering ways and the City of Thompson and the school board to meet the challenge in ways that are not preceded by the Highland copper operation in B. C., where they even have a provincially paid commissioner to get his nose into that system.

On April 22, we announced a new mine-closure regulation to ensure the responsible restoration of the environment after the life of a mine. Under the new regulation, both a required closure plan and the security to rehabilitate the land must be in place before a company can begin mining at a site. We will have much stronger assurance that land affected by mining will be restored in a responsible and environmentally sound way. This is not new for this government because this government created a rehabilitating degraded lands in the pit and quarry rehabilitation program under The Mines and Minerals Act. This is a product of a unique partnership, another example of collaboration with an aggregate mining industry represented by the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association. Under the act, funds are set aside for the rehabilitation of the depleted pits and quarries by collecting an environmental levy on aggregate production from the industry. This money is set aside in a dedicated account and then it is paid back to the industry to do the work, to do the rehabilitation. It is a total win-win, and it also improves the image of mining in the province because many of these were orphaned sites that were abandoned, but they are being cleaned up by these industry levies. You can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the result of the program is clearly win-win all around, and that is the approach we take to all of the programs in the mining industry.

Self-reliance initiative. Many of our Northern Affairs communities are now going through a process that is setting them on a course to a new prosperous sustainable future in the

next century, something the members opposite, when in government since 1974 when they created The Northern Affairs Act, failed to accomplish. They built infrastructure but they did not have one single success, not one single incorporation. They did not have any concerted, focused effort to achieve healthy sustainable communities. The self-reliant community, the self-reliance initiative which has been strengthened through this budget's injection of \$1.6 million in funding for the current fiscal year—and the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) do not celebrate these kinds of initiatives. They do not put all of these achievements in context. They do not share these with the members in this House. They do not share these with the people of the North that they supposedly represent, these people who are claiming to be paradigms of virtue, these people who claim to be angelic. Do they share these kinds of things? Do they share the truth with their constituents?

Ever since it was enacted in 1974, The Northern Affairs Act had provisions for Northern Affairs communities to take the big step of incorporating municipalities, but the very first community to take this step, South Indian Lake, did so as of April 1, 1999. The members opposite say another election ploy. I did not hear them say that about this. The fact is it takes hard work to achieve things and when you get elected four years ago, some things take four years to achieve. To denigrate, to criticize, to show disrespect for achievement in that way is not becoming honourable members opposite, and it is going to be seen by the public. It will be seen by the public because you will be judged by reasoned people.

The very first community took this step. I was there, and so was the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) when they celebrated on April 15. I would like to recognize the mayor and community council of the incorporated community of South Indian Lake for their leadership in taking their community into this next stage of its life. The self-reliance initiative is designed to help Northern Affairs communities reach their goals through assistance in partnership in several key areas, I might say a kind of partnership which

the federal government, through INAC, might usefully learn from in terms of relating to First Nations reserve communities, because you have to build capacities and you have to do it over a period of time. You have to facilitate it. You do not tell people what to do or do things for them. Communities will be assisted in meeting basic needs and services to maintain an acceptable local quality of life. They will receive assistance and support in exercising their powers of independence and judgment as they see fit respecting their local situation. They will receive support for maintaining a level of local services, exercising leadership, building infrastructure and generating economic development for their community, but at the same time, the participating communities will be in the driver's seat.

They will be able to plan the social and economic course of their community to ensure that their future generations will be able to live, work and prosper in a healthy, sustainable environment created by them. They will be able to enlist the help of the province; as well, however, they can take the initiative to work with their own private sector or engage in agreements, initiatives and partnerships with members of the private sector elsewhere in the North or in southern Manitoba, private, for-profit or not-for-profit.

The development of the initiative is progressing well. Among the Northern Affairs communities as of April 1, 1999, 14 that have been identified for participation have signed partnership agreements with the province to guide the process toward eventual incorporation. With respect to communities that may not have the capacity to function as municipalities, we are prepared to work with them to find other local government or structural alternatives for the healthy futures of the residents.

I cannot resist commenting on the Children and Youth Secretariat founded in 1994. I have been very much a champion for that in the role that they play for aboriginal people and northerners and indeed in my constituency and throughout the province, because they are addressing in the right kinds of ways, in fundamental ways, the big issues facing this province, the epidemic of diabetes, fetal alcohol

syndrome and the need for early intervention to ensure a healthy start in life for Manitoba's children.

The secretariat's work focuses on following key areas: the early years of a child's life to provide a good start, strengthening families in the community, recognizing and respecting aboriginal culture and reducing barriers to providing co-ordinated services for children and youth. I can tell you, this is of great benefit, I am sure, to all honourable members' constituents regardless of what side of the House they are in. This is a collaborative effort between departments of this government that is functioning smoothly now. It took time to put this together and get the bureaucracy out of the way.

Now in the North, 14 full-time home visitor positions are being funded in the regional health authorities to enable delivery of the BabyFirst program, a phenomenal achievement; these are public health nurses. This came to my attention. There was only one left in the Health department, and I got spoken to by that one individual. Now we have 14, and they are serving the North in ways that were working. The home visitors are trained to help the parents, and that has become an important source of community support. This support and link to the community will help both parents and their babies by reaching out to the parents and working with them to increase their self-confidence.

* (1700)

There is a remarkable program, Stop FAS, at Norway House, developed by them, designed to work with chronic drug and alcohol-dependent women who are at high risk of having a child with FAS. Wonderful programs. The PEER program in 13 remote northern communities; that is, Parents as Early Education Resources program where parents work weekly with a trained home visitor, focusing on the child and what the child needs for a healthy home environment.

Yesterday, the urban aboriginal strategy which has been criticized by members opposite was explained. The challenge was put out to

those who wanted to move forward and help establish the generational targets, the issues and priorities, the time lines and the identification of resources collaboratively between governments and within departments and from the private sector and the nonprofit sector. This is something that has never been done before, that kind of commitment. It is revolutionary and positive and practical.

I wanted to comment on what this 2025 strategy can mean because it is my vision. My vision is just a tentative draft because others can have theirs. My vision by the year 2025 is to work collaboratively with other governments and other organizations to reduce aboriginal student dropout rates to the provincial average, to increase aboriginal student graduation rates to the provincial norm, to increase aboriginal workforce participation rates to the provincial norm, to increase aboriginal employment rates to the provincial norm, to increase income levels of aboriginal Manitobans to the provincial norm, to reduce aboriginal dependency on social assistance to the provincial norm, to reduce the rate of incarceration of aboriginal Manitobans to the provincial norm, to reduce hospital utilization by aboriginal Manitobans to the provincial norm, and to increase home ownership by aboriginal people to the provincial norm.

Can we be trusted to work in determined ways, in focused, collaborative ways toward these objectives? You bet. Look at our record. Treaty land entitlement, something this government did. Members opposite in government from 1969 to 1977 and then after that again, they did not do that. Treaty land entitlement has been achieved. Eighty percent of the Northern Flood Agreement has been achieved. You did not do anything, did not do anything under that. You did the damage and did not do anything to fix it up. Settlements with South Indian Lake, Grand Rapids, Chemawawin, Cormorant, all of those were done by this government.

Cross Lake negotiations are now back on track, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a positive process is underway which could lead to this huge economic opportunity which could make Thompson look small by comparison. North

Central power line, \$150 million by this government, together with the federal government and Hydro. That line has just been completed. Here are the Hydro lines, made 1999, North Central project completed. What an achievement, and what does that mean? It means they have a level playing field with the rest of us.

Yesterday I announced the urban aboriginal strategy; today the Partners for Careers, \$1.2 million, doubling funding for that program, a program that was proven to work. We paid twice as much as the federal government HRDC to that program, \$800,000. They paid \$400,000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a \$550,000 contract with the friendship centres, 10 of them right in the constituencies of the people from the North, right in Thompson and Flin Flon and The Pas and Dauphin. I am looking forward to reading the articles they write in the northern papers and in the community papers about this one, and this comes from them. They wanted it. We listened. We listened and we designed what they wanted, and then we got the funding for them. They are excited about it, and we are excited for them, and so are the aboriginal people who are going to benefit.

This government has achieved band-based child welfare agencies. I was there, in Peguis, in Norway House the week before, the week after the first demonstration at the House. I was in Peguis sitting right beside Louis Stevenson and celebrating the occasion.

Gaming agreements, over 30 bands have signed those gaming agreements. They get the funding from that. Gasoline and tobacco tax agreements, we have done that, band by band, sharing in provincial taxes.

Can we be trusted to do things long term? We did it with the balanced budget legislation. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), all of those honourable members opposite, they did not support it. We supported it. We did it. We are responsible for the debt elimination plan, a 30-year plan. Can we commit to and follow through with long-term commitments? You bet. The Sustainable Development Act, Children and Youth Secretariat, all of those things that we

have done since 1988, just the beginning. We need more time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record regarding the budget of this government which I would guess would be just a few days before an election, and I wanted to wish all of the members in this Chamber well who may be retiring. I understand the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has been renominated, so I was wrong about him. But some other members may not be here after the next election, and I wanted to wish them well for their contributions for the number of years they have been here and wish them well in their future endeavours.

The member for Riel, the Minister of Energy (Mr. Newman), was quite hot and bothered and quite exercised about the Monnin report. I missed some of his remarks, but I caught a piece of it. I would like to ask him and the members opposite: what do they expect? I mean, it is not people in the NDP that were being talked about by Mr. Monnin, doing improper acts; it was members of the Conservative Party. It is a smoke screen to run around and try to deflect attention from the guilty to the innocent and think that you are going to have people buy it. You know, I think their original approach was the correct one. They trotted the Premier (Mr. Filmon) out sort of in Bill Clinton style and he apologized. When that was not good enough, he did it again. That strategy probably works. People can appreciate that if things have gone wrong that no matter how many times it takes, you apologize for them and promise not to do it again and try to take the steps that they have done, coming out of the report, to satisfy the recommendations of the Monnin report. But to turn around and spend any time attacking the opposition, to me, does a disservice to the whole process.

I do not see where they would gain by that sort of a strategy, so I do not know why the minister is so exercised about this, but perhaps he should get over it and recognize that Monnin did say that there were a lot of liars in this process. And, in fact, he was simply observing and I think he went in as quite a neutral sort of

observer given the kid-glove care he gave the Premier in his initial approach. I mean, clearly this judge did not believe the initial allegations, but as the process progressed I think his eyes were open quite a bit and he was quite surprised. I think members opposite too were quite surprised by the extent to which this covered. So I think they should follow the original plan A and stay away from plan B, because I do not think plan B is going to work very well. But once again, my job is not to give these people advice on how to stay around any longer than they should.

The minister, the previous speaker, went on to talk about native programs. You know, this plan, these different programs that they talk about, these are the same programs that they announce each election and clearly the people that they are targeted to do not believe them. I mean this is the problem. This is the fundamental problem with this government is believability, and that is what we have been focusing in on here. It does not matter how good this budget is. I mean this budget is a fairly decent budget in many, many respects. The fact that it may be a bit unbelievable, a bit unsustainable really shows that the public would believe this budget if it was brought in by the NDP. That is the irony of the process that in actual fact if this was Roy Romanow bringing in this budget or if this was Gary Doer bringing in the budget and if this was an NDP government—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am starting to have great difficulty hearing the honourable member, but I did overhear the honourable member mention somebody from this House by name. I would remind him that he should refer to him by his official title which is the official Leader of the Opposition.

An Honourable Member: I did not hear anybody . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But he said it clearly.

* (1710)

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point is that if this budget were being brought in by an NDP government, whoever the leader would be, if this budget were

being brought in by an NDP government anywhere in this province, this budget would be believable by the people. That is the point. But this death-bed conversion by the Conservative government leaves people not believing, leaves people mistrusting. So they can do all the focus groups they want, they can do all the public opinion surveying they want, but the bottom line is, is it credible, is it believable? I think, and I think we think, that people do not believe that this government will keep these promises. I mean, these people—

An Honourable Member: Do you believe them?

Mr. Maloway: No. The member for Thompson asks if we believe these promises, and I have to say no. I will tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure you have heard this before, but it merits repeating. Back in 1995, the Conservatives promised not to sell the telephone system. They sold the telephone system. Back in 1995, the Conservatives promised \$678 million in a whole number of capital projects for health. Immediately following the election, they cancelled the projects, and they have the nerve of only four years later basically reannouncing the same program. I am thinking that in fact people will believe them this time.

But, you know, I think the ex-Minister of Health was on the right track a few months ago when he did agree and allow that this time around they were actually going to have to build things. He had it figured out that people would not buy—there was a credibility gap, a credibility problem—this government doing the same thing it did last time, make the announcement one day and a couple of months later cancelling the program. So they understood clearly that they would have to make good on these promises. They would realize that there would be a residue of skepticism, there would be some skepticism in the public about whether or not they would proceed with this.

So I think what they have done is they have tried to deal in some ways with their credibility, their believability problem. They have taken moves to nationalize the gas company. Are they really that interested in nationalizing the gas company or are they more concerned about the

continuing, persistent, negative opinions that some of their own members have about their role in the selling of the telephone system? I can tell you that a long-time Conservative, and there are several, in my constituency—

An Honourable Member: A few, eh?

Mr. Maloway: There are a lot, thank goodness not enough. But this one member told me he had been voting Conservative for 35 years or so a couple of years ago, and he just could not understand them selling the telephone system and that he would have to vote for another party at the next election. These were their membership, essentially, their core supporters.

So I think our campaign of letting the people know about what this government was up to in that whole sale of the telephone system caused some problems for them in the area of trust and believability. So in part it has been perhaps good timing on their part to be in a position to take over the gas company at this time and therefore sort of neutralize that issue in advance of the election.

I know where the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) stands on that issue, because he stood with us, he stood with the NDP against his own Leader when we moved to take the gas company over. But I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he had better get ready for some disappointment, because it may, in fact, be our NDP government that finally ends up taking over the gas company, because this may be nothing more than window dressing.

The Public Utilities Board has approved in the last few days public hearings, but I can tell you that when the due diligence process is completed, at the end of the day they may decide not to proceed. So for the second time in the member for Lakeside's long career, he may find that that gas company is not within his grasp after all. That may well happen at this point in time.

But this government has a believability problem. I can tell you that if the election is not called on Tuesday, if they put it off from Tuesday then clearly that is one of the problems. They have a believability problem, and these

numbers in this budget, while it is a good-sounding budget and they are good numbers, they are just not believable.

Well, the member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Sveinsson) is laughing about the numbers in the budget, but I understand, based on his comments yesterday, that he cannot feel secure in relying on how good this budget is to bolster up his re-election chances in his constituency. He has to resort to abortion issues and other issues to try to inflame public opinion to try to get himself re-elected. So clearly the budget is not good enough to save his seat for him.

So we have seen signs of desperation, we have seen signs of desperation in this government over the last little while. We have seen the—[interjection] Oh, I am sure the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) will come around. But I want to say too that the heightened government advertising programs that we have been witnessing in the last few months, the increased tempo and desperation of these advertising campaigns only show the public that this government is in more trouble. I tell you that all you have to do is go out and knock on a few doors. I do not know how many doors people opposite are knocking on, but I can tell you that there is a strong dislike of actually the Conservative's previous strongest asset, and we have mentioned many, many times that they have run the past campaigns on the Leader, that in fact the party has disappeared. In fact, today it is the Leader who is the anchor on the group opposite. Perhaps one of our worst nightmares at this point is that they replace the Leader, but with the current Leader, I think they have got a fairly big anchor on this boat. No amount of advertising campaigns and all these promises that they are making, all these are really not having an effect.

I mean, they have two tracks, maybe three tracks here, but certainly one of them is the budget. We were expecting to see the budget get a little better reception than it has. I think that the people opposite, the Conservatives opposite are quite disappointed, I would think, in the kind of lack of enthusiasm shown for this budget by the media. Other than a few good reports the first day, it has been pretty quiet. There has been very little attention given to the budget.

There has been probably more attention given to the budget in Ontario, positive for the Conservatives in Ontario, I might add, and not the good press. So I think that they are probably a little disappointed in all the efforts they have gone to to craft this budget. And no doubt about it, there has been some pretty clever crafting—pretty crafty, as the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) said—pretty crafty crafting going on here with this budget.

But still, where it falls short is the believability, and that is the problem. Now, I want to tell you that while the people are not talking about the budget, they are talking about some other points, and one of them, of course, is the Leader of the party. I get a lot of that about the Premier not being anywhere near as popular as he used to be. So that certainly is a problem.

* (1720)

But another big area is the issue of the frozen food. That may well be the Achilles' heel of this government. In fact, just to show you some of the mail that I have got in my office just in the last couple of weeks and some of the responses I have had, the fan mail that I have got on this whole issue about the frozen food, I mean, literally pounds of letters and phone calls, I can tell you that it is universal. Maybe one or two letters have come in in favour of the Urban Shared Services plan to handle the frozen food.

This is a very, very unpopular move, and I think that the members opposite, if they do not know it now, they sure are going to find out. They are going to find out on Tuesday, and we will be hearing a lot of them exclaiming on Wednesday morning and to our horror, to our collective horror, we found that we walked into a huge issue that there is no way of getting out of. There is really no easy way out for them. Even if they had another two or three years left in their mandate, I do not think they could get themselves out of the frozen food issue. So they have really buried themselves in on this one.

Now, another issue the people are interested in talking about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the whole question about how long these Conservatives have been around. Now, I know that some of us have been around here quite a

long time, too, so I do not want to cast any aspersions here, but, you know, we are getting—I say the collective we, to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)—a little long in the tooth. We have been here for a lot of years. The government has been here for 11 long years. [interjection]

In opposition, I can tell you, to the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that being in opposition—and he will get to know it—is actually invigorating. It brings back one's youth being in opposition, and I think that the members on this side of the House are actually getting younger. We are getting more invigorated the longer we have been over here, and what we see—and, you know, our eyesight is still pretty good, but they do look pretty tired over there.

Now, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) talks about the Interlake Spectator calling them tired, rheumy-eyed old men. I thought she said tired, grumpy old men. I detect that there may be some element of that over there, too, but clearly—and governments do go through stages. I mean, people understand that. They went in as a fresh new group, and they have to try to bring in some new blood. They have done that with the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). They have done that recently with her, and they have done that with the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou). We have gone through so many MLAs for Portage la Prairie, it is almost like an annual election out there. But the point is we have been through this scenario before. We have been in government, and at a certain point, no matter how you rearrange the chairs, no matter how many new people you bring on board, there comes a point where people think it is time for a change.

You know, we refer to the Bermuda Triangle over there, the three Health ministers who sit in a little triangle and advise each other. I mean, it is just the same people recycled back and forth, the same three or four people. They wheel one in. They come up there, and they are like a target, you know. They get stuff thrown at them for a year or two, and their popularity starts to plummet. Then the trap door gets pulled, whom, down they go, and then a new one comes in. Right? Then they go and recycle that

one and they rehabilitate, too. They have some sort of rehabilitation process over there. I am not exactly sure how it works, but they do rehabilitate them a little bit.

But, you know, that can only last so long, and that is a big issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a big, big issue out there, that people think they have been around too long and people think that it is time for a change.

But, other than that, they are trying to do some things right, but it is just a little too late, and, you know, they created this problem. I mean, all the problems that we are talking about now, that we are discussing now, these people created. They were not there before. The nurses that they got rid of, they got rid of over a thousand nurses, and now they have a problem, and they say, oh, my goodness, there is a problem here. Where are the nurses? You fire them, and then you say, well, where did they go? Well, I will tell you where they went; you fired them. That is where they went, and now you have a problem on your hands, and now you are trying to solve that problem.

Now let us deal with the whole issue of the Stabilization Fund and their ability to basically operate this sort of hocus-pocus finance system that they have operated for a number of years now.

Back in 1989, they set up the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which we supported, which the government has in Saskatchewan. What they did was they were smart enough to figure out that because of revenues left to them by the Pawley government that they were going to be left with a \$58-million surplus. I thought, well, we want to keep the NDP down for as long as possible and showing a surplus might bring some people back to them, so we cannot do that. We have to kind of sell this argument that in six and one-half years they added \$2 billion to the debt, not thinking that perhaps other parties would be doing the same thing right across the country, of all stripes, for a number of years. But they would not allow us to be given that little bit of credit for having taken the responsibility of dealing with the tax changes at the time and trying to get the province in order.

We were producing the first budgetary surplus in quite a number of years, in fact, probably the first one since the Schreyer years. There may have been one during the Lyon years, I am not sure, but I do not think so. So what they did was created the Stabilization Fund, and they put the money in there. They immediately created a deficit that year by, I believe, \$142-million deficit that year. They tagged us as leaving them with a deficit, when in fact we left them with a surplus. We had to get the Provincial Auditor involved to prove our case and to prove that we left the province with a surplus that one year.

Now we have to recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not claiming that we turned the financial situation around in that one year. We are simply saying that we balanced the budget that year. We admit that we added to the debt each of those years, but what did these paragons of economic virtue do and fiscal responsibility do once they were elected? They proceeded to amass another \$2 billion in debt, all the while talking about how the debt and the debt load of half a billion dollars is a millstone around the necks of our children.

Well, of course, it is a millstone around the necks of our children. It is, we have to admit that. This irresponsible group added \$2 billion while criticizing us for doing the same thing, but we have to take the collective responsibility to say that we both created this problem, and now we have to solve the problem. Let us look at the federal government for a moment. The federal government has an accumulated debt of around \$600 billion, I believe. Now that is only sustainable if the economy keeps growing just like the provincial debts are.

* (1730)

So it is logical that when you have good years in the economy, you take steps to pay down your debt. That was a lesson that was lost on governments in the '80s. It was lost on David Peterson's government in Ontario, and it was lost on Devine's government in Saskatchewan. It was lost on the NDP governments as well. There was just kind of a collective amnesia when it came to consideration of the debt.

So now we have this very high federal debt, and we have to do something about it. As long as the economy keeps expanding, we can put off the problems, but one of these days we are going to have a downturn in the economy. The economy has been expanding now since, what, 1992. The longest peacetime, or the longest time period, I think, in this century of expansion. It cannot last. I can tell you that in Japan in the '80s, they had a long period of expansion. It just would not plateau. It kept going up and up, year after year after year, against all the economic forecasting, against all the intellectual assessments of it. It kept defying those assessments.

Then what has happened? Eventually it went up for 10 years, and now it is gone down for 10 years. Generally the depression is about equal to the length of the good times, right? So if it is a three year good times, it is a three-year recession, and that is our problem. We are going into now, what, eight years. We may be looking at, if you follow Conradius' [phonetic] curve and the other economic theories, we may be headed for a fairly substantial downturn prolonged over a number of years, and that deficit will be catastrophic or could be catastrophic under those circumstances. We could be into a major worldwide depression. It is on that basis that we have had to come to grips with the debts and try to start paying it down. As a result, this government, if it were following that scenario, would in fact be paying down the debts in good times and spending money when we have a downturn.

Now I want to ask the members opposite, where was the downturn this year? The Fiscal Stabilization Fund when it was set up and the balanced budget legislation required 5 percent of expenditures to be put into the fund, just a couple of years later, this government is throwing out the rule book, is ignoring its own rules. The money in the fund is supposed to be at a level of, I believe, \$299 million; that would be about 5 percent, I believe. What they have done is they have just blown their whole plan apart. All this sanctimonious talk in 1995 about how we have to set up a balanced budget legislation, we have to balance the budget, put money in the Stabilization Fund, 5 percent, we have to keep it in the fund for emergencies, downturns in the economy—where is the

downturn in the economy? Where is the big emergency?

I will tell you where the emergency is. It is the electoral emergency, the election. That is what it is. Right? It is the Leader who is sinking them, is taking them down. He is going down with the ship. I can imagine the trauma they went through, because they had to throw out the whole plan. They had to collapse their whole plan. They had to sink the balanced budget legislation. They had to sink the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, all to change course and deal with this emergency, and the emergency is the election. That is what the emergency is all about, and they think that somehow people are going to accept this.

Well, as I said before, this budget might be believable but not with these people presenting it. Now, the references have been made to the—

An Honourable Member: He likes the numbers.

Mr. Maloway: Well, they have to make this process believable. They have to find the money for the budget and for the election. In order to do that, what they have done is they have simply taken the money the federal government made available, \$131 million in one-time federal money—they have taken that money that was designed, by the way, for three years of expenditures to be brought down, paid out in orderly fashion over a three-year period. They simply saved it and are going to blow it all out in one year in a desperate attempt to win re-election. Then they attacked their sacred cow, the Stabilization Fund, and they milked that. Not only that—

An Honourable Member: Remember that 5 percent target?

Mr. Maloway: That is right. The 5 percent target. But what is even worse is they have taken the telephone system—back to the telephone system again. You know, there is a limited amount of peas that they shuffle around the board here, right? So this makes it kind of relatively simple and easy to follow, right? Remember the telephone system? Will not sell

it before the election; after the election, sold it, took the money. Did what with the money?

An Honourable Member: Flushed it through the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, flushed it through the Stabilization Fund. Put it under that little pea shell, shook it around a little bit there and then flushed it out into general revenue. Boom, now it is coming out into Tory pre-election, feel-good advertising campaigns. That is what your telephone system has bought you, advertising for the Tories. You know, that is where your money—

Dealing directly with some of the issues with the budget, I mean, they are spending. Now, they say they are spending 10 percent. They are going to advertise a 10 percent increase in health care spending. That is probably going to look good in their advertising. The fact of the matter is that it is a 4 percent increase. You know, I guess we cannot argue with a 4 percent increase either, because that is a fair amount, and the fact that it is being done is important.

These home care facilities have to be built, should have been built already, but we cannot argue with them that it is, you know, I guess, better late than never, but it should have been done. It should have been done four years ago. It is, well, the political situation they find themselves in that has made them do it at this point. So they are doing the right thing, but it has taken them a long time to do it.

Reducing personal income tax 3 points, is that believable either? I mean, I know that in Ontario the Conservatives there are going with a huge tax reduction. Certainly a 3 percent income tax cut over the next couple of years is going to be welcomed by people in this province. In fact, many people think that there should be greater tax cuts in personal income tax.

Perhaps people would even like a sales tax cut. I can tell you that since this government came in power, it broadened the sales tax. It brought in a lot more money because it has broadened the sales tax, once again making a lie of its argument that it did not increase any taxes.

They promised to eliminate the health and education tax, right? Well, we are still waiting. That was from 1986, I think, they promised. So that was five elections ago and they are still talking about that. Last week the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) talked about turning it over to the tax commission. So now anything that comes up in the campaign about taxes, they will simply refer it to this fair tax commission for discussion. Yes, so they will be referring property tax and sales tax reductions and other kinds of tax reductions, holding that carrot out there, that possibility that if you vote Conservative you are going to get some further tax reductions.

We have to get down to the believability of the budget. We do not know at this point whether it is sustainable or not. Only time will tell whether it is sustainable. Only the economy will tell whether it is sustainable.

* (1740)

So, if things develop and work like they have in the past with this government, here is what will happen when the election is over. When the election is over on June 15—

An Honourable Member: If they win.

Mr. Maloway: If they win. If they win, health care projects will be shelved quietly. The opening day of the Pan American Games, they will have a little press release saying, we regret to advise—[interjection] Yes, this is the doomsday, nightmare scenario if the Tories are re-elected. Their little press release will go out saying, sorry, but we are going to fill the holes in, right? Sorry, we have dug some holes here to build personal care homes; well, we are going to fill them in and start over next time because there is not enough money. And those tax cuts that we promised you, the 3 percent personal income tax phased in over two years, sorry, but it is unsustainable. We cannot afford it. It is the federal government's fault. Kevin made us do it. They will blame it on the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he is still around, and then we are in for another four years of this little shell game with their Fiscal Stabilization Fund, moving the peas around until—and we want to continue a little bit with the doomsday scenario before my time is up.

But what is next, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Ah ha, Hydro. The formula is there. It is not hard to figure out, and then we start the whole process over again. They will decide that Hydro is now being opened up to competition, and we have to follow the globalized free market. We are going to open up Hydro, and then they will sell it once again to their friends. Big Bob will be buying shares, buying it up with Arni and all the rest of the Tories of the day, and the process begins again.

I do not want to be standing here in 2003 giving the same speech, so it is incumbent on us, on this side of the House, to make sure that we get our message out, that we get our message out clearly that this government has to go. There are some very positive things in this budget, but you can only trust an NDP government to make good on the promises in this budget. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the recognition. I would just like to very briefly put a few words on record regarding the budget and the responsible manner in which our Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) has put together a package that will indicate not only next year's requirement, but will take us into the next decade and the next millennium. I think that is, after all, the most important part of governing, to ensure that the future is well secured. I think that this budget we have before us certainly, clearly gives us the pathway and the direction that we want to proceed in during the next decade.

The first 10 years into the year 2000 I think is going to be extremely important, because there is going to be some major, major redevelopment, and how we deal financially within this province will clearly indicate whether we will be a leader or a follower in the sense of world trade. I think that is clearly spelled out in our initiatives laid out in this budget. That is clearly part of the initiatives that were laid out in the throne speech, and this budget simply follows through with that process. I congratulate our new Minister of Finance for clearly demonstrating a need to recognize the fiscal responsibility.

When I talk about fiscal responsibility, I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is the fifth time, the fifth time in a row—and I think this is somewhat of a record for this province—the fifth time in a row that we have had a balanced budget or surplus budget.

I think that the honourable members opposite need to pay heed to what we have accomplished here and need to pay attention to what this actually means from a financial perspective. If you balance a budget and if you start paying off debt instead of continuing, as British Columbia has done, to borrow and borrow and borrow, and as Ontario did under the previous Rae administration—and I know that the honourable member who just spoke called Mr. Bob Rae, Premier Rae, and I think we only need to look at that dismal record and how they almost sank the economy. The NDP almost sank the economy in Ontario by the huge amounts of money that they had to borrow. They were going to demonstrate something to the world, that you actually could borrow your way out of debt. I have not heard or read an economist's report yet that demonstrated that you could actually borrow yourself out of debt, but you look at the record of the NDP in this province, under the Pawley administration and even under the Schreyer administration.

I will never forget when Mr. Schreyer was first elected. Revenues were climbing and they had a lot of money coming into the province, and these guys really knew how to spend. I remember well when I was first elected and took on a ministry. The deputy minister of the day then, who is no longer with the civil service, told me, he said be careful that you do not fall into the trap that the NDP did. He said they spent. When the revenues ran high, they spent more than they had even at that time, and he said then when the revenues started declining, they had paid no attention as to who would shingle the roof on the buildings that they had built. There were no provisions. There was no savings account anywhere. They just kept borrowing and borrowing and borrowing as if the increased revenues would never end. Well, they did end. That is when the increased borrowings really started, and Mr. Pawley and his group, including the now Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), who was then a minister of the Crown, kept on that path till 1988.

I am somewhat amazed. I think members of this Legislature should be a bit appalled as to what we have been hearing because they have been talking about honesty on their side, and they have been talking about surplus budgets in 1988 on their side, and they have been talking about a \$50 million, \$60 million surplus budget. Well, let us look at the Manitoba Budget Address of 1988. Let us look at it. Let us look at the NDP Budget Address of 1988, and you look on page 30 of the budget document of 1988. Look at page 30 and look, it says, Net Budgetary Requirements, and I will read: the fiscal plan. This is the NDP fiscal plan of 1988. The people of this province were appalled at this, not only the people of this province, but one of their own members was appalled because they tried to portray their budget as a surplus budget when in fact they were borrowing \$334 million in that budget—[interjection]

No, that is not true, that is not a correct statement. The budget says that their budgetary expenditures would be \$4.557 billion, and that their net revenues that year would be \$4.223 billion. That leaves a net deficit in my book. I am not an economist. I use simple agricultural mathematics, but when I subtract one number from the other here, I get a net deficit of \$334 million.

Do you know what they did? In order to fudge the numbers, all capital was removed from the budgetary requirements, all capital. Do you remember when the Auditor used to caution about how the NDP used to do their numbers, how they used to fudge the numbers? They talk about honesty, boy, do they talk about honesty, but what have they demonstrated in this document here? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$268 million of capital spending was removed, and that still did not leave them a surplus. That still did not leave them a surplus. That still left them with a \$69-million deficit even after removing all the capital requirements. Then, when you go to the requirements, the total fiscal requirements, you will note that they actually borrowed that year \$1.3 billion for their total borrowing requirements. [interjection] See? Now we are getting the honest answers. Of course, we borrowed \$1.3 billion; we are refinancing.

* (1750)

So here we go, a \$334-million deficit, and you remove the capital requirement because you amortize that, or at least they assumed, and then you refinance \$1.3 billion. Then you add the interest cost to that—oh, by the way, they were suggesting that out of the \$66-million requirement, 7.3 percent would be interest requirements which they said would be 31 percent lower as a share of revenue, which was 11.4 in 1981-82, during the then Conservative administration.

Well, that just demonstrates one thing very clearly to me, that there was a large debt incurred in the meantime which required them to refinance \$1.3 billion. I think that is rather simple economics. Had they not borrowed—

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am wondering if the member has put some information on the record that may be sort of a little out of perspective. I just draw to his attention that \$2.3 billion is required this year for your refinancing, \$2.356 billion to be exact, so I am not quite sure what his point is. If he is trying to say that their deficit this year is \$2.356 billion, let him make that case. It will be an interesting point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, members opposite continue to forget very conveniently in their conversations and their speeches that all the money they borrowed is still being financed by the province. Each year this government still has to find from taxpayers' money, the cash to pay the interest, and they shamelessly deny that fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Emerson, to continue.

Mr. Penner: I am glad that the honourable members opposite recognize the folly of their actions, because they are absolutely correct. We are forced, simply by their actions or by their inactions, to keep on refinancing some of the debt that they foisted upon the people of this province, and that is why we are in this situation we are in. That is why we are still paying better than \$500 million in interest every year, because the Pawley group drew a huge amount of debt down on the heads of Manitobans.

However, there is a bright light, because since we have drawn down the debt substantially and since we have refinanced, as they said, from the huge interest costs that they incurred, refinanced, we are now saving annually an amount of \$116 million. Every year, we are saving \$116 million because of fiscal responsibility, Sir, and I would suggest to you that the \$116 million now contributes substantially to the amount of money we can spend on health care, hiring more nurses, building more facilities in health care, providing more personal care beds and ensuring that the positions will be there to care for the people of this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$116 million in interest saving goes a long way.

I would also suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if you look at the so-called one-time expenditure that was raised here, a one-time contribution that we are now getting from the federal government, the \$131 million, we are not going to allow that to sit there and just waste away. We are going to spend it. Absolutely, we are going to spend it to provide the needs of the people. Now, if you take the 116 and you add the 131, you have got what? Around \$250 million, right? When you look at what we spent last year over and above what we had budgeted and the amount we are budgeting this year, we are dead on.

They have asked: Where does the money come from? It is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being responsible, budgeting responsibly and ensuring that our people have jobs, that they have health care, that they have education, and that those that cannot help themselves are cared for. That is what comes from fiscal responsibility.

Let us look at agriculture. Agriculture is, of course, as you know, something that is near and

dear to my heart, but listen to this. During the 1970s the NDP devised a strategy to ensure that agriculture would be taken care of forever. What did they do? I think I have got three or four minutes left. What did they do? They embarked upon a program. I think it was partially land banking it was called. They embarked upon a program where those farmers that could not meet their own needs, they would buy them out and make them tenants. Remember the program? That was their answer to an ongoing agricultural economy. Well, it reminded me somewhat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the U.S.S.R., whereby all the land was taken away from the people and then they were told to go back to the land and farm it. That is what these guys were up to.

What did we do when we came to government? We said we like our agriculture; we want our farmers to stay on the land. We reduced the taxes. We ensured that there was proper financing. We developed programs such as GRIP and NISA that have kept the farmers on the land and encouraged expansion, value-added production, and processing.

Look at what we have got now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are now one of the largest exporters of agricultural goods, not the raw product anymore. Our largest industry in this province is agricultural processing and the export of the processed goods in this province, totally foreign to the socialists in this room, totally foreign. The NDP did not know what that meant. They had no idea how to encourage farmers to invest beyond the farm gate. No, they would take the land away. They would buy them out, put them on the land as tenants, and make sure that they worked for government all their lives.

What did they do to their own labour, their own labour people? They put a tax on every man's head that went out to work. What was that tax called? It was the payroll tax. That is how they again made sure that those that worked would be penalized for working to ensure that the debt that they incurred could be serviced by paying the interest to the banks. They were the biggest supporter of the banking industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have ever seen any government be. And here they are being self-righteous, looking at this budget. I believe the

Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), if I can find it, the Leader of the Opposition says that the darkest days of the health care crisis, the Tories did not use the rainy day fund.

Well, now we use our surplus funds to meet the needs of the health care system, and they said: do not take it out of the rainy day fund. Before they said: spend it. Now they say: do not spend it. But we did not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, take it out of the rainy day fund to fund health care. It was a once in a lifetime contribution by the federal government and a \$116-million saving in interest cost that allowed us to do it. It had very little to do with the rainy day fund, but they do not understand that. They do not even understand that they need a bank account in order to be able to write a cheque. They think they can just go out and borrow the money and keep on borrowing and keep on borrowing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of other comments that I would like to put on the record. I think when you look at the Manitoba Budget Address of 1998 and compare it to ours today, to the 1999 one, you can clearly identify that the 1988 budget that the NDP wrote where they claim to have a \$59-million or a \$60-million surplus clearly indicates that it was a \$334-million net loss to the people of this province, and I say to you that is appalling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Emerson will have 22 minutes remaining.

The hour now being six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow (Friday) at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 6, 1999

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