



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNESSE, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 1, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to the authorities and practices of the House, I now report that I have examined the petition and find that the petitioners have not complied with the set authorities and practices in the following respects.

According to our Rule 81.(8): "No petition shall be received if it prays for expenditure, grant or charge on the public revenue, whether payable out of the Consolidated Fund or out of moneys to be provided by the Assembly."

Therefore, I regret to advise the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that her petition is out of order and cannot be received.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to table the Annual Report 1991-1992 for the Canada-Manitoba Partnership Agreement on Municipal Water Infrastructure for Rural Economic Diversification (PAMWI).

I would like to table the Annual Report 1991-92 for the Manitoba Water Services Board.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table, firstly, Volume 3, Public Accounts 1991-92, Summary Financial Statements and, secondly, the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Report for the nine months ended December 31, 1992, and the Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1992.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the government, at this time, would like to waive the two-day notice of motion, with the permission of the House, and introduce four bills at this time.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I understand the government House leader is asking for leave. I think we already have a significant amount of business.

We would like to know when the second reading committee hearings will be held on the Sunday shopping bill. After the government has decided when they are going to do that, we might get down to the rest of the business—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there leave to allow the honourable government House leader to introduce said bills?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I would request leave of the House to introduce Bill 14, The Personal Property Security Act and Consequential Amendments, for first reading.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Attorney General have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

* (1335)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): May I have leave to introduce a bill for first reading?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to revert to Introduction of Bills? Leave? [agreed]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 210—The Plain Language Act

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that Bill 210, The Plain Language Act; Loi sur la langue courante, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, Bill 210, The Plain Language Act, would see all consumer contracts and all government statutes, regulations

and publications written in plain language. This legislation arises out of the growing concern that many contracts, laws and regulations are often unreadable, packed with legalese and written in language that is hard to understand.

The absence of plain language, Mr. Speaker, contributes to a fear of the system and deters many from pursuing their rights. This bill would make laws and legal documents understandable. It will help ensure people can comply with their legal obligations and obtain the benefits to which they are entitled. It will help Manitobans to clearly understand the full intention of government actions without the help of a dozen lawyers, and finally, it will help ensure fairness and equal access to the law for all of our citizens.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon forty Grade 9 students from the Chief Peguis Junior High school. They are under the direction of Mr. Barmeier. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Budget

Child Anti-Poverty Programs

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have raised the issue of child poverty and its alarming rate of increase in the province of Manitoba with the government before. In fact, on December 13, 1991, the Premier, in answer to a question we raised in the Chamber, said: We will work co-operatively with all levels of government to work on any programs, whether they be education, whether they be social programs, whether they be health care programs, any programs designed to eradicate poverty with respect to children of our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a series of budget decisions from this Premier's (Mr. Filmon) government dealing with all those three areas affecting the poor in Manitoba. There have been reductions in the welfare payments for families with

children of over \$200 a month for a family with three children. There have been reductions in the funding to the public education system, inconsistent with the comments made by the Premier for eradicating poverty.

Further, Mr. Speaker, there was a reduction in the social welfare benefits and health benefits last week of some \$3 million out of a \$20-million fund that will affect again children living in poverty, particularly those with teeth that need care that will not get it with the cutbacks of this provincial government.

I would like to know how these budget decisions that have been announced by this Premier's government will eradicate poverty for children in our province.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, over the last three years, we have announced a number of initiatives that have enhanced the social allowance system in Manitoba. We have annually increased the social allowance rates; we have created a new program called Income Assistance for the Disabled; we have introduced the Supplementary Benefit; exempt to children's trust funds; we have given assistance for school supplies; we have passed on the goods and services tax. There are many, many other areas.

We did make an announcement last week that we felt we had to make some adjustments to the benefits for social allowance recipients. We still have left these benefits in place that are comparable to what other provinces have. The adjustments are necessary because of the tremendous increase in the Social Allowances line, some 65 percent over the last three years.

Program Reduction Criteria

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to again ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), whose comments were that we will do these three things, education, health care and social programs, to help eradicate child poverty, everything he has done in the last two months in terms of the budget decisions have been kicking the poorest in the teeth, have been kicking the poorest children in the teeth and those are the Tory priorities in this province.

I would like to ask the Premier how he, in his tough budget decisions, can square the choices that his government is making. On the one hand they are increasing their revenues by tens of millions of

dollars with the undebated expansion of video lottery terminals in the city of Winnipeg. On the other hand they are cutting back on social benefits for food for children living in families on municipal assistance.

How does the Premier square the value system that comes into play in terms of making those kinds of budget decisions on the people of Manitoba?

* (1340)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the member referenced the fact that governments have to make choices. Governments across this land are making choices. Every government in this country is making those tough choices at this time.

The member is making some reference to Bill 70 which was enabling legislation that was brought about through the recommendations of the SARC committee. This government consulted with members from the City of Winnipeg, from the rural municipalities, from the urban municipalities, who recommended that we bring in legislation to provide equity across the system so that the provincial government is responsible for paying the same amount on social allowances in all jurisdictions. We did allow jurisdictions to exceed that amount if they so wished.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely indefensible, indefensible to have the children in poverty in this province in terms of the Province of Manitoba's action, be the ones who suffer the most from the government cutbacks from the Tories opposite.

Budget Program Reduction Criteria

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to ask the Premier, in terms of his commitment in this Chamber a year ago in eradicating poverty, how he can defend having millions of dollars going in grants in lieu of taxes for training to places like Keystone Ford, \$10,000; Kingswood Golf and Country Club, \$9,000; Linnett Graphics, \$7,000; Wardrop Engineering, \$10,000; lots of grants, Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars in grants going to corporations. At the same time, they are cutting the benefits to children living in poverty. How does he defend this in the House?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) has

indicated, there have not been cuts throughout the years that we have been in government, and we have been in government for almost five years. During that period of time, the Department of Family Services, and particularly those lines that pertain to Child and Family Services, daycare, to foster parents and so on, have been receiving over that period on an annualized basis increases that have averaged in the range of 9 percent, over that period of time of five years.

So we have not been reducing those areas, that is No. 1. Number 2, Mr. Speaker, the grants that he talks about are for training people for jobs. That is a very key priority. That is absolutely for training. Not a nickel can flow without that money going to pay for training. So when he talks about it, he is absolutely misleading the public. [interjection] Yes, absolutely. This is, of course, the problem that you have with New Democrats, is that they are dishonest when they talk about these things. They will not tell people the truth—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, this is our first day back after the recess, and I would have thought that perhaps the Premier of all people might have taken the time when we were in recess to assess the way we behave in this House, and in particular not talk about dishonesty. I mean, coming from this government, its actions, it is horrid for members of the opposition to take comments like that, and I would like to ask you to have him withdraw that comment unequivocally.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member does not have a point of order. The honourable Premier did not refer to any specific member.

The honourable First Minister, to finish his response.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, it is that lack of honesty that, of course, has left the New Democrats in the position they are, with no credibility. Every nickel of payroll tax deduction is based on the dollars that are spent on training of their employees for jobs and that is exactly what we need in this province, is to have well-trained, capable employees for the jobs that are there in our society.

The New Democrats speak out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand they say, spend more money on training; they say, encourage the private sector to spend more money on training, and when it happens they criticize it. Mr. Speaker, they cannot have it both ways and the public knows why they have a lack of credibility in this province, and that is why they are where they are.

* (1345)

Throne Speech Education System

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the public knows that there is total neglect of children in this province by this government. That is what they know, and nowhere has it been exemplified better than by the cuts by the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) of 2 percent, not the 2 percent she announced, but three, four, five, six and higher cuts to divisions across this province. All this, when in November in the throne speech, the government said, my government realizes that education and training are the keys that unlock a world of opportunity and a future of economic growth and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education, what has happened to this world of opportunity and economic growth and prosperity, and will the minister now admit that her government has failed only two months later to live up even to the words that she included in the throne speech?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I reject entirely what the member has said. Let me tell you that this government maintains its commitment to education and its commitment to students, and we are making sure through what we have put forward and have offered to school divisions in terms of options that students and their programs will be protected.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, how can this minister reconcile her callous actions now with her position of December 2, '92, when she said: I am very pleased with what this government has put forward in relation to education in this throne speech, especially when the Antler River School Division states, in the area—

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have a question?

The honourable member for Dauphin, kindly put your question now, please.

Mr. Plohman: I say, the failure at the school levels—we see increased violence and I have to ask this Minister of Education, how can she stand in her place in this House when there are cuts being made right across this province, the many divisions in the province, how can she reconcile the position she took in the throne speech only two months ago?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would remind the member that there is a fiscal issue relating to all Canadians that this province is not immune to the fiscal position and that this province has had to make some very difficult decisions. Those are only the decisions that we are now asking school boards to make, and we expect that they will make them in good faith.

I would also like to remind the member what I heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) say in the Budget Debate of 1988, when he said if you are not willing to make the tough decisions today, you will not have the money to deliver the services tomorrow.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Some things never change. Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin has the floor.

* (1350)

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, she just admitted they are not delivering the services.

I ask, how can this minister stand in her place and defend the economic mismanagement of this Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), total economic chaos which is the result of the cuts in education? How can the minister justify the position in light of this economic minister, this Minister of Finance, who has failed totally in regard to management of the economy in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again, I will remind the member of the fiscal position of this country and this province and to say that this government has made every attempt to make very fair decisions, very fair decisions across government. We recognize the importance of education, and in doing so, we have made recommendations to school divisions so that the integrity of programs and the programming for children will be protected.

School Divisions Budget Reduction Alternatives

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education.

While performing major surgery to our educational system, this government continues to pay lip service to the importance of education as we have seen in this House today. Not only have we seen the minister take a cut at public school funding, but we have seen her come up with unrealistic ideas and suggestions to school boards.

Can this minister enlighten the House today as to what options she has suggested to the school divisions that have to come to grips with these awful cuts?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I did outline several options which were put forward to school divisions. One was an option similar to the option that we in government have put forward to our own employees. We did suggest that school divisions might look at work week reduction. In addition to that, we have asked them to look at administrative costs in the same way that we in government have and to make sure that we protect the interests of children in the classroom and current programs.

Department of Education and Training Administration Budget

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if she will in fact be cutting her own administrative budget 20 percent as she has asked the school divisions to cut?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, that information will come forward with the budget.

Education System Reform Report Tabling Request

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary for the Minister of Education.

Can the minister tell us and is the minister prepared to table a framework to deal with educational reform? The MTS and school trustees are waiting for this. She indicated to us before that in fact the process had been underway, but it was news to most of the educational officials and organizations.

Is she prepared to table that today, or is her reform simply cut and slash?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): The process of educational reform has been very important to us, and it is proceeding, Mr. Speaker, in a very organized way. In that organized way we have had focus groups, we have had discussions with all of the representative groups in education. We have spoken with the teachers, the trustees, business, industry and the MFL. We have made sure that in beginning to design our process of reform we have included all of the partners, including the public.

St. Boniface Hospital Pediatric Bed Closures

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): My question is to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). On February 18, the head of the minister's own hand-picked reform team, Bernard Blais stated, and I quote: All bed closure decisions are made by the deputy minister and the minister.

Now that this minister has completely closed the children's ward at St. Boniface Hospital, which changed from his original announcement that some beds would stay open and some day surgery would remain open, can the minister advise this House when and why he made the decision to completely close the children's ward at St. Boniface Hospital?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I am very pleased to welcome my honourable friend to the important position of critic in the ministry of Health, and I hope that my honourable friend brings to his responsibility on behalf of the New Democratic Party, some of the policy they might bring forward in terms of health reform. Possibly they might want to share with us the progressive initiatives in other provinces that they may or may not be familiar with.

I know that my honourable friend the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) will approach his new responsibility with the kind of enthusiasm that he has shown in the past, and I hope, Sir, that he does not fall victim immediately to what I describe fondly as the Leader's disease, although he has fallen victim to that already, Mr. Speaker.

To qualify, so there is no confusion, not my Leader's disease, the Leader of the Opposition's disease.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne is very clear that answers to questions should be brief and relate directly to the matter raised.

If the minister wants to debate health care policy in this province we are more than willing anytime, anyplace, but he should not waste the time in Question Period and should answer the question raised by our new Health critic.

Mr. Speaker: I would remind the honourable minister, the honourable opposition House leader does have a point of order, and I would ask the honourable minister to deal with the matter that is raised.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Indeed, and I certainly look forward to the New Democrats debating health policy. It will be a refreshing change in the five years I have been here.

Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend asked the question when and why and what was the process around decision making in terms of consolidation of all inpatient services for children in Winnipeg to the Children's Hospital. That decision was made and was announced following recommendations from a number of study groups, including the Urban Hospital Council.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that the latest recommendation which arrived on my desk approximately the end of November indicated that when government was consolidating services the Urban Hospital Council recommended complete consolidation of pediatric bed services to the Children's Hospital.

* (1355)

Mr. Chomlak: My supplementary to the same minister: Will the minister at least consider keeping these beds open for a period of 18 months to two years to allow for a time period to find out whether the consolidation which would result in only one children's hospital being available to 600,000 people?—because last year on at least two occasions, Health Sciences Centre was overcrowded and St. Boniface was alerted as a backup. We will have no more backup, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister, at least in the interim period, allow an 18-month to two-year period to see if a backup is in fact necessary?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I know my honourable friend does not always have all the information before him, and certainly the opportunity to receive full and complete information is not available, but I want to indicate to my honourable friend that one of the pieces of incorrect information that he may have been predicating some of his observation on, the consolidation of inpatient services to Children's, is the fact that this was the plan as envisioned by governments in planning the Children's Hospital since 1975. Now that is a long time to achieve a goal of consolidation of pediatrics into one hospital, but it was the plan in 1975 and will be expedited.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my honourable friend that since the Children's Hospital opened to accept children for inpatient services in approximately 1982, a number of beds have never been opened at Children's Hospital. With the complete confidence of the professionals, Dr. Aggie Bishop as head of pediatrics, we are assured that we can provide the inpatient needs of children in Manitoba at Children's Hospital, utilizing only a portion of the yet unopened beds at Children's Hospital. It is with that integrity that we have approached this decision.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, I just do not listen to focus groups. We have been listening to the patients; we have been listening to the parents and the nurses.

Health Care System Francophone Community Services

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): My final supplementary to the minister: Will the minister at least attend the public forum being sponsored tonight by the Société Franco-Manitobaine and explain why his government is ignoring the community, is ignoring the safety needs of children and is ignoring the Francophone community?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is regretful with the first series of questions my honourable friend has put out that he has not told the exact truth. Now that again is a problem my honourable friend had—[interjection] Well, I hope he tells the truth—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Health indicated that I am not speaking the truth. I object to that, and I am rising on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: For clarification, the honourable member did say he is up on a matter of privilege?

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, I am asking that the minister apologize for indicating that my comments were dishonest.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member does not have a point of order, but I would caution the honourable Minister of Health to pick and choose your words very, very carefully.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I accept your caution. Sir, that is the caution that I am giving to the member for Kildonan, because in his preamble to the last question, he did not have his facts straight. We have not ignored the Francophone community. We have not ignored the concerns of children and families in Manitoba, contrary to the information put on the public record by the member for Kildonan wherein he said that the St. Boniface Hospital will close completely to children. That is a false piece of information. Little wonder that families are concerned when the critic for the NDP is putting falsehoods on the public airwaves.

CN Rail Employee Layoffs

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that CN Rail has announced that it will reduce its workforce by 10,000 people over three years in Canada. Of that, 3,000 jobs will be lost this year, 1993. Manitoba stands to lose 351 of those jobs and possibly another 350 plus more.

My question is for the Minister of Highways and Transportation. Considering the historical significance of railway jobs to the province of Manitoba and to my community of Transcona, what action is this Minister of Transportation taking to protect these jobs for these employees and for their families?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, last year CN announced the potential layoffs of 10,000 positions. Presently, they have 32,000 employees in Canada.

Unfortunately, today, the announcement was made that there would be 3,000 employees laid off this year and 3,500 in the year '94 and 3,500 in the year '95.

I got in touch with the senior people from CN this morning. Just to clarify, based on the news release they had—I was not sure exactly what the impact would be—and regretfully have to confirm the fact that there will be 350 actual layoffs at CN, plus there will be 184 positions affected by a four-day work week. There will be another 62 that will be affected by attrition reduction and cutback on summer hiring. Mr. Speaker, also, they have indicated a further 323 positions that are going to be laid off in western Canada during the course of the year.

What bothers me most is the fact that Manitoba is getting a bigger proportion of the layoffs than the other provinces. Ours is over 7 percent. I have raised it with the officials of CN. Our position has always been that it should be fair and equitable across the provinces if there are going to be reductions. This has not happened.

It is my intention to later today meet with the president of CN as well as the CEO to discuss the fairness aspect of it, that in the future, if there are going to be further reductions taking place, that we get dealt with in a fair way.

* (1400)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for making my point for me.

CN Rail Retraining Programs

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Will the Minister of Labour explain, since two years ago I asked him and his department to intercede in this process of retraining for these employees who are facing layoff and for those who are now finding themselves laid off, what his department, the Department of Labour, is doing to provide skills upgrading for the employees who are laid off and those who are now facing layoff and an uncertain future, Mr. Speaker? What actions is his department taking to provide these—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I indicate to the member for

Transcona that the railways fall within the jurisdiction of Labour Canada.

Having said that, there was a particular concern that the member brought with respect to the trade certificates of those people working at the railroad in that they were not transferable to other areas. At that time we put him together with our director of the Apprenticeship & Training branch and I believe several of the officials from the unions who were involved to develop a plan that could be used to upgrade those skills. I understand there were some complications and difficulties in that particular process.

I indicate very clearly to him, within the budgets and the available resources that I have in our department, we are always prepared to work with those groups to overcome those difficulties, but again one of the major problems of course was it being in federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, these employees are still waiting for this minister to act.

CN Rail Retraining Programs

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): My final supplementary is to the Minister of Education.

Since the Department of Education has anticipated that Manitoba will lose 1,700 railway jobs this decade, what action or plans does this Minister of Education have, or any member of her government for that matter, to retrain the laid-off employees from the railway and to restore some sense of security for their families?

What adjustment strategy does this Minister of Education have, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this serious situation?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I think the members in the House probably are well aware that the severance packages that the unions have negotiated with CN and CP are second to none in this country. My biggest regret is that these jobs are going to be lost because the people, by and large, who will be laid off or terminated—there are tremendous severance packages that they have worked out.

In fact, my understanding is that anybody working eight years or longer will receive over 80 percent of their wages until age 65. They also have severance

packages. My understanding from CN—and I am not defending CN's position. I am just saying that the employees who are affected, by and large, are not the ones who are raising the biggest concern, because the unions have looked after their employees well in that regard.

CN has also assured us that they are trying to look for placement with these people. A lot of the positions that are being lost are basically through attrition. Mr. Speaker, I think CN itself was looking to see whether they can place many of these people aside from what training they can get.

Universities Funding Reduction Impact

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, since this government came to office they have worked steadily to transfer the costs of education off the government and onto the debt loads of students attending our universities and colleges, and the trend continues. They clawed back \$2 million from the universities, a 2 percent cut in the support coming this year. They have increased the fees to international students by more than 75 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education a very simple question. What will be the impact of all of these decisions on students currently in programs at our universities?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, let me start with the failure to flow the anticipated funds, and let me assure the House that was covered by the universities with their surplus. In fact, the universities still retain a surplus therefore there was no effect on students in that regard.

Universities were only required to share what other Manitobans have also had to share when anticipated funds did not come into Manitoba.

In terms of visa students, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that action was taken to bring Manitoba in line with every other province across Canada.

Student Financial Assistance

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Perhaps this minister should do some focus group with students. Can the minister assure this House that we will not be moving to a loans only program in student aid this year?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I can certainly tell the member I

spend a great deal of time with students and making sure that I speak to them and that their interests are represented in the planning of this government. I believe that is evident when we acted on behalf of students and we capped tuition at 5 percent this year.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the question is a serious one. Can students expect the same level of grant support this year as they have received in the past?

Mrs. Vodrey: The issues of student support are serious ones. I have spoken with the honourable member several times in terms of the Canada Student Loan Program because that is the first loan that students are required to take when they need assistance. In addition, the provincial support will be considered in the context of our budget.

Universities Quality of Education

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Students in every survey and in every interview indicate that they are very concerned about the quality of the education that they are receiving in Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Education, who has assured Manitobans that the quality of education in our universities will not suffer under the cuts she has proposed, could she tell the House whether she measures quality in class size, in library service, in lab times and assistance, in counselling and guidance services, in the number of assignments and evaluations, or does she have some definition of quality that includes none of these, perhaps a focus group definition of quality? Will she tell us how she intends to monitor the quality of education in Manitoba's universities?

* (1410)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Again, the quality of education is the most important thing that we are dealing with in terms of students on our K-12 side, students on our post-secondary side, whether they are in our colleges or our universities or our training programs. Therefore, when the announcement was made to the universities, we also made recommendations to the universities so that we could preserve programming for students. We have asked universities, in the same way we have asked ourselves in government, to look at a version of the work-week reduction so that any reductions will not affect students and student programming.

Budget Consultations

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, the minister thinks that reduction in hours of the staff on services is not going to affect students. I have no idea where she gets these ideas from. I want to ask the minister in fact where she does get these ideas from. Did she talk to students, faculty, parents, boards of governors or the UGC? Who advised her that her million-dollar clawback and the reductions to universities next year will not affect the quality of education, and will she table those opinions?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member again. When the decision was made to not flow the funds to universities, it was because there was an understanding that those universities did have surpluses and the shortfall was covered by surpluses with surplus remaining. In addition to that, in this announcement, as I have told the member already, we have asked the universities to examine ways to not affect students and to not affect programming. I would wonder what the member is getting at. Is she asking us to continually increase on the backs of students so that others can continue to get increases while other Manitobans continue to take reductions?

Capital Budgets

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that, in addition to the clawback, in addition to the cuts to next year's budget, she intends to dramatically cut the capital and renovations grants to the universities as well?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I informed the universities when I met with them last week that the capital budget will be announced when the budget is announced in this House.

Social Assistance Child Tax Benefit

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, last year the federal minister of health and welfare met with his provincial counterparts in Charlottetown to discuss the new federal child tax benefit. After a public protest on the steps of the Manitoba Legislature, the Minister of Family Services finally announced that there would be no clawing back of this new benefit to people on social assistance.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House if he agreed in Charlottetown that Manitoba would not claw back the new child tax benefit, especially the new \$500 benefit for families who are working but with children?

Hon. Harold Gillieshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that there was a recognition amongst the social services ministers across this country that we have to look at all of the programs that we have in place across this country. I indicated in a previous answer that we have seen a 65 percent increase in the Social Allowances line over the last three budgets. Other provinces, including Ontario, have seen a greater increase. We have to look at the manner in which government relates to social allowances recipients and make some difficult choices.

I would say to you that over the last numbers of budgets in Manitoba, Family Services has seen consistent increases and that the recipients that this department is responsible for are aware of the many reforms and changes we have made to their benefit.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the minister misses a very simple point, and that is, when the federal government improves a program, is the provincial government going to penalize people and cut it back?

Will the minister assure working parents with children in the daycare system that the new \$500 child benefit will be excluded as income so that children, and not his government, actually do benefit from this initiative and will not once again be penalized by this government's actions.

Mr. Gillieshammer: Mr. Speaker, I can say that if the member wishes to discuss daycare, this is an area of our budget that has doubled over the last five years, and there is a tremendous amount of provincial resources that flows into the daycare system. The daycare system has been well served by the changes that have taken place.

Mr. Martindale: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the minister will not answer the question.

Does he agree with the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who said on December 13, 1991, that his government would work co-operatively with the federal government on any program designed to eradicate poverty with respect to children? If so, will he promise not to penalize children and allow working parents to keep the child tax benefit and not claw it back through decreased child care subsidies?

Mr. Gillieshammer: Mr. Speaker, in fact we have worked co-operatively with the constituents who access this department.

I say to the member that if you want to understand the realities that are out there, I would suggest that you look carefully at what Premier Bob Rae is saying these days about the treatment of social allowance recipients and the structural changes that we are going to have to make in this country because of the tremendous increases in volume. I also would have him reference new-President Bill Clinton and the statements that he has made on this.

I could tell you that the mood across the country, with the ministers of the social allowances department, recognizes that there have to be fundamental changes in the system.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. Chairman's Salary Increase

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are in the process of paying exorbitant increases in their Autopac premiums even though they were misled by the Conservative Party back in 1987 and 1988 that a Conservative government somehow magically would roll back the rates or at least freeze them. Manitobans have had a rude awakening and are now particularly offended by this government's decision to increase the salary of the new chairman from \$20,000 to \$35,000 a year, a 75 percent increase.

Will this government reverse this decision, this unconscionable increase, today?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, we are expecting of the new chairman a considerable increased workload, which he has committed to.

Under the NDP, of course, there was a minister who was the chairman of the board, the very thing that caused the downfall of the NDP management of Crown corporations, the continual political interference.

Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants to reference costs of chairmen in similar positions, I suggest he should look at ICBC. It seems to me that the chairman there receives something three times the rate of what the Manitoba chair does.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, how can this 75 percent increase be justified in light of the massive

cutbacks to schools, to hospitals, to people on welfare, to universities, plus all of the people who are being laid off? How, in all fairness, can this increase be justified?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, at the very time when we are looking to put some very serious changes in the MPIC program—Autopac 2000 is coming forward—the member should look at his colleagues to the west, where they increased Mr. DeVito from not \$10,000, to \$90,000.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister, to finish the response.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, let not the member be too sanctimonious. We are looking for leadership and expertise at the corporation. The retiring chair indicated that the workload was exceeding the amount of time commitment that had been expected. We are expecting an increasing time commitment from the new chair, and we believe we are getting good value for the dollar.

* (1420)

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. Chairman's Salary Increase

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier, does the Premier approve of this unconscionable increase, because I noticed this Order-in-Council is both recommended by the Minister of MPIC and then he signs it twice? He approves of it.

Mr. Speaker, will this Premier now repeal this unacceptable increase that is occurring while others are being asked to take a cut?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat so that the member for Brandon East can understand that the new chair has been asked to increase the time spent in the position to between three and four times what the former chair was spending there. The new chair is a former corporate secretary of a major insurance company so has extensive background, a corporate legal counsel, a corporate secretary.

Under other circumstances in British Columbia, the New Democratic government has increased the salary for their new appointment to chair from \$10,000 to \$90,000 a year with an individual who does not have half the qualifications of this chairman of the board, so let not the hypocrisy of the New

Democrats lead us into misinformation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House prior to recognizing the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray).

During Question Period on December 16, 1992, the House leader for the official opposition party the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) rose on a point of order regarding the uttering by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) of the words "those are racist comments." The words in question were used in reference to the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). I took the matter under advisement.

On November 1, 1990, I ruled in a similar matter that the phrase "potentially racist attitude" was unparliamentary. I noted in that ruling that in our own House the phrases "smacking of racist" and "it is almost a racist assumption" had been voluntarily withdrawn by the member who spoke them. Further, in a very similar situation in January 1987, Speaker Fraser of the House of Commons ruled that a member withdraw the words "racist comments."

I am, therefore, ruling that the honourable member for Thompson did have a point of order, and I am calling on the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to rise and withdraw the unparliamentary language, without qualification.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of co-operation as we start a new year in this House and according to your ruling, I will withdraw those statements.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable Madam minister.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a matter of urgent public importance.

I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), that under Rule 27 the ordinary business of the House be set aside to

discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the crisis in education funding in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the honourable member for Crescentwood will have five minutes to state her case for the urgency of debating this matter today. A spokesperson for the government and the other opposition party will also have five minutes to address the position of their party.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on this matter of urgent public importance to indicate to you that in fact this is the first opportunity that we have to raise the issue on the crisis in education funding.

We heard announcements from the minister last week and the week preceding talking about the severe cuts that are coming to education in this province for this year, and given that this is the first day that we are now resuming sitting in this House, it is very, very important that all members of the Legislature have an opportunity to discuss the issues here.

Mr. Speaker, there is no other opportunity to discuss this matter since we do not have a budget before us and we do not know when that budget will be here. We have had no Estimates scheduled. There are no committees, or there are no other occasions to explore this very serious matter of education funding.

I believe this is a very urgent matter because school boards, as you are aware, require to submit their budgets to the city by March 15, and to municipalities. Therefore they are required to make very significant decisions which will affect their students and the parents in the divisions in which they work. Further, the minister has arbitrarily slashed out a percentage of school division budgets based on the bottom line. This is not true reform.

We definitely have a crisis here in education funding. I think it is very important to each of the members of the Legislature, particularly those in rural Manitoba, because this is not a crisis which is only peculiar to Winnipeg. In fact, it will probably affect some of the rural school divisions more significantly than even some of the school divisions in Winnipeg. It is very important that each member has an opportunity to discuss this crisis in education funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this motion here this afternoon. I am

sure that not only my caucus colleagues and the Liberal opposition who has moved this motion, but also children, parents, students, trustees, superintendents, everyone involved with education across the province has been shocked by the move of the government at the present time, this minister and this government as a whole who have taken the unprecedented step of cutting the funding for public education in this province in an unprecedented way.

We do not have another opportunity in the debate with the bills before us in this House to discuss this issue and raise the urgency that is being felt by people across this province in rural Manitoba as well as in the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon, the kinds of cuts that have been taking place by this government, Mr. Speaker.

We see that the quality of education, contrary to what the minister says, is being impacted on in a dramatic way by the cuts that she has announced. She has entrenched the inequities that have existed throughout the system from division to division by her actions and the government's efforts to introduce a bill later on in the session that will come before this House, entrenched inequities in the system, across the system. She has ensured, contrary to what she said, that there will be massive cutbacks in services to children.

I was attempting, Mr. Speaker, during Question Period to relay the message from the Antler River School Division, a small school division in rural Manitoba, when they said to me, at the school level we are seeing increased violence, problems with alcoholism, an increase in abuse and problems in family and peer relationships. In one school we have had two student suicides in six years—a Grade 6 student and a Grade 8 student—both from the same class.

This is the kind of impact that we are seeing in our schools as a result of the inability of the education system to cope with the problems being thrust upon the system. This government is taking no actions in the area of reform, Mr. Speaker, to reduce those demands on the system. Instead, they are choosing to ignore them, to increase the class size, to cut the number of programs and teachers and let them go their own way, and if they survive, they survive, and if they do not, they do not.

This is a callous attitude toward the public education system. It is an issue of the utmost importance in this province, one that concerns us

deeply in the opposition, and all Manitobans. I believe that they would want us to raise this issue and speak to this issue and debate this issue in the House on an urgent basis here today. I urge all members, the government, to listen to what the opposition has to say, to listen to what people are telling us about their draconian cuts, their deep cuts unprecedented in the public education system, Mr. Speaker.

I ask you to rule in favour of this urgent debate at this time so that we can get on with bringing forward these concerns to the government.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have called for the set-aside of the ordinary business of the House.

Mr. Speaker, certainly their arguments around urgency, even with an attempt with all the bombast associated with their calls, still have not been able to build a case for urgency.

Education funding is an important issue; all of us acknowledge that. But, Mr. Speaker, decisions have been made and rendered by the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), school boards are budgeting, and will be expected to do so, within the realm of those decisions. There is not a crisis. This is reality.

The member just opposite said that it is unprecedented. He should know that a year ago Saskatchewan announced that there would be a 2 percent reduction. That was announced a year ago in support of '93 funding. So the member, when he says it is unprecedented, is wrong. He is wrong in every element of his contribution, so I would say to you, the rules interpreted in any respect would not allow for a debate. Other opportunities include Estimates, coming up, budget, Interim Supply, which all flow once the budget is presented, so there will be plenty of time to debate the issue.

However, Mr. Speaker, the schedule today probably could allow for some debate. We say that because, although there are a certain number of bills before us that we could debate, given that we are coming into a period of time when one day could possibly be directed towards debate on important issues, I would say that the government is prepared to engage in debate.

I want it fully understood that this is not to be precedent setting, that certainly no interpretations of the rules would allow for a debate on this issue,

given the fact that the opposition has failed to establish urgency, but given that this is not to be taken as a precedent case, the government is prepared to debate this important issue.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable members for their advice as to whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) should be debated today. The notice required under our subrule 27.(1) was received.

* (1430)

Pursuant to our Rule 27 and Beauchesne's Citations 389 and 390, there are two conditions required for a matter of urgent importance to proceed. First, the subject matter must be so pressing that the ordinary opportunities for debate will not allow it to be brought on early enough. Second, it must be shown that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention.

In reviewing the Order Paper, I do not see any other opportunities in the near future for debate on this subject matter. However, while I am aware that some members view the matter to be a pressing one, I am not persuaded that the issue is so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not considered today.

I understand that changes to the education funding formula will not be implemented before the start of the upcoming fiscal year, therefore, I am ruling against the motion.

However, despite the procedural shortcomings, which I have pointed out to the House, I note that there appears to be desire of members to debate this matter today. Beauchesne's Citation 387 as well as past rulings of Manitoba Speakers take this into account. I will then put the question to the House.

Shall the debate proceed? [agreed]

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on this issue. It is actually a day of sadness that we must stand in this House and debate a crisis in education, because in fact if this government had been managing the Department of Education since they came into power in 1988 we would not be in this crisis today.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) spoke about the fact that tough decisions had to be made. Well, if the then Minister of Education and the government had in fact started making some

reasonable decisions in 1988 and 1989, we would not be in this difficult situation we are today. This government has promised us education reform. We have yet to see any document, any shred of information, any shred of evidence that would show us that in fact there is a reform process that is underway.

What should have happened in 1988 and '89 is that this government should have decided to go into partnership with the education officials, with the school division trustees, with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, parents, parent councils, universities and decided on what is the strategy of education in this province of Manitoba. Let us look toward a five-year plan. Let us look toward a 10-year plan. They failed to do that in '88 or '89 and so today they are faced with a huge deficit, and their answer to education reform is to cut and slash. That is totally unacceptable to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Since Thursday, all of my colleagues in the caucus have been bombarded by phone calls from people from across Manitoba, teachers, parents, school officials, people who are very, very concerned about what is going to happen to our education system in Manitoba.

We have seen from this government no idea of a framework for education reform. The minister spoke in the fall about how reform was underway, yet when we speak to the very officials whom she supposedly met with, they in fact said it was a nonmeeting, and they were embarrassed for senior bureaucrats because it was obvious that the senior bureaucrats knew nothing about what this education reform was supposed to be.

The minister today has spoken to us about the many options that she has given school boards. Well, Mr. Speaker, the two options that she has talked about are, decrease your administrative budgets by 20 percent. We have some school divisions where they are so small that in fact we have very few staff. There may be two or three staff in that school division. How does one cut that administrative budget 20 percent?

We asked the minister today in the House: Is she prepared to cut her own administrative budget 20 percent? It was very obvious by the rote answers that she was giving us today that in fact she probably is not prepared to do that. How does she expect school divisions to cut their administrative budgets 20 percent?

I will look forward to the minister's comments today on this particular issue. I would like the minister to be able to tell this House and to be able to tell all Manitobans what other options she has for the school divisions to deal with the salary cuts. Some of these cuts are not 2 percent. Some of the school divisions will be faced with a 5.9 percent cut. [interjection]

Now, I hear the minister say, salaries. Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things and one of the difficulties in the education system today is when school divisions are forced to make cuts on salaries or are forced to lay off teachers. What happens, and the principals will tell you this and the superintendents will tell you this, is that seniority does count.

They will tell you, in a school division, it is good to have a mixture of teachers, teachers with years of experience and new teachers, teachers with new ideas, with fresh blood, new ideas brought into the division. What happens when we are forced into layoffs is in fact many of those new teachers are laid off. You are left with experienced teachers only, and you do not get the same quality of education that you might have if you were allowed as a school division to make those best decisions as to having a mix of teachers.

Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about the crisis in education funding, we cannot forget the funding to post-secondary education at the university level. Now this government and this minister have an unusual way of dealing with issues to organizations and agencies, and they did the very same thing with Child and Family Services. They have done the same thing with hospitals.

What they have said is we are going to cut your funding. You make all the decisions. You have to deliver the service, but you cannot do a, b, c and d. So they have taken away their autonomy to make decisions. They have taken away the authority that they have. This minister has said, you cannot cut programs, you cannot lay off university professors, you cannot raise your tuition fees more than 5 percent, but you must grapple with these funding shortfalls, and it is your responsibility to make sure that you have a quality education delivered.

They have said the very same things to school boards and the very same things to school teachers. They have said, you do not have the tools, you do not have the resources. It is like telling a carpenter to build a house, and you have to make sure you

have the essential features in the house, but we are not going to give you any hammer and nails to do the job. It does not work that way. It cannot work that way. This minister and this government should have been in partnership with these universities, with the school divisions, with the school trustees years ago to say, how are we going to deal with education here in Manitoba? Where do we want to be in five years? Where we are now in 1993 is, we have no education reform, we have no strategy, we have no plan. We have an idea in the throne speech about education reform, and now we hear the minister today talk about focus groups and consultation. If, in fact, her government is out there doing that, then it is unbeknownst to all of the individuals who work in the education system.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the government reconsider their position on education funding, that they sit down again with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the school divisions, that they go out and talk to these trustees, that they talk to parents, and that they find out what people want to see in education, because unfortunately the real tragedy of these cuts will not be seen this year. They will not be seen next year or the year after, but the real tragedy of these cuts will actually be realized in five and 10 years when it is far too late.

We are talking about a generation of children here who are not going to see the type of education that we here on this side of the House feel that these children should get, so we are not going to see the worst results this year or the next, but it is going to be down the road.

I would also like to say, in response to the education crisis that we have here in Manitoba, that there are major problems out in rural Manitoba. We have school divisions that are calling in and saying they do not know how they are going to deal with the cuts to funding: Antler River, Pine Creek, a number of school divisions. And what of the members of the Legislative Assembly who represent those areas? What is their response to those school divisions? What suggestions and options do they have for those school divisions?

* (1440)

Twice this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I have heard the word "reality" used, and "reality based," and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) talks about, this is reality. The Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) says they base reality on what

happens in Ontario and Bob Rae. Well, I feel very, very sorry for Manitobans and the education system if, in fact, the reality of this government is based on what happens in Ontario.

We are our own province, and we have to make our own decisions. I would ask that the cabinet and the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) reconsider their shortsightedness in regard to education funding, reconsider the draconian cuts, reconsider the regressiveness of their policies in regard to education and that they look towards other options.

If they feel that dollars are short and that we have to be more efficient, nobody is going to disagree with that, but you have to plan and decide over a period of time as to how you are going to ensure that those reforms do occur.

So I would ask this government to reconsider, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the comments of the members of this House, particularly those who represent rural areas. Thank you.

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

Mr. Plohman: This is an extremely grave situation with regard to public education in this province. We have seen, over the last number of years, a reduction in the commitment to the public education system, and we have seen instead an increasing priority being placed on private, elite schools in this province.

One of the reasons why this government now is short of money for the public education system is because they have been providing increasing amounts to elite schools in this province at the same time that they are decreasing their commitment to the public education system.

It has happened continuously over the last number of years with the elite schools receiving sometimes as much as 10 times the increases of the public education system under the former member for Roblin-Russell when he was Minister of Education and carrying on to this minister at the present time.

It is an insidious attack on the public education system, and it has resulted in many inequities developing throughout the province, particularly in many of the smaller rural school divisions who are not able to offer the same quality of education that they can in some of the larger divisions, because a greater and greater burden is being borne by local taxpayers. So if a school division is poor in terms of

their ability to raise taxes from property, they are not going to be offering the same quality of education, the same variety of courses available and experiences for the students in their area. That is the regrettable part of this whole lack of commitment to the public education system.

I guess we can say we should not be surprised by the government actions here this year, because they have shown us, over the last number of years, that they do not place a high priority on education, regardless of what they said in the throne speech, regardless of what they said in speeches, regardless of what this minister said in speeches and this First Minister, this Premier (Mr. Filmon), because in fact their actions speak louder than words. This year that is extremely evident in everything that has been done so far, Mr. Acting Speaker—smoke and mirrors announcement designed to leave the impression that the cuts were not as deep as they were.

In fact, we have seen many divisions having cuts in the 6 percent range, not 2 percent, as the minister said. Many will suffer even greater reductions because of the fact that they have gone through a collective bargaining process with their staff and have agreed to reasonable settlements very close to inflation, and they will have to pay those as well.

This government seems to have no regard for negotiation or consultation or collective bargaining process that has been in place historically in this province. They want to rule by decree. This Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is known for that. He has done it before with the civil servants. It is just a matter of who he has decided the scapegoats will be for his economic mismanagement and his failure in this province. Who will the next scapegoats be? It was the civil servants, the nurses. Now it is the teachers they determined who are the fat cats in society and shall be singled out for huge discriminatory personal tax increases.

Who are they trying to kid, Mr. Acting Speaker? They say they do not increase personal taxes. Of course, we know they have offloaded the taxes onto the property owners, offloaded their responsibilities and tried to save face on their election promise, but have they kept their promise insofar as the personal income taxes of individuals and groups in society? No, they have not.

Their scapegoat that they identify is never big business. No, they will give tax decreases, tax

breaks to big business, but never will it be to the average working person in this province, and whether it be in the public sector or in the private sector, but particularly in the public sector, where they have singled out what they call fat cats for discriminatory tax increases, huge tax increases by this Minister of Finance and supported in an apologetic way by this Minister of Education.

She is, I think, not carrying out her responsibility as Minister of Education at all. It is the Minister of Finance making the decisions for her. I think that is regrettable, because the public education system in this province needs a minister to stand up and say we cannot do this to the children in Manitoba, we cannot cut back the education quality that they are receiving.

The demands are being increased year by year by society on teachers and students in the classroom. Students are lining up to see their teachers for special help that they require because there are too many of them in classrooms. They cannot meet the needs physically of all the kids in their classrooms. This minister stands back and allows the Minister of Finance to make these kinds of callous deep cuts that bite deep into the quality of education for our children. We have to put our children's future first.

I found it rather ironic that the First Minister would talk about that, and the government, in the throne speech this past year when they talked about the need for priority to be placed on education. In fact, there has been no priority placed on education.

When they said in the throne speech, my government realizes that education and training are the keys that unlock a world of opportunity and future of economic growth and prosperity; when the minister said she is pleased with what was in the throne speech; when the Premier on December 10, 1992, just a few short months ago, said we have been hailed for bringing forward not only a fair and reasonable, but a sensible, way of funding for the public schools in Manitoba; what has happened to this sensible funding model that they talked about?

It was not sensible in the first place. It was inactionable. The school divisions have told us that, and I refer to the Antler River School Division. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) should know if he would meet with his constituents there, Mr. Acting Speaker, exactly what this has done to a small division in southwestern Manitoba. They cannot

offer near the same course choice that the larger school divisions can offer. They are finding that program choice may mean two or three programs offered in the same room at the same time by the same teacher, two or three programs going on at the same time. In order to ensure large enough numbers for courses—they offer them to Grades 11 and 12 students together, chemistry, physics, math—they are only offered every second year.

* (1450)

The minister says it is not affecting the quality of education. The minister said the quality of education will not be sacrificed. She said it again today in Question Period in response to a question that quality of education will not be sacrificed. We will protect programs. That is not true, Mr. Acting Speaker, because they are not doing it, and we see evidence of this right across the province that the children in schools are suffering in terms of the education quality and opportunities because of this government's cut.

Let them talk about Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has over double the declining enrollment rate that Manitoba has. They did not mention that when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) stood up in his statement and said, oh, well, look at Saskatchewan, they have done it, unprecedented. We are talking about Manitoba. We are talking about Manitoba's situation. We are not talking about the unprecedented cuts in Saskatchewan. We are talking about unprecedented cuts in Manitoba. These are the custodians here. These are the decision makers. These are the actions that we are concerned about here in the province of Manitoba.

Sure, Roy Romanow inherited a massive mismanagement similar to what this Minister of Finance is in the middle of in Manitoba at the present time. There is no difference with this look-alike Devine that we have here in Manitoba. He is doing the same thing. He is following in the same path. Even with these drastic cuts that he is putting in place for education, he is still heading down that trail of doom as Devine did in his province. That is why Roy Romanow was faced with the situation, but we cannot juxtapose that situation in Saskatchewan on Manitoba here.

Let us deal with the situation in Manitoba. We do not have those cuts in enrollment that they have had in other provinces. We see this government moving

in a callous way towards the destruction of the public education system. I would assert and my colleagues would assert that the public education system is at risk with this Conservative government. It is clear. The evidence is clear over the last number of years. Many small school divisions have received less and less from the province, while the local taxpayers have tried to hike it up. Now they did not like the message they were getting for that, and they have decided that they are going to now move into the area of local decision making. They are going to tell trustees what to do. They are going to make the decisions for them. Even though they were elected on a platform of education policy and administration in their communities, this big brother government is going to move in and tell them what is good for their communities and what is not. That is unprecedented, Mr. Acting Speaker, in Manitoba, as well as an infringement of local decision making.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is an urgent matter; this is of deep concern. The government must change its position on this funding of education and ensure funding of inflation which their Premier (Mr. Filmon) said they would do; they promised.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this very important issue. My friend, my colleague the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plozman), of course, has just provided us one of his typical speeches. What is the old saying: heap big wind, but no rain; or lots of smoke, no fire?

An Honourable Member: Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Mr. Manness: Lots of fury, but there certainly was not much provided in substance to that particular presentation.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I too was disappointed with the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) in her lead-off presentation on this issue.

I listened very closely to both presentations, and what is obvious is that nothing has really changed. Both carp on and on. They say that reform has been promised by this government in the whole area of education, and they try to paint the picture that nothing substantive is changing within that area.

Let me say what they do not say. What they do not seem to say or acknowledge is that reform from

their viewpoint cannot happen with a lesser amount of money. That says to me that, to a Liberal and to a New Democratic Party member, reform can only happen if there is more money to spend. That seems to be the presentation as I hear coming from the opposition benches.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if that is their view, then obviously there is not going to be a common sharing of the view as to how reform should occur. For 30 years now, governments throughout the land and in the western world, reform always meant more resources being spent, but the reality is today we do not have more resources to spend in support of reform, or even in supporting some of those good areas of public service in the public sense that require the same level of support.

Why not? Well, reform today is happening in many households and many businesses because the reality of the times is pushing reform and that reform is going to have to occur within finite budgets. I say to you that education is no different. It cannot be looked at in isolation. Our Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) understands that. Every member of this Treasury bench, every member of this caucus understands that, and a growing number of Canadians and Manitobans today are understanding that, but not the dinosaurs over across the hall here.

An Honourable Member: Old-think.

Mr. Manness: Old-think. Old small "c" conservative-think. What that means is spend, spend and spend some more. Keep pushing back the wall. Mr. Acting Speaker, I heard a new term, and I am going to label—every time I hear the members opposite speak, I am going to use it on them. We hear, and it is tragic, and I am probably going to be chastised for using it, but today there is tremendous sensitivity around the term "child abuse" and there should be, but do you know what the members across the way are practising? It is fiscal child abuse; in every one of their requests, it is that the government of the day spend more, disregard what is happening with respect to these deficits and this growing accumulated debt. What they are saying to the children of today is, tomorrow we are going to steal the fruits of your labour, and we are going to steal all of the energies you put into earning those fruits.

I say to the members opposite shame, because it is old-think, it is out of step with the realities of today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I hear the dinosaur from Dauphin talking and talking and yipping and yapping, and all of the taunts are not going to be able to change the reality of our bottom line and are not going to be able to help one dollar in dealing with the interest on the \$4 billion that the members across the way accumulated in such a period of time.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what I find interesting is, in our budgets between '90 and '93 we devoted on a yearly basis an additional 5.5-6 percent every year, \$22 million every year, to Education—6 percent a year, more or less, in the last four budgets, year over year over year over year. By the way, the Liberals voted against every one of those budgets and so did the NDP.

How did we do this? Well, this is how we did it. We had some decent success on the provincial debt side. We changed some borrowing around. We had some favourable interest rates. With those savings, where did they go? Did they go into the Department of Natural Resources? No. Did they go into Highways? No. Did they go into the Department of Northern Affairs? No. Did they go into Urban Affairs? No. Where did they go? They went into Health. They went into Education. They went into Family Services, Mr. Acting Speaker. That is where those savings went—\$100 million a year increase into Health, \$20 million a year increase into Education. The member says that is wrong. Well, I guess it must have been, because they voted against it—voted against it.

So the issue today is not that we have not put enough money in, because we have put every dollar in that we could. The issue today is sharing.

Who should escape? Now the member for Dauphin said that teachers should escape. He is saying to Peter Olfert, no, you take it on the chin, and the civil servants, you take it on the chin, but the teachers should escape.

How real is the problem? Well, I look around in the business community today and I know two things. I know that the corporate tax when we inherited government was \$200 million. Today, the business community is contributing in corporate tax around \$100 million. So who is paying the tax? I know also that there are individuals working for private business today who are voluntarily rolling back their wages. Why? Because they want to make a contribution to the bottom line, not like

the—oh, I cannot say this term, Mr. Acting Speaker—not like my honourable friend the member for Dauphin.

Mr. Acting Speaker, had we wished to attack school divisions and had we wished to attack the teaching community, we could have done so in Bill 70, because the powers were there. The powers were built right into the legislation. We chose not to because, in fairness, we said to the education community, particularly the public school system, you have these powers, you are autonomous with respect to your ability to tax and so we chose not to. No, we certainly did have the legislation built into Bill 70, I say to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

* (1500)

Mr. Acting Speaker, we will attack nobody but, in fairness to Mr. Olfert and the Manitoba Government Employees' Union, we will ask everybody to share. As far as we can push our model, we will push it. We will push it into the public school system to the extent that we can, in fairness to everybody who is carrying such a portion of the load.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker—and I only have a minute left—I know what is happening in Saskatchewan and I give them credit. I understand the situation they inherited, and I throw no criticism at the Romanow government for announcing a year ago that they would be reducing support to public schools by 2 percent—no criticism meant. My involvement in reaching the decision and the NDP portrayal that I am the bad guy is OK with me. I have thick skin, I can take it, but I think it is terribly unfair to the Minister of Education, our minister, who in all respects has been reaching out to the education community, who is so sincere in her attempts to have everybody work towards the common good.

So I welcome this debate, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I hope I have an opportunity over the course of many other speeches to lay out for members opposite the reality of the situation today in education and, indeed, in the fiscal standing of the province as a whole.

Thank you.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I would like to start maybe by thanking the Minister of Finance for one thing, and that is encouraging this debate, because I think it is a very important debate.

I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to start by trying to frame this one in a slightly different way.

These are tough times. Nobody denies that. Nobody denies that a government has to make tough choices but, when you make those tough choices, you do it by looking carefully at your resources and preserving those priorities that are of paramount concern to your government if you believe that.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, in throne speech and budget speech over and over and over again, this government has talked about the priority of education. They have used words about quality and accessibility, equity, flexibility, responsiveness. In the budget speeches, this same Minister of Finance has talked about that it is one of the government's primary priorities to preserve high standards of education. Yet they have failed their own test.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I attended, along with other members of the House, a workshop by the technology council, the new flagship of the economic program of this government. What was the discussion there over and over and over again? It was to strengthen education. It was to build a base so that we could be competitive internationally in knowledge-based industries. That is what this government was proposing in those workshops as well as in this House and that was the position that this government had chosen to place education in.

So what are their activities? Since they have come to office, they have worked steadily to transfer the costs of universities onto the debt loads of students. They have allowed tuition fees increases that have totalled more than 80 percent since they came into office. They have reduced the support available through grant programs to students so that students, if they are going to be able to go, have no choice but to assume a higher debt load.

They have held their support for universities to the 2-2.5 percent range despite what the Minister of Finance said in this House. The facts are very clear, Mr. Acting Speaker. As a result, students are picking up more and more and more of the burden, and we all know what that does. It means that fewer students go and only certain types of students can go. Only students who have the financial capability to withstand those tremendous increases can go to university.

That is unfortunate, because we all hurt. We all lose when we fail to look to the future. The Minister of Finance made lots of brave statements about the

future and our children's future. Our children's future is predicated upon a strong and creative educational process in this province, and that is the very thing that they are attacking and have been attacking in post-secondary education for five years. This is not a new thing. This is more. It is a little harder, it is a little deeper, but this has been going on since this government came into office.

Mr. Acting Speaker, they took back at year-end over \$2 million from the universities. Now how does a university make that up in the final quarter of its year? That means a very huge cut in its ability to provide services, in its repair and renovations programs.

In the University of Manitoba there are buildings falling down around the students' heads. There is a basement dropped out of the architecture building there, and rats and mice are coming into the library steadily. This government knows about it, but it has refused to provide the support to do the capital repairs necessary.

Also, this government this year—it will be very interesting to see what they do with capital because the belief is that there will be no capital this year, zero. Where are the universities going to find that \$3 million? Are they going to continue to take it out of the mythical surpluses that this Minister of Finance keeps identifying? Are they going to continue to find it by reducing the fat? There is no fat in these universities anymore. That fat left a long, long time ago.

I would invite the minister or any member of the government to go in, as I have done, and sit down with the students there and talk to them. Sit with the students in the Tache residence as I did the other night. In fact, a great many of those students are from rural Manitoba. They come from the communities that these ministers used to represent and now have chosen to ignore. And what do they say about it? They talk about sitting in lecture halls that they are so crowded into because of the need to cut back on classes, because of the cuts that have taken place, that they are sitting two and three at a desk. They are sitting in the aiseways, they are sitting on the stairways.

They talk about an increase in machine marking of papers because there are no longer the teaching assistants to help out. They talk of complete absence of seminars or any kind of discourse

among students because there simply are not the resources available to do it.

They talk about it taking an increasingly long period of time to get feedback from their professors, feedback that is so desperately needed if they are going to improve, because the professors simply do not have the time to give individualized feedback. They do not have the teaching assistants to do it, and it is all they can do to keep up with teaching a class when class sizes are moving to the 200, 300, 400 level.

It is absolutely disgraceful that a government that puts forward as a major plank in strengthening this province, puts forward education, puts forward knowledge creation, and then not only does not do anything to support it, but in fact undercuts it, in fact plays cheap political games over and over again.

This Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) is more interested in the response to her focus group and public opinion and her political management than she is in the educational management in this province, than she is for the development and support for our universities.

I want to talk about something else that I just found so incredibly appalling in the discussions or in the announcements in the last little while. This government has played the game of hiding behind the Universities Grants Commission for some time, but it came out from behind that cloak when it said, and you will raise the fees for international students 75 percent.

It cast aside any pretence that there was an independent arbiter making these decisions and ordered the universities to do something. Between the 5-percent cap that it is allowing on student fee increases and the 75 percent it is ordering for international students, they will face an 80 percent increase.

I would like you just to stop and consider that for a minute from a couple of perspectives. Major universities in this world work hard to get a mixed student body. They work extremely hard because they know that part of the educational experience takes place in the classroom, and part of it takes place in the discussion groups among students outside of the classroom. Those discussions and those experiences and that learning is enhanced if you have a range of opinions and a mix of experiences, and if you can get an international mix, so much the better.

Harvard University, one of the best universities in the world, works very hard to ensure that in all of its programs there are students from all over the world represented, because it believes that is the way you give a very high-class, a very world-class education.

What are we doing? We are attacking the very people who do that. We are launching an attack on those students who not only do not take jobs away from Manitobans because they cannot work when they come to this country as a condition of their visa, who bring in large sums of money to pay for the fees and their living expenses and everything else, they bring cash into this province, who provide us with linkages back into their home countries and we talk about it, at least we give lip service to the fact that we want to be international exporters and we want to develop strong links and play in the global economy. What are we doing now? We are rejecting 1,400 people who have the ability to do that. This is the most shortsighted, stupid decision I have seen this government make since it came to office, and they have made a lot of them.

* (1510)

I am in a sense sort of at a loss as to how to deal with it, because when you listen to the language that comes out and the statements that are made about how you produce strength within your community—and sometimes this government likes to deal with some more folksy analogies. I mean, if you think back to how the West was settled, one of the first things people did once they got their communities built was build a school to educate for the future, because they knew that it was by giving people an education and giving them skills to be competitive and giving them skills to grow with that we built a stronger community.

This government, instead of prioritizing, instead of saying, look, we have to make some hard choices and here is an area that we are going to protect because it is so important to our future, has chosen to attack it. That has to be an unacceptable decision in this province. We simply cannot allow a government to act in that fashion if we are to remain strong as a province and if we are to grow and become competitive internationally in the way that this government says it wants to be. They ought to read their own throne speeches, their own budget and act in accordance with them instead of spending all their time in their focus groups listening to the opinions of those people and only those people who

they believe will vote for them. I do not believe any Manitoban will support this decision.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Acting Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to enter into this debate on education finance as the opposition has chosen to raise the issue.

Frankly, this is one of those issues that grips government probably more closely than any other. We all have children, we all recognize the value of education and the importance of maintaining that quality education in this province and across the country. Mr. Acting Speaker, to hear the kind of criticism and debate that we are getting from across the way does nothing more than indicate that they are totally bereft of ideas. They have been able to criticize because they think there are dollars that should have been spent in a different way in different areas, but not once have they raised the issue of where those dollars would come from or why there may not be enough dollars available to expand in the way that we would probably want to spend.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have spent a number of years as a trustee in a school division, and if there is one thing that is very near and dear to various communities across this province, all the communities across this province but particularly in the rural areas where we have seen a drop in population, where we have been faced with difficult decisions as have some divisions in the city where they have actually had to contract their number of schools, they have invariably found that in dealing forthrightly and fairly with the problem that faces them that they are able to bring forward a plan that indeed probably strengthens the educational opportunities within their divisions after they have taken a look at their priorities and reorganized their affairs. When one asks the question, what are the options that are available to the school divisions today, what are the opportunities that they can use to strengthen and underpin the quality of education which we believe is an expected standard across this province, it really comes down to the recognition by this government that local authority and that close local input of the trustees is what makes the difference in terms of decision making around educational opportunities within the various divisions. We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the problems that have been associated with educational finance as we see a shrinking revenue base and as we see long-term results of passing on educational costs to property.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the local municipalities for years have talked about the accountability of school divisions. They raised that issue with me a number of times when I was responsible for making these decisions at the local level. They said, how many times do you as a trustee get a call about the education taxes? They asked, how often do you really feel that you have been held accountable for the decisions that you have made? You know, as long as those decisions were being made without regard to where the dollars were going to come from and without regard to the reality of some of the costs that we are being faced with, as trustees, we did not receive a great deal of criticism, but as soon as we were faced with the reality of having to contract some of the services because the students were no longer there, we were faced with some very severe questions and some difficult options.

We did not always have the support of the government in providing options in how we might deal with those situations, because in the minds of the opposition and in the mindset over the last 20 years, Mr. Acting Speaker, the only problem with decision making around educational finance has been whether or not each level of government has been putting forward enough dollars to cover what the expected costs are. We have to make sure, as we deal with the educational program in this province, that we remember that we are protecting the future of our leaders, protecting the futures of our thinkers, our workers, our managers. The young people and the minds in this province are our most important resource, but they have to have a future to look forward to.

When we look at the impacts of continuing to pass on funds beyond our ability to bring in revenue, we know that we cannot continue to add the equivalent of a half a billion dollars worth of debt annually without recognizing what the real cost, just of the interest, will be to those people who are presently in the school system. We are robbing from our children, and we cannot continue to do that.

When we look at the alternatives, we know that we have some very resourceful and very capable administrators out there in the school divisions. We have already seen the reaction from a number of them that they believe they can deal with the funding that has been presented them, that they know within their own organization that they have options. They know that they have the support of this minister and this government when they go forward to decide

what are the best and most viable options within their division.

When they look at the options that are available, Mr. Acting Speaker, it does not mean that this government has given them a template. What it means is that we have given them the choice that they may choose which direction to place their emphasis, which are the most important aspects in their school division that they are prepared to support and make adjustments.

While it varies from division to division, there has been a number of divisions that have indicated that they do have some surplus. I know personally of one school division that has a surplus left from their transportation budget. Mr. Acting Speaker, that goes back to decisions, albeit efficient decisions that they have made, but decisions that they have made to suit their community and properly serve the students of that community.

I think that is the emphasis I want to put on my comments. The relative ability of school divisions may vary somewhat from division to division to respond, but there have been adjustments made in the formula that recognize those nuances between divisions. I have had a number of school divisions that have said to me, it is about time that somebody recognized those differences and included them in the formula, because now, even given the restrictions that we now are being faced with in this province, we have a better ability to react, and we are being recognized for some of the specific situations that arise between school divisions. That indicates there is a willingness and there is an understanding and there is an ability out there on the part of the school division leadership to be able to work with us in dealing with this public funding issue.

* (1520)

Mr. Acting Speaker, it comes down to the simple questions that the public ask from time to time as they look at the school system. Each area has its nuances, as I said, but when we look at some of our rural divisions and we see that 30-passenger buses are empty, virtually empty until they arrive within a mile or two of their destination and they start to pick up some of the rural subdivision students, when we look at situations where we have classroom sizes that have to be offset by the realization that tremendous distances are involved in travel, school

divisions will be wrestling with these demons the same today as they have done before.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the decisions that have been made and the funding proposals that have gone forward are made with an eye to making sure that we have a supportable system in the future, because we cannot look at our children and tell them that they will have to pick up the cost of our excess. We have to make sure they have the underpinning that is required for their educational opportunities. We have accomplished that.

I believe that when this year has finished this government and this Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) will be given considerable credit for the fact that they have been able to, in very tough economic times, establish a funding regime and a support mechanism that means that our children will get the very best education within our ability to raise funds to deal with it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let not the opposition say that this is a situation where you have to fund more, because the opportunities are now reduced, and the taxpayers, who are expected to pick up more, are no longer able to produce those dollars. Thank you.

House Business

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave just to make a House business announcement. It will take 20 seconds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Does the honourable Minister of Finance have leave to make a House announcement? [agreed]

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to formally announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, March 2, 1993, at 7:30 p.m., to consider the 1992 Annual Report of the Manitoba Energy Authority and the 1992 Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

Also, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Thursday, March 4, 1993, at 10 a.m., to consider Volume 3 of Public Accounts '91, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of Public Accounts '92 and the Report of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1992.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to announce that informally I had indicated that the Standing Committee on Economic Development would meet on Thursday, March 4, at 10 a.m., to consider the '92 Annual Report of the Communities Economic

Development Fund. Unfortunately, I have to postpone that meeting, and I will try and arrange a date for next week for CEDF. Thank you.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): May I have leave to make a committee change?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Does the honourable member have leave for committee changes? [agreed]

Mr. Hickes: I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) for Transcona (Mr. Reid) for Tuesday, March 2, 1993, for 7:30 p.m.

I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: Concordia (Mr. Doer) for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for Thursday, March 4, 1993, for 10 a.m.

* * *

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Acting Speaker, I stand in support of this resolution, and I intend in my few minutes that I am allocated to explain why very clearly to this Assembly.

The government of course is wont to use rhetoric in support of whatever action it might take, but the government needs to be reminded from time to time about the commitment it made on many occasions to the people of Manitoba. Earlier today in Question Period my Leader read back into the record the comments of the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) when it came to the government's commitment to education, to health, to services that were going to protect the children of this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, although we all recognize that the government is facing some uncertain financial times, there are many of us and many Manitobans who believe that those circumstances are in the main of their own making, that they are not hapless victims in this circumstance, that they have to take some responsibility—I am not saying all responsibility—they have to take some responsibility for the circumstances we face in this province. They have to take responsibility not only for their own fiscal mismanagement of the affairs of the province of Manitoba, they have to take responsibility for their philosophical approach to

government, to economic development and the delivery of services.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have heard time and time again members of the front bench and the First Minister talk about standing aside, talking about letting the private sector be the engine of growth. We know that they have supported philosophically and practically on many occasions initiatives of the federal Conservative governments, governments who are philosophically the same as this government, whether it is deregulation—I see the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) smiling. Of course, the Minister of Highways and Transportation knows better than most in this Chamber how damaging, how destructive federal transportation policy has been for the province of Manitoba and this country, whether it is deregulation of the airlines, deregulation in the transportation sector, whether it is the abandonment of our national transportation institutions. We have lost thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs.

What is the connection? What is the connection between the destruction of the industrial base of our country and the problems the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and his government and that group are having financing education and health care and the social services Manitobans have come to rely on? What is the connection? The connection, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the fact that if Manitobans are not here working, if they are leaving this province, if they are fleeing this province, if our population continues to decline, if Manitobans are not working, if they are not contributing through the tax system to revenue to the government of Manitoba, the province goes broke.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is the problem that the Minister of Finance and his government have. That is the problem that conservative, right-wing governments have had for the last decade and more in the industrialized world, the simplistic fixation on reducing spending as a means of solving the deficit problem or creating new economic activity.

I have just spent the last two, three months meeting people in Chambers of Commerce, economic development groups, small-business people all over the province. I have been in Brandon and Russell and Dauphin and Gimli and Steinbach and Emerson and Carman and other places—[interjection] Not in Emerson. I am sorry. I meant Carman, not Emerson. I will clarify that—in

Lac du Bonnet as well. I was in Portage la Prairie not more than a couple of weeks ago meeting with representatives of the R.M. and the town. The turnout in Portage la Prairie was thin, Mr. Acting Speaker, but I want to say that the turnout in Lac du Bonnet and the turnout in Carman was exceptional.

What I want to say is that this government is not a hapless victim. It has been for the last five budgets the master of its own destiny. The problem is that no conservative government in the world has ever reduced the deficit by cutting spending as its sole means if that is all it did. It did not work for Maggie Thatcher. It did not work for Ronald Reagan. It did not work for George Bush. It did not work for Brian Mulroney, and it has not worked for Gary Filmon. Gary Filmon inherited a surplus and now has the highest deficit. If the Minister of Finance wants to get up and contend that the Provincial Auditor is lying or misleading the House, this government inherited a surplus. That is what they inherited, a surplus. The Provincial Auditor of the Province of Manitoba will confirm that to any member who doubts that—any member.

* (1530)

An Honourable Member: We chopped \$150 million out of your spending, out of that budget.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Acting Speaker, there is the only thing the Minister of Finance fixates on: We cut another \$150 million.

I have just told you, show me a government where cutting spending alone solved the deficit problem. There is no such thing.

Brian Mulroney's Conservative government in Ottawa came into government promising to control the deficit. They controlled the deficit by cutting spending. I ask you the question, is the deficit in Canada lower today than it was in 1984? Just like in the province of Manitoba, deficits continue to escalate, debt continues to escalate.

I ask you to refer to the Minister of Finance's Third Quarter Report. This province is a billion dollars deeper in debt on general government programs today than it was nine months ago. March 31, 1992, the general debt of the Province of Manitoba was approximately \$5.2 billion. As of December 31, 1992, the provincial direct debt was approximately \$6.1 billion.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this fixation is not working. It is not working in the economy. The more difficult,

the more alarming circumstance around this is the impact it is having on our education system, on our health care system, on our daycare system, on the unemployed, on the people on welfare lines across the province. Those institutions and those groups are feeling the impact of this particular government's policies and its complicity when it comes to federal government policies which are unfortunately in the same vein.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to relate the education cuts to my own constituents. When the previous Minister of Education announced the new formula and the sort of transition grants, I got calls from divisions all across northern Manitoba. The community of Leaf Rapids is perhaps the best example, but I refer the Minister of Northern Affairs to his own constituency, the Antler River School Division, where they noted that they were losing some \$800,000 out of a \$4.5-million budget as a result of this government's new education finance program. What galled them more than anything was the fact that during the same period this government has been in office, private school funding has increased 150 percent.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is not fair. It is not honest and it is not honourable for anybody on that side to suggest that there is not money available to support the public school system. As Brian Mulroney said to Pierre Trudeau in the debate in 1984, you, sir, had a choice. This Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), this Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), this government had a choice, and they chose to support private schools as opposed to the 195,000 students who attend public schools. Mr. Acting Speaker, what is going to be the damage? The damage is to the children of Manitoba, and that is the problem.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): I am pleased to be able to participate in this very important debate.

I listened to the member for Flin Flon's (Mr. Storie) normal diatribe, patterned very closely after the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who spoke earlier in this debate. Mr. Acting Speaker, neither one of them are in the real world. Both of them have had their heads stuck in the sand, I think, for the past five years. They do not understand what is going on around them, and they have not paid any attention to it. They still think that simply throwing money at something is the way to solve the problem. They think that simply putting more money against

an education system is going to solve the education problems of this province, and it is not.

For the edification of both of those members, I would like to point out that things have been changing in the world around them. They may not have noticed, Mr. Acting Speaker, but there has been not just a recession but a global restructuring of economic activity in every country throughout the world. They may not have noticed, but there have been major plant closings and layoffs. They may not have noticed that, but the fact of the matter is, major restructuring has been going on in the world within the private business sector of every economy. Certainly within the free world at least and even within the Eastern Bloc countries, major changes have been occurring.

The fact of the matter is that we have had employee groups come forward and say to their employers, look, we understand that there is global restructuring going on. They have recognized it, and they have said, how can we get involved in this process so we can preserve our jobs? Simply saying, no, we are going to live up to the letter of our collective agreement—they have come forward and said, look, let us participate, let us help you; let us help the business survive so that we can survive, so that we can have those jobs that we want so desperately.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have seen employee groups come forward and do that. It is happening today in the province of Alberta, where the employees of Safeway recognize that Safeway is in a major competitive war with the Superstore, and they have come forward and said, we want to preserve our jobs, so let us participate in this process.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the private household has also gone on that same track. The private household today has to look at how it can restructure itself because of the taxation load that it faces, reduced incomes that it faces. We had during the '70s 14-15 percent growth rates in income. In the '80s that dropped by half to about 7 percent. In the '90s it is down around 2 percent. We have to recognize those days of simply spend, spend, spend, spend, spend are no longer with us and that we have to try and make due with either more innovative ways of spending the money that we have or trying to find other ways around the fact that we are not going to have the kind of level of growth,

the level of incomes that we experienced in the '70s and the '80s.

Unfortunately, the public sector cannot escape the fact that restructuring is required. Restructuring in the public sector has lagged considerably behind what has been going on in the private sector both on a personal basis and on a business basis over the past five years or so. The public sector has to recognize also that restructuring is required if we are going to survive, if we are going to provide the basic services that are required by the people of this province in some reasonable measure.

Even the Leader of the national NDP party has recognized that, Mr. Acting Speaker. Interestingly enough, the members opposite have not yet, but their national Leader at least has now come to recognize that simply ignoring the deficit, ignoring the huge legacy of debt that is being loaded upon the rest of the people in this country, has recognized now that cannot be simply ignored, has recognized now that we have to deal with the deficit and you cannot spend your way out of this particular problem and that artificial stimuli in the economy simply increase the debt. Even the national Leader of the NDP has recognized that. So I am hoping that eventually the members opposite here will also come to their senses and understand what has gone on.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as indicated by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), there has been more money spent on education over the past 10 years, year by year by year, than ever before. Yet, go out and talk to the public and see if they say they have a better standard of education today than they had five years ago or 10 years ago or 15 years ago. Ask them if their kids can spell better. Ask them if they really think they have a better quality of education today, and I suspect that a great many of those people would say no. I certainly get lots of complaints about the level and the quality of education that their children are receiving. That is in spite of all the money that has been thrown against it, in spite of the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent on education in this province.

If throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at it has not solved the problem, then maybe there is something else we need to be doing, not necessarily throwing money at the problem, which is the answer of the members opposite in this House. The fact of the matter is, we have to look at different ways of

doing it, different, more innovative ways of dealing with it. Dealing with those innovative ways within the context of what we have available leads us to the current problem we have today, but we have to deal in fairness. We cannot simply say to one particular sector, you should bear all the brunt of the fact that revenues have declined, that the entire world is restructuring in terms of its economy and so on.

* (1540)

We should not say simply if Education is to go and receive more money, do we cut the grants then to the City of Winnipeg in half? Do we close up our provincial parks system? Do we abandon our highways infrastructure? Do we go and say, lay off 500 or 1,000 public servants? I do not think those are the answers. I think we need to deal with the question of fairness, and that question of fairness is, how do you deal overall government expenditures?

I have sat now through six budget processes for the provincial government since we came into office in 1980. I sit every week in Treasury Board dealing with the spending programs of the government. I have not seen one program that has come across my desk at Treasury Board that does not have redeeming value, that is not of some benefit to somebody somewhere. But the fact of the matter is we do not have the luxury of being able to do that anymore. The fact of the matter is that we have significantly reduced revenues.

We had just an announcement last week from the federal government that says, we have already paid you \$139 million too much, and we want it back—spread over a period of time, I understand, and thank goodness for that. But the fact of the matter is that significant sums are also required to be returned to the federal government throughout the system, so that simply compounds the problem that we are facing here with our budgetary process.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

So if education is to receive more, who is going to receive less? Who is going to lose their job because of that? Who is going to be unemployed and be able to go home and tell their family that they no longer have a job because the government did not deal with it in a fair way?

Our government has said we want to deal with it in a fair way, and we want to deal with it with provincial civil servants, but, Mr. Speaker, those provincial civil servants represent a small portion of

the people who are employed through the expenditures of the provincial government. Eighty-five percent of the Education dollar goes towards salaries. Throughout our medicare system, hundreds of thousands of people are employed in that system through municipalities that receive benefits in payments and grants from the provincial government.

There are all kinds of other organizations that exist on government grants of one form or another that ultimately go to pay wages and salaries.

So we said—and I commend the Minister of Finance for leading this initiative—we want to try and spread that problem, that pain, if you will, amongst all of the people benefiting from provincial government expenditures, not just one group, but everyone. So we try and carry that forward on a fair and reasonable basis, and that is exactly what we are in the process of doing.

The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, get excited over the fact that Education has been reduced in terms of the total expenditures related to its budget line. It is a nominal reduction overall, and when that nominal reduction overall is carried throughout the system it spreads the impact reasonably and fairly. Thank you.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I join in the debate because I really do believe that education is in a crisis in the province of Manitoba. I want to address very specifically some comments that have been made by members of the government today, and I want to begin with the Minister of Finance.

He talked about a phrase, and he called it fiscal child abuse. I think that is an inappropriate use of words, because I do not think one uses child abuse with respect to the fiscal constraints upon any government, but if we are talking about children and the problems that they will inherit, then obviously one must consider that they will inherit a deficit and a debt for the province, but I would suggest to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that the only way that they will be able to deal with that as young people, because they are going to inherit some of it anyway, will be if they have the ability to find employment.

Statistic after statistic, study after study shows us very clearly that the only ones that will be capable of finding employment in the 21st Century are those who have a quality education, and the higher their

level of education, the greater the opportunity there will be for them to find employment. School dropouts will find themselves almost unable to find employment and will live on social assistance for most of their life unless we find a way to provide them with upgrading. High school graduates will also find it not easy to find employment in the 21st Century. Those in post-secondary education institutions, including our universities, will have a better time, but it will not be free for them either.

One only has to look at recent statistics in Canada, to look at professionals and find out for example that in the law profession at the present time 8 percent of the lawyers in this country are unemployed—8 percent. So the education qualifications in and of themselves will not be sufficient, but if they do not have those educational qualifications then their opportunities will almost be nonexistent. So we have to ensure that we have a first-class education system that gives opportunities for young people to maximize their potential within our society.

The Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) said, we cannot just keep throwing money at it. Well, I would suggest that there are ways in which we can in fact bring about fiscal control of education. One way to do that would be to do what this government promised to do in 1990, which is to undertake a fundamental restructuring of school division boundaries in the province of Manitoba, but they decided to back out of that last year. The reality is that we have far too many school divisions in the province of Manitoba. We have far too many school trustees, all of whom get paid money, and when we can eliminate those unnecessary positions we will indeed save money. We will save money on trustees. We will save money on school division superintendents.

You know, it is interesting that the minister seems to want to debate this issue on education from her perspective of having formerly been a school trustee. I wonder what she thinks of that position now, looking at the cuts which are being made to her former school division, which are going to make it impossible for the level of education in that school division to be maintained. The reality is that unfortunately the school divisions cannot speak for themselves in this Chamber, and it is up to those of us who have been duly elected to speak for them as we did in meeting with Winnipeg School Division last week as they outlined for those of us who are

representatives in their area the very great difficulties that they are going to have in meeting the expectations of children.

The Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) and the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) also went on to talk about some of the difficulties that they saw within the school system as it is presently structured. I found it fascinating that one of the issues that was addressed by the Minister of Environment was the issue of transportation. It may come as a shock to the Minister of Environment that that is the fastest growing line in any school division's budget. It outpaces Instructional Resources by about seven times. Transportation. It is the movement of children from one program to another program or from home to school. It is an extremely costly venture, but I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Education mandates those very transportation costs.

It is the Department of Education that will not allow for the review of school divisions that will allow some of those transportation difficulties to be alleviated. It is the Department of Education that says when a child needs to be transported and when a child does not need to be transported, so do not blame the school divisions because their transportation line in their budgets is going up. Look to your own Department of Education that mandates that particular line of the budget for the school divisions, and that is the fiscal reality of the situation.

* (1550)

We also know that what is happening in terms of the schools is that they are being asked to deliver services which really are not directly related to education, and again, it is the Department of Education that has mandated that. It is the Department of Education that has talked about the integration of all special needs children into the school system. It does not fund those children. It looks to the local school division to fund those children because, in terms of the cost of those children, less than 50 percent and in some divisions as low as 34 percent.

It is interesting that the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) says you are wrong, but those are the statistics that she tabled in the Education Estimates last year, and Education Estimates clearly show that less than 50 percent of special needs funding is picked up by the province. The rest of the funding

is picked up by local school divisions. That is the reality.

In 1993, in the Winnipeg School Division budget, because I got those figures last week, 34 percent of the special needs budget will be picked up by the Department of Education, and yet they mandate the service. They say the service must be conducted, so when the Department of Education then turns around and says, not only will you get 2 percent funding less from the province, but in addition we are going to restrict your ability to collect new taxes, what they are in fact saying is, either violate our mandate or squeeze the educational opportunities available to youngsters in this province. That is what is going to happen.

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

If we want to find a means by which we can offer quality education, we have to do a fundamental restructuring of education. That, unfortunately, the minister is avoiding, and she is avoiding it because to re-evaluate school division boundaries I would suggest, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a political hot potato and they do not want to deal with it. And they do not want to deal with it at exactly that opportunity when the review of school division boundaries and the next provincial election will find that their timing is almost identical. Yet I would say to the Minister of Finance that the only way that you are going to bring about some reason to the education policy is to bring about that fundamental restructuring of the way in which we offer education in the province of Manitoba.

We have to set some fundamental goals as to what it is we want our education system to be. Do we want it to be a body which teaches computation? Is it a body which teaches communication? Is it a body which teaches calculation? Is it to take the three Rs of the past and move into the 21st Century, which is much more realistically the three Cs, and to ensure that those young people have those skills that they are going to require?

This does not mean necessarily the lavish expenditure of new dollars or even new dollars at all. We have to find ways within the present structure to reorganize. But you know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): This is certainly not one of the issues that I think any one of us relishes debating in this House today. Fiscal reality and fiscal responsibility are words that we use relatively loosely to describe where we are today financially. This province over the last number of years, if you go back to 1983, has experienced administrations that I believe in all sincerity have attempted to provide education to the children of this province. I believe the department has done a very significant job in trying to find ways and means to ensure that our young people will in fact be equipped to face the realities of the 20th Century. That is really what we are debating here today, the realities of the 20th Century.

I remember, and I believe it was back in 1983 or thereabouts, when the Pawley administration promised the people of Manitoba that the province would fund 90 percent of the education budget. School divisions and school trustees, yes, taxpayers all across this province were looking forward to a greater degree of assistance to provide that base education for our small children.

I know the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) does not want to hear some of this because it reflects on some of the things that they promised during an election campaign and during a term of office that they held for some eight years whereby education funding decreased substantially, I believe, from a point of about 74 percent in 1983 to 66 percent in 1986. Those were the fiscal realities of the day.

Not only were their incomes increasing, but the Minister of Education at the time, Mr. Storie, said, we have other priorities that we must address and therefore the decrease in education funding. Well, I say to the honourable members opposite that not only is this government having to face fiscal reality in recognizing that our revenues are down very dramatically over the past year, and we can stand here as a government and defend the commitment that we have made to education in the increased funding that we have provided over the last four years. In 1988 we provided a 5 percent increase in educational funding, in 1989 a 5.5 percent increase in education funding, and in 1991 a 7.8 percent increase in funding. I dare say that record stands rather well comparatively when you want to compare that with the record of the 1983 to the 1987 Pawley administration. But that is not the debate that I believe we should be into today. That is the

rhetoric I hear on both sides here today. I hear the opposition now complaining about a decrease in funding.

What we should be discussing is how do we better reform our educational system, our process, to ensure that the needs of our children will be met in the future. Have we reached the time that we reorganize the whole administrative process in education? Have we reached the time when we said, yes, maybe we have created too much of a Cadillac in some of the areas, that some of the chrome, some of the frills that we have added into our educational system need to be rethought? Should we think about the basics of education and how we ensure that those little children that we put into the system in fact receive those basics?

You know, there are too many times when I look around our own community and many other parts of our province when I meet graduates or people that have just graduated that cannot read and that cannot write. We have to ask ourselves, what have we done over the past 15-20 years to ensure that those basic elements of the education system were not ignored?

* (1600)

So I want to stand here today and congratulate the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) for taking a very difficult, very tough stand on education finance and how we reorganize some of our thinking into providing the basic elements of education to the future. Should we say that one of the fundamentals is ensuring that our graduates out of the elementary classes can at least read and write and that they know the basics of our mathematics system? Are those some of the things that we should be paying attention to? Can we then in fact reorganize some of the thinking around our fiscal responsibility as the Leader of the Liberal opposition indicated?

I believe that the model that the Minister of Education is working towards, and I believe that what some of the school boards and school trustees are saying to us very clearly, are things that we should give a great deal of heed to. Number one, the taxpayers of this province have said time and time again, we cannot afford to pay any more taxes. What do you set aside then? Do you set aside the social services to increase funding in education? Do you set aside the health care system to increase funding in education? Do we ignore our basic infrastructure in this province, just ignore it, set it

aside, let it decay to increase education funding? Or do we challenge the decision makers to change the way that they have approached education over the last couple of decades into rethinking how we administer and how we provide, and whether it is economically feasible to do some of the things that we have done and reorganize this system?

I believe that all Manitobans, all with the exception of a few who are the ones who want to challenge and ask for more all the time, but the basic members of society today are far more interested in providing quality instead of quantity. That is really what this is all about, to ensure that you get value for your money.

I am sincerely convinced that under the leadership and direction of our Minister of Education and with the support and co-operation of our schools boards and of people across this province that we can sit down and dialogue and come to a resolve on how to provide in a more economical way a better system of education for our children.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Acting Speaker, I think, when every generation of Manitobans has looked at education, they have known that what they are looking at is the future of this province. How we deal with education and how we look at it and whether it is the Manitoba school question or whether it is the creation of the University of Manitoba or whether it is the reforms of the 1960s, every generation has looked at education in Manitoba and tried to leave in place an educational system which would meet the needs of their children and of the next generation.

How we look at education is an indication, a very clear indication, of the kind of future that we see for our province. A number of speakers on the other side have emphasized the changes that we are facing around the globe, the economic changes, the shifts in education, the increasing needs for a variety of new types of information and new kinds of education and that is true. I was glad to hear their references to that.

When communities and societies have to face those dramatic changes that we are facing around the globe, the very fast transfers in money, the new kind of global economy that many of these Conservative administrations have created with so little disregard for their own communities, we are indeed facing new times and in those new times the

role of universities becomes crucial. Universities are the creators of new knowledge. They are the leaders of education upon which all other forms of education in some way depend. They are the flagships which give us the teachers, which provide us the nurses, which provide us the health care professionals, with the lawyers, with the business people, with the scientists.

Wherever you look in our society, the kind of people who are going to lead us, who are going help us adapt to this new and brutal world that the Conservatives have created, must find their source of new ideas, new knowledge, ability to be flexible and ability to adapt, in the universities. So, particularly in these new times, the universities are crucial.

I would say, thirdly, Mr. Acting Speaker, that universities in every age, whether it is from classical times to our own 20th and 21st Centuries, have been the instruments, the focus, for the creation of public debate, and it is one of the institutions, only one of the institutions which help to form the kind of citizens that we look for in Manitoba and for the nature of the continuing debate over what is citizenship and how we each have to play our part in the creation of economic policy, public policy, and in the kind of future that we want to see for our province.

In particular, universities are responsible for the training of teachers, and if we look at the entire educational system in Manitoba, nothing could be more crucial than the preparation and creation of teachers who are able and well educated and who, in fact, are able to lead us in the kind of new training culture that we hear so much about from these new-market Tories. The training of teachers, the kind of education that they get at university, the kind of attitudes that they imbibe there, the kind of understanding of research, of education, of childhood development, of citizenship, of the future of Manitoba, all of those things which are so crucial to every Manitoban, must be imbibed by students at university primarily, not only university, but certainly one of the major institutions in the shaping of teachers.

To reduce the support to education faculties, to teacher training, seems to me, Mr. Acting Speaker, to be very, very shortsighted, indicates a lack of understanding of the way in which the educational system works, and then lack of understanding of the way in which public policy and public changes are to come to this province.

Teachers at the heart are the very basis of our transmission of our culture, of what we want to transmit to the next generation. To reduce their opportunities for learning, for understanding, for practice in the schools, and for continuous upgrading as they must do, seems to me, again, a very shortsighted, an unbelievably shortsighted form of approach to our new economic situation.

* (1610)

Manitoba in particular faces some specific difficulties that are perhaps not faced to the same extent by others. We have a much lower percentage of our post-secondary age group in post-secondary education. Our universities, perhaps, in terms of their intake in numbers, are more comparable to other provinces, but in the colleges we fall very, very far behind places like British Columbia, Quebec, though Quebec has a different way of calculating, but even so we are much behind those provinces. We are far behind Alberta, and if we look at the two provinces in Canada which do have an economy which is managing to face the new economic conditions, it is British Columbia and Alberta with their very high proportion of students in post-secondary education, and it is no coincidence, Mr. Acting Speaker. Those two things go hand in hand. They are not the only condition, but they are one of the major considerations for any business which is going to relocate, for any community which is going to develop partnerships with other provinces. The level of post-secondary education and training, the level of commitment of support of those governments to post-secondary education becomes one of the factors that every business and government will be looking at.

Second of all, Manitoba faces a particular difficulty in the number of aboriginal peoples who need access to post-secondary education. We have a very low percentage of aboriginal students at the moment who have access to post-secondary institutions. In part this reflects the nature of the secondary schools which have been available in the past to these students. But every economic indicator in Manitoba, whether we are looking at, for example, the Winnipeg 2000 report which was done a couple of years ago and which, in some instances, was a reasonable survey of some of the conditions that Manitoba was going to have to face; that, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a particular condition that Manitoba has to face, and it seems to me that to

reduce accessibility to universities, to reduce the ability of universities to reach out to aboriginal communities and to aboriginal students is not the kind of way that we should be going in our approach to education.

We face, as I am sure many of the rural members know, a particular geographical disparity in our ability to have access to education, and it affects not just aboriginal students but, of course, rural students as well. Nobody who has been to rural Manitoba in the past year will have missed hearing the voices of rural Manitoba which are saying how difficult, how increasingly difficult it is becoming to send their students to any university, not just to universities in the city but to universities anywhere. That disparity must be addressed, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, the cost of \$10,000 per student to send them from rural Manitoba to university is something which is crippling not just to those individuals, not just to those families, but to anybody I think who has a perspective on the future of this province. You have to recognize that that is going to affect the future of those communities when there are no university-trained students who are going to be living in those communities and going back to them, becoming teachers in those communities and becoming the doctors who will serve those communities. It is going to affect all of us.

I want to indicate one of the contexts of the difficulties that we are facing. Perhaps the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) will also be addressing this. But it is important to notice, since we are discussing Tory policy in education, to look at the threats that have come from the federal government. The reduction of EPF payments has affected education in most provinces of Canada, and it has affected us. Of course, as a poor province we are affected, I think, more dramatically and in greater proportion. The federal government, not just content with reducing the ability of provinces to meet their educational needs, has also reduced areas of research in the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, in medical research, in engineering research.

In its recent cultural cuts, Mr. Acting Speaker, it has also reduced areas of support that it had offered to libraries for the price of books and for postage in many areas. A federal Conservative government with its high interest rates and its disregard of the educational future of this country, I think, has chosen to put the burden of education onto

provinces and onto Canadian and Manitoba families.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am delighted to take part in this debate because of its importance, its seriousness and its timeliness. Although there is a little premature element to the debate taking place at this time, as I really do believe had we all been listening, particularly members opposite, a little harder to what in an unprecedented way our Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), indeed the entire government, has been telling Manitobans and that certainly includes all members of the opposition, there ought to surely by now be an understanding that all governmental funding has to be looked at in its total context.

I do not know what honourable members opposite are going to say when the budget is brought down as to governmental impacts of funding with respect to other services that I know are of equal concern to all members in this House as well as to all Manitobans. How does it appear when you take out of the educational funding that we are talking about now compared in the context with fundings provided for the other important social services, namely health and family services?

Mr. Acting Speaker, one is tempted to get into the debate with respect to the level of educational funding not just in this province but in Canada as a whole. One is tempted to talk about the kind of attention that has been focused on educational funding and its result, whether it is in recent publications by Canada's one and only national magazine, like Maclean's magazine, which not so long ago seriously addressed the question as to whether or not Canada and, more importantly, our youth, our children were getting full value for the dollars expended on education in this country; whether or not we look to other countries such as New Zealand where other difficult decisions have been made which recently have been publicly examined by our media and have made Manitobans and Canadians aware of what other countries and other societies are doing with respect to this important issue, but I would, quite frankly, presume too much. I stand before this Chamber as Minister of Natural Resources. I leave the more complex issues of educational funding and/or its prioritization in the very capable hands of my colleague the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey).

Mr. Acting Speaker, and to honourable members opposite, I do wish to bring a perspective to this debate that sometimes I fear is lost, and it comes from the experience that the people of Manitoba have privileged in providing me with. I want to refer to the impact that the priorities of funding, not just of this government but the governments of the past that have spanned some 20-30 years of my experience, have placed, which, by and large, have had the bipartisan support of all members. There is no argument about the importance of health; there is no argument about the importance of education; there is no argument about the fact that governments and we as a society have a special responsibility for the complex society that we have to cope with, that my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) has to deal with: changing lifestyles, the failures of our system, the failures of our families in all too many instances, in particular problems that that poses for us as a society, how to deal with children who are often neglected, children who are not being looked after, children who need the supervision, who need the care, who need the compassion of this or any other government. That is not at argument.

* (1620)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish to speak with some knowledge about the impact that this prioritization has had on the totality of government services. You see, the Department of Natural Resources today in 1993 is still expected to look after our parks, is still expected to look after our forests, is still expected to better police and better manage our wildlife population, is still expected to make sure our waters are left in an unpolluted state for children and future generations to come. Members opposite will be the first ones to not only remind that if it was important yesterday, it is even more important today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to impart this little bit of trivial knowledge for honourable members to indicate to you that when I first had the privilege of being the Minister of Natural Resources for this province, this Legislature decided that to do those very same things—and the mandate has not changed—that the Department of Natural Resources deserved 7 percent of the total revenues of this province. Seven percent. That was the budget allocated in the division of departmental responsibilities in the years '68-69.

Today, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is less than 1 percent, and I can show you poll after poll, not polls

this party took or any other, but national polls that have indicated that the public concern, the public awareness, the public demand for my department to address those issues that my department is legislatively mandated for is much higher today than it was 25 years ago when this department had the respect of 7 percent of the revenues.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I complain. I complain openly. I complain around the Treasury Board; I complain around my cabinet table; I complain on the hustings and publicly when I can, but I accept the prioritization of the government that I serve that saw this decline take place—and it did not decline over the period of this government. That decline took place since the years that I have experience with in 1968-69, over 15 years of NDP administration, over an equivalent number of years, or close to it, of Conservative administrations.

It is a simple fact of life that we have placed as a society that higher priority on what we call broadly our social services. Mr. Acting Speaker, I challenge honourable members opposite, surely all of this has to have some overall fairness and be kept in context. I know that different times during this coming session honourable members will be going after my colleague the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), why is he not doing a better policing job, a better regulatory job? Why is his department not being staffed with more and more expert people to ensure that the environmental orders that he is charged with by legislation to put on various activities across this land, why is he not doing a better job of it? Why am I not doing a better job ensuring that elk not be harvested out of season, that less poaching is being done, that big Duke the bear is not being shot in Riding National Park? That is what I am being charged with.

Honourable members, even though they switched portfolios in the critic's role, will continue to come and remind me of that. I am simply saying, Mr. Acting Speaker, you can say that about Highways, you can say that about the Department of Environment. Are there not urgent depressing housing needs in our housing programs for seniors?

What I am saying to honourable members opposite, before they rush off on a tangent on one specific issue of the day, that demands, in my judgment, to be lifted out of this context of total government service and provided with unlimited funding, that in today's real world we will be judged as a government as to how fairly, how

compassionately we have used those resources that we have.

I am satisfied, Mr. Acting Speaker. I am satisfied because I know that the task facing the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), the tasks facing the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the tasks facing the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gillshammer) are tremendous, but I say to you and I say to my colleagues opposite, as I say to the general public, that this government has attempted and I believe succeeded in bringing about a real recognition of total government services for which we are responsible to the people of Manitoba, and to providing them and to challenging our own bureaucracy to maintain the quality of service, indeed to enhance it where possible, and to look for different ways of using those resources that we have and that you will be in due order providing the legislative approval for in this very Chamber. Because, in the final analysis we are not hearing alternative methods, and alternative methods means alternative methods of raising revenue. That is what we have to hear from honourable members in this debate, and we are not hearing it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, I find that what the government has done over the past three, four and a half years since it has been in office has been somewhat of a disservice to education and to the young people in the province of Manitoba. Personally, I have always felt that we have to rely on education and the quality of education that is being delivered through our institutions, that we have to be able to count on that to carrying Manitoba into the next century. This government, much like the previous government to a certain extent, has not put a priority on education, and I would suggest to you that education is in fact in a crisis in the province of Manitoba.

What has this government done, Mr. Acting Speaker, in this upcoming budget? A 2 percent cut in education. Now they are telling the school divisions that they cannot increase taxes. Well, they—they being the school division—have been restricted, or this government has restricted the ability of the school boards to seek the taxes that they feel are necessary in order to provide the quality or the educational services that they believe are necessary. After all, these school trustees, whether you agree or disagree with the individual trustees, do have a mandate which they have to fulfill, and this government and particularly this

minister is not allowing those school boards that were duly elected, as we were, to provide the services in education that they feel are absolutely essential and living up to what they believe are the standards that the communities that they represent in fact want.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party made reference to, on the one hand, we are saying to the school divisions that they cannot increase taxes, that it is beyond them at this point, where she pointed out—and I want because I too met with Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and they talked about the increase to transportation at 7.53 percent. I do not think that we can emphasize strong enough that this is a line in which the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) has mandated the school board to fulfill, that they do not have any choice, and this is a 7.53 percent increase in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in itself. In the same budget, proposed draft budget, regular instruction is actually receiving a decrease of .65 percent.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, if the government was sincere in its efforts, in its thoughts, to be able to better prepare our children to succeed into the future, how can we allow something of this nature to occur? This is in fact the area in which the teachers and the students are best able to make positive changes to whatever it might be: the curriculum, number of hours, professional development, and so forth.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am convinced, like other MLAs no doubt, that the No. 1 concern that I hear about education is, in fact, the quality of education. I have a working group that deals with education within my own riding, and in that group, in the meetings that we have had, the discussions I have had with constituents of mine, the quality of education in the form of curriculum, dropouts, literacy, the number of school divisions, the whole question of family values, student discipline, the role of parent councils, what roles should the schools be playing, those are the issues that we have been dealing with at a very local level within my own riding.

In essence, what we end up talking about at every meeting, in virtually every discussion I have, is the quality of education. I had a survey that went out to my riding. I am going to read the question, and I will be sure to give the Premier a copy of the results

because I know he has quoted from my surveys in the past.

* (1630)

The question I asked was, are you satisfied with what is being taught to our children at our schools? Twenty-three percent said yes, 55 percent said no, 22 percent had no opinion. Mr. Acting Speaker, the quality of education, and you do not need to hear from a survey, you can ask the constituents which you represent, I am sure will be treated in such a fashion that people will be disappointed. They do not feel that this government has been addressing the whole issue of quality of education. The government did take some stands. We have seen that in terms of destreaming of the Grade 10 English and social studies. They had indicated that they had received research in favour of doing that destreaming. Well, I have discussed with principals, with parents, teachers, had some information discussions with respect to other research documents. In fact, I understand that the Province of Ontario had a number of documents and research papers that dealt with destreaming.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am not convinced that is in fact the way to go. I would ask the minister to demonstrate to those individuals that are interested in why she believes we need to destream. She makes reference to one, she may even make reference to more than one, I could not tell you right offhand, but from what I do understand, at least with the groups that I have met with, is that she has not been straightforward with why it is that she feels that destreaming is the way to go.

This is something that is not coming from one or two people located in one little area. This is coming from individuals outside the city of Winnipeg and within the city of Winnipeg, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am disappointed in the sense that you have a minister at the same time who wants to cancel the professional in-service days through this budget. She is suggesting—[interjection] Well, to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), the Minister of Finance set up a model and said 10 working days. I would suggest, what does the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) want? Where are those 10 days going to come from? Maybe she should stand up and suggest where those 10 days should be coming from.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do have only two minutes left to speak, and I wanted to very quickly make

reference to what has been the biggest disappointment from my perspective of this particular minister. On March 17, she announced that the province will not proceed with the review of the school division boundaries. I find that absolutely irresponsible for a minister to ignore that particular issue while at the same time telling the school divisions that they cannot do this, they cannot do that, that we are cutting back at this end. The students inside the classroom have been suffering at the hands of this particular minister, and it is actions such as the school division boundary review and putting it onto the back burner.

The city of Winnipeg does not need more than two school divisions, and I would suggest to you that there is no need in the province of Manitoba to have in excess of 350 school trustees. Mr. Acting Speaker, until this government decides to take action on addressing the real issues of education and educational reform, whether it is curriculum development, whether it is the revision of the school divisions, this government should be ashamed of itself. It would be doing a service to Manitobans if in fact it started acting on some essential reforms. I would make reference to a couple of them specifically: the school divisions and the curriculum. Thank you very much.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity today to speak about education in Manitoba. I would like to begin by saying again, education is very important to this government, and education in its broadest sense. We are interested in education on our kindergarten to Grade 12 side; we are interested in our post-secondary education at our colleges, at our universities and in our training programs; and we have acted to support education and the quality of education. We continue our commitment to the quality of education.

One way that we have done it is by promoting a province-wide test or examination in each year so that we can look at assessment and we can be sure that the curriculum is being followed and that students from one part of Manitoba are receiving the same quality and the same type of curriculum teaching from one place to another so that there is not a question that students may be deprived if they come from another part of Manitoba.

I would refer to the member from Flin Flon in 1986 when the discussion of standardized provincial

exams was discussed, and he called them of questionable validity. In his mind, there was really not the same need to ensure that students from across this province receive the same quality of education. Mr. Acting Speaker, we stand by that. We believe that it is important.

We have also spoken today about the restructuring that is required—[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable minister has the floor, and I would appreciate it if I could hear. If the honourable members want to have a discussion, have it in the loge.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We have spoken this afternoon about the worldwide restructuring that is occurring and the need around the world to restructure and to bring a new type of thinking, a new type of problem solving to our realities. We have also spoken about the restructuring need within Canada and to bring that new thinking. We bring that same need for restructuring here to Manitoba. That restructuring does require new ways of thinking and it requires co-operative ways of thinking.

Through that restructuring, we want to ensure that our children and our students in Manitoba—and they are not all young people who are students. Some of them are adults who are returning to education and to training programs—that Manitobans receive the very best education possible.

On the K-to-12 side, we have introduced a new funding formula. This is now going into its second year of application. Through that new funding formula, we have attempted to direct some dollars to some very important areas that have been identified, areas like library services, areas like counselling services, and that new funding formula is a responsive formula. In the most recent announcement, Mr. Acting Speaker, we did add six priority areas that were recommended by the education advisory committee on education funding to make that formula much more responsive.

* (1640)

We cannot measure, however, our commitment to education by dollars alone. We do need to examine what is the job of education, what it is that education should be doing. In the process of asking those questions, I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of Manitobans, with representative

groups of Manitobans from the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Federation of Labour to discuss with those Manitobans what is the job of education.

However, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we do look at the dollars targeted for education, we can tell you that 80 percent of those dollars on average go to salaries and to benefits. We cannot continue to support increases. We need to protect programs. We need to protect our students. We need to leave the future generation with the best quality education system and not with an overwhelming debt.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have made some suggestions with that educational announcement to ask divisions to examine ways in which they can use their dollars in the most effective way while protecting programs and while protecting students. We did not choose the way that in 1986 the member for Flin Flon chose when he urged that teachers' salaries be frozen. At that time, in 1986, he said that the cost of maintaining our education system is accelerating more rapidly than our ability to fund it. He said at that time, it is not heresy to ask teachers to look at having no increase.

What we have done is to present some possible options to school divisions. We have asked them to look at their administration first. We have asked them to look for administrative reductions in the first place. We have also asked them to look at our version of the work week reduction, but this as a tool.

It is very important, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we do not turn first to the taxes on people, those people who are already experiencing some reductions, so that a very small group will continue to get increases. So we have asked school divisions to look at all of their options.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I can tell you as well that the NDP party in 1986 made the election promise that they would like to achieve a 90 percent funding in education. However, they found that in 1987 the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) again had to say, we would like to achieve that 90 percent, but there are other priorities as well, he said. We also found that the then Premier said the word that they used during the campaign was that they "hoped" to achieve, that they did not use the word "commitment" to achieve.

So I think it is very important that we look at what this government is doing in terms of its commitment

to education and what this government has spoken to school divisions to in a partnership way look at protecting students and programs for Manitobans.

We do have a goal for quality. We have a goal for a quality curriculum, and we do have a goal to support students who are at risk. Further to that goal, we did develop the Student Support branch last year. That branch does work with individual schools as well as school divisions to develop programs for students at risk and to develop the supports that are going to be of the greatest assistance in each area of Manitoba.

As I have said, we have also brought forward the new educational funding formula, and we are making every attempt to make sure that that formula is as responsive to the needs of Manitobans as possible.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let me spend a moment now on the issue of educational reform, because the issue of reform is also very important to this government. I have met with Manitobans who represent the interests in education. I have named some of those groups: Association of School Trustees, Manitoba Teachers' Society, parents home and schools, Manitoba Federation of Labour.

The purpose of these meetings was to focus on the issue of reform and what those groups would see so that they could put their minds to the issues of how they saw educational reform and their role in it. That was the job of those meetings.

We have also visited schools and made sure to speak at each opportunity with parents, with teachers and with trustees. These groups spoke of issues such as standards. They spoke of accountability. They spoke of partnership, and they spoke of the learning environment.

The member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) just called a press conference last Thursday to say that that party now thought it might be a good idea to start speaking to Manitobans, that they would start holding public hearings in areas such as Portage la Prairie and Dauphin. Well, we have been doing that for quite a long time and we continue to do it.

Finally, I would just like to speak of our commitment to universities and our commitment to colleges. We continue our commitment to those areas.

We have the Roblin commission on university education operating. We look for that commission to bring forward the role and the mandate of

universities for the year 2000. We want to make sure that our universities are in the best position to provide the best and most competitive education, but in that process, we have made sure that we have protected students in our funding announcement. We have capped student tuition at 5 percent to make sure that again students were not the first place that universities went to in this particular fiscal situation.

Yes, the universities were required, as many others, to take a reduction. These are difficult times, but I know that the universities will work with some of the options available to them to ensure that students and programs are not affected.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we continue to be strongly committed to education and very strongly committed to working with Manitobans to make sure we meet their vision of education in Manitoba.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Acting Speaker, I listened with a good deal of attention to the Minister of Education's comments with respect to the fiasco that is occurring in our education system today. I listened to her read her speech in this Chamber.

You know, I have in front of me a speech that could almost be identical word for word. If I had time I would repeat it. It is almost word for word the same thing that we heard from this minister, but do you know what? This speech was delivered January 22, 1991, by the then minister Mr. Len Derkach. Do you know what? He says the same thing, but there is one other thing. There is one thing in this speech made by the former minister that is not contained in the present speech by the minister. In the former minister's speech it says, and I quote: Through a co-operative effort all of us will be benefactors two years down the road.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Well, two years has come. It is two years since the minister Len Derkach delivered his fiat to school boards and people in the education community, and in fact the co-operative effort exhibited has not occurred two years down the road. I will send a copy of it. I am sure that the former minister has it. Perhaps the present minister can use it again in reference, because it is almost word for word everything she said to us today, the same dry rhetoric, the same reliance on failed Conservative fiscal policies.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what is wrong with the education system today is not something that can

be cleared up by the present minister. It is far too late in this government's mandate. They have had six budgets. They are going into their sixth budget, and I can tell you it is too late. The ship of state is far out in the ocean and listing about. It is too late for this minister even if she had the capacity in cabinet to change it. I believe she is sincere. I believe that this minister would like to change the education system for the better, but I do not believe she has the clout or the direction in cabinet, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that is unfortunate.

We know that the real clout and direction in cabinet is determined by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) who determines all in cabinet. We know the Minister of Finance came into cabinet and dictated what would happen in the education funding formula. So even if this minister had a plan, I do not think it could be implemented. Mr. Acting Speaker, it is far too late in this government's mandate to implement any kind of meaningful reform in the education system.

The minister and the government, the members opposite, are so fond of tests and examinations. Let us look at some of the initiatives initiated by this government in the last few years in terms of education. Let us talk about the High School Review initiated. It is still in chaos. It is still administratively chaotic out there. School divisions do not know, and even the person brought in at the late hour to try to implement has been unable to do it, so the government gets an F on that, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Let us talk about legislation, Mr. Acting Speaker. This government has promised a reform to The Public Schools Act since they came to office. Where is it? The minister had her own report. I memorized the dates. April 29, 1992, was when the report was to be given from her advisory committee to the minister. Where is that report? We are almost a year later since the time the minister had the report and still we see nothing, still we hear we are going to have more public hearings. We are perhaps going to have a white paper. We are still into the sixth year now of this government's regime and still no legislation reform. I dare say, I suspect that it will be a promise in the next provincial campaign that they are going to somehow reform the education act.

* (1650)

The funding formula was a sore point with members of this side of the House for some time. We predicted when the minister brought it in—and, by the way, Mr. Acting Speaker, I might add the minister still to this day has not released the background papers and documentation and the report which initially prompted this funding formula. It still has not been released publicly, and we predicted there would be real difficulties with the funding formula, and do you know what, the former minister came on and attacked us, et cetera, which is the usual response. You know what, they have revised it at least three times.

They have committees all across the province trying to come up with rejigging the funding formula because it is a disaster. On top of that disaster, on top of that creaky structure, they have now brought in a clawback—clawback is not the appropriate word—they have brought in a 2 percent cut on an already inequitable and unfair formula.

What members never fail to mention on that side, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it is a concern of mine, is equity. They do not talk about fairness. They do not talk about access to programs. They do not talk about children having access no matter where you live in this province with some flexibility. They do not talk about that. They talk about fiscal management, and there is no concern given to the equitable and the nature in which the allocations are redistributed around the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, comments from members opposite are so rife with errors that I could probably talk for the rest of the day in this Chamber about errors that I have heard in their comments, but time does not permit.

I want to talk about something that has been a sore point with members on this side of the House for some time, Mr. Acting Speaker. Members opposite, part of their new rhetorical response to anything we say now is, you offer alternatives. For two years I have been speaking in this Chamber about better co-ordination of services between government departments and the approach they take. For a year and a half, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) have had on their desks reports from MASBO, MAST, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and Manitoba Teachers' Society, a report calling for the better co-ordination of services in education to children. Has there even been a letter of response from this government? Has there been an action

plan? Has there been any response from this government?

If there is one area that would perhaps help, that would perhaps deal with some of the concerns and problems in education, there would be a better co-ordinated approach to it, but we have heard nary a word. There is not even a plan for members on the opposite side of the House, and every time we raise concerns on this side of the House, we get rhetorical verbiage from members opposite, and then we get the constant claim that we never offer any alternatives, which again is part of their rhetorical response.

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

Mr. Acting Speaker, they have not done it, and you know, we would welcome some initiatives from this government, but I dare say that it is too late in the mandate, it is too late in the game for that bunch. Although I would welcome a paper, I would welcome something from members opposite talking about a co-ordinated approach and an action plan to deal with, but you know what, it is lacking.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we held a press conference in the fall to talk about this, something the government hated to talk about, and that was the GFT, the Gary Filmon tax, pardon me, the government's offload of taxes onto the municipalities. It is funny to hear the minister talk about governments promising to go to 80 percent. I believe that one member for Tuxedo in 1988 promised to take provincial funding to 80 percent. I also remember that very same member—we have tabled it before—promising that education grants would be at inflation or better under his government, inflation or better under his government, another promise broken, another broken promise by members opposite, another broken promise, and it continues.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) I think is treading on very dangerous ground, Mr. Acting Speaker, when she criticizes members, when she criticizes us in terms of their funding of the education system. They have offloaded from provincial revenues, and one of the reasons they have done it is because of the corporate tax breaks that they have given to their friends which have not been recovered, which we have not seen in terms of increases to the revenue base. As a result, we have

lost revenue and we are faced with the difficult fiscal situation that we are in. Thank you.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker and members of the Legislature.

I am pleased to rise to debate the issue which the Liberal Party presented to the House today. The government would more than welcome the opportunity to lay before this House and the people of Manitoba the facts as to what we are doing and to how we feel about the importance of education, the funding question.

I want to open my comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, to say that I believe very strongly this Minister of Education has put before this government, has put before the people of Manitoba and this Legislature, a program of funding that does in fact maintain the integrity of the system and in fact maintains the future opportunities for our children in the education system; but I will try to deal with the issues that I feel the opposition members are trying to deal with and point it out as I see it.

One has to fully appreciate that over some 15 years ago now, in fact it was 1981 when the Lyon government was defeated, that it was presented to the people of Manitoba the cause, the need for dealing with expenditures of government in relationship to the income of government. Mr. Acting Speaker, we were rejected from the governing of the province at that time. I guess one of the things that we did not do very well was communicate the reason for it.

Today, Mr. Acting Speaker, what are we hearing that is coming from not only just this government, but we are hearing it from all political stripes throughout Canada. We are hearing it through all leadership throughout the entire world, and we are hearing it of course from our neighbour, the president of the United States saying that they in fact, the United States, have to deal very, very quickly and effectively with their deficit.

They have one luxury that we do not have. I should not call it a luxury. They have one capability that we do not have. They have the capability of putting greater taxes on the people of the United States which we do not have in this province or in this country. We have already taxed the people of this country, Canada and our provinces, to the maximum. Those of you, and I do not always do this, if you happen to read the article today in the

Free Press by Don Campbell, I think there is a realization of the media that they in fact are putting that message out.

I think the other media comment that was a front page headline today, when you see in fact that what our policies are doing for the average worker in this province are working, so I think there is generally an acceptance of the problem by our government and by the responsible leaders throughout the entire world. For some reason there is a group in this Assembly, Mr. Acting Speaker, that have not come to that realization. It is old-think for political opportunism. Quite frankly, it is not selling out there.

* (1700)

I will deal now with the specific issue of education and education funding. Mr. Acting Speaker, we saw the employees of government and everyone in this House last year under Bill 70 take less. We have seen the private sector out there, because of the restructuring that is going on, take less. I do not say this with any malice. I do not say this with any disrespect, but quite frankly, up until this point we have not seen the education system deal with the difficulties as other people have had to deal with until we point out that 80 percent of the costs of education fall within the whole area of salaries and you have to put a mechanism in place for the decision makers to deal with that component. If you do not, then you in fact continue to see the snowballing effect.

We have put, not by force, not by edict, but we have put in place a guideline, a system of policies that we believe are acceptable by the public. In fact, the communications that I am getting, that they are very acceptable and we believe that they can be carried out without causing a loss to the students of this province.

There seems to be a philosophy from the members opposite in education, in health care, in family services, in any problem that arises, that the solution is you throw more money at it. That is not correct, because as I said, 80 percent of the education funding goes to salaries, so if you increase education funding to those people who are working in the system, it does not necessarily give you a better education. That is something that just does not happen automatically.

I do not begrudge people more money, Mr. Acting Speaker, but when everybody else is having to size down and hold the line, I would expect it should

happen in education as well as it should happen in all segments of our society. The issue is one of application of fairness. I, last year, met with some of the school boards and school divisions and you know what was upsetting to some of the people who were on those boards? Some of those people were civil servants and they said we are not unhappy to take a freeze in our wages, but we think it is unfair that the educators in our society do not have to deal with the same subject matter. That is where the question becomes a matter of fairness. The issue is if you are going to deal with a problem, you have to deal with the size and the magnitude of the problem where you spend the most money.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do not want to, as I said, try to belittle or say anything that would cause anybody any hardship, but again when you are in the kind of times that we are in, we all have to share to try and resolve the problem jointly. I find this interesting, the only criticism that came from the Liberal Party, the proposed leadership candidate, is he only has one concern with our education policies. Here we have the Liberal Party today who sponsored this emergency debate and here is the next Liberal leader to be, or would like to be, saying his problem is that we have not realigned the boundaries. Nothing to do with the quality of education, nothing to do with the funding for the system, but his problem is, we have not realigned the boundaries.

An Honourable Member: Two school divisions in Winnipeg.

Mr. Downey: Two school divisions in Winnipeg.

Well, at least he is on the record of coming clean, but I do not think, Mr. Acting Speaker, he has really got to the bottom of the problem. I think he is trying to skip over this and not make any commitment to do anything in a meaningful way that might get him into problems with the greater Liberal caucus that is out there that may support him.

So I guess I am quite pleased that in general then he supports our minister, he supports our education policies, but what he does not support—it is on the record—that we have not moved on the boundary issue in Winnipeg. Well, not bad. I think we can withstand that criticism, and we have justified why we have not moved on it, so I thank him for coming open and clean in his support.

There has been mention of a school division of which I represent. That is Antler River and I should make a quick reference to it. I have made the case

to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) as it relates to Antler River. I have made the case, and I have met with a large group of constituents who showed their concerns and spoke.

Yes, the New Democratic Party had a representative there. Again, they seem to show up when they think they can make some political hay, but I never saw them in the constituency all the time he was the Minister of Education, or I never saw him communicating directly. In fact, that was the forgotten hinterland as far as the New Democrats were concerned when they were in government, but all at once there is a newfound need to get into some of these constituencies that they do not hold. I wonder why. Is it because they are really sincere about the problem, or are they still trying to harvest political support in areas that they now do not have? Well, be it as it is, he was there. One of the things—gosh, I have got a flashing light here already, Mr. Acting Speaker, time goes by quickly when you are having fun, does it not?

Let me just conclude by saying, at that time I said to the local community that we would do what we could on sparse population, and there have been some improvements made for that constituency and for that school division. I said that there would have to be some increase in the local funding because in fact the special levy was considerably lower than the provincial percentage. I said, the most important thing is we have to consider some of the reduced funding, or some look at how we are spending the money, because there have to be ways in which we can save some of the taxpayers' money as it relates to that constituency.

I do not support anything that is unfair to Antler River, to Fort la Bosse or to any constituency. This has to be an application of fair and open policy. That is what I have attempted to do, and that is what I will continue to do. It is a matter of applying a formula fairly so that in fact people can live with it. We all have to be very fair and open at this particular time. We are in difficulties, but let us deal with the real issues. Let us deal with the fact that we cannot continue to spend more money than we take in, and everyone has to in fact deal with it in a responsible manner, whether you are a teacher, whether you are a school board member, whether you are a university student.

I believe, in my conclusion, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we have done the responsible thing. We are reforming the system. We are protecting the

students, and we are, in fact, dealing fairly with those school divisions in Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radlsson): Mr. Acting Speaker, like so many people have said, we have such a short time today to debate education and the crisis in education, it is tough to know where to start.

This government's attack on public education in this province is inexcusable, and we should be very clear that that crisis is created by this government's foolhardy and shortsighted economic policy. It is very clear what is happening, and the Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) will pay close attention because he was at the same meeting I was this morning, finally, over at the Transcona-Springfield School Division.

An Honourable Member: His colleague was not there, though.

Ms. Cerlill: No, his colleague was not there, and I know that she was not at other meetings that the board of the Transcona-Springfield School Division has tried to have them come to so that this government will have some accountability for the ill-advised decisions that they are making.

What they are doing to public education in this province is inexcusable, and it is interesting to hear the Minister for Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) go on about how we have to cut from everywhere, we have to be fair. There is this attitude that somehow they really think that the world is fair and equal right now—oh, the world is fair.

As the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) heard this morning, you cannot have people who have no belt to tighten tighten their belt. What this policy is doing is having the poorest school divisions pay the most. I have the information here from Transcona School Division, which is one of the most efficient school divisions. They have the most costs for transportation; they have the least ability to raise funds from the local area from taxes, and they are being taxed the most under this new system.

Then we will talk about the quality of education. Quality for whom, I would ask. Is this government going to provide quality of education for residents and people of Transcona, for the children of people in Transcona? No. This program for tax reform and education is on the backs of people in areas like northeast Winnipeg.

It is very clear to see what is happening to quality education. I would ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) if she thinks that having 30 kids in a classroom is quality education and how many kids are in the classrooms where her children are, in a private school. She lives in Fort Garry School Division, where there was an administrator who lives—we'll say that in a classroom in Grade 6 in Fort Garry School Division, you could go into a school and find that there are 18 children in a class. You go into Transcona-Springfield, there will be 26 students in a class in Grade 6. In Grade 9 there will be 30 or more children in a class in Transcona-Springfield, and if you go to Fort Garry, there are 22.

* (1710)

Now, to me, you do not have to be very clever to realize that is not fair or just no matter how you define it. This government seems to think that the world is fair and that the world is equal and that equality is simply doling out money the same to everybody. They have changed the policy of equalization payments. Equalization means that when a child who comes from a poor family in a poor region of the city you should have a subsidy going to that area so that they can have some equality of access and opportunity. Access is the key when you are talking about these kinds of issues in education. Access to education is supposed to be in a democracy the great equalizer, and that is not happening in this province at all anymore.

I get a little excited about this. Yes, my training is as a teacher. I am supposed to be a health educator. That is my background, and I cannot believe—[interjection]. That is my training. That is supposed to be what I am trained to do, but you know what? I listen to the rhetoric coming from the other side of the House, and they talk about this back-to-basics stuff.

Point of Order

Mr. Penner: I am wondering whether the honourable member would clarify a statement that she was trained as a teacher.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. Cerlill: Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, my education is from the University of Manitoba. I have two

degrees in Education, and my background is in health education, and I worked in a school for two years before being elected. Before that I ran a number of youth programs, the kinds of programs that they have cut, the kinds of programs that the federal Tories have cut.

If we want to talk about education, let us talk about education that trains young people to know how to stand up for their rights, because what is happening to young people right now is they are working over 70 or 90 hours a week and they are getting no overtime. They are being ripped off left, right and centre, because young people are the most vulnerable to exploit in the labour market.

There are young people who are not even getting near to minimum wage. They are too afraid to report it or even tell anybody, because they know that they are going to get fired because they are expendable. There are a lot of young people out there looking for work. So it is very easy to exploit young people who do not know their rights. They do not know where to go to find out about their rights. They are not unionized, and they already earn less than adults because they are youth. That to me is not democracy. That is not any sense of what this government says is fairness.

The issue of taking the clawback at universities to me is absolutely reprehensible. It is the same kind of tactic that they will try to take with the public schools when they go after the professional development days of the teachers, when they go after teachers' salaries. Teachers have signed collective agreements. They have signed on to be paid at a certain increase in salary that has tried to keep up with the cost of living.

Why is it that they are willing to claw back salaries from professionals in the public school system when they give a 37 percent increase to the Deputy Minister of Education? Why do you have to pay these guys so much? Why do you have to pay the people of the Department of Education who advise this minister so much—\$100,000 that person is getting? You could pay a lot of teachers with that \$100,000. Yes, I get a little excited and I get a little mad, but I think that this is what it is going to take to get through to this government to make them realize the people of Manitoba have had enough.

I would hope that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) paid attention this morning at that meeting to understand that justice is not giving the same to

everybody when everyone does not start off equally. That is a very basic concept that young people learn in about Grade 5. They can understand it in Grade 5.

The other thing that I think is really important is to look at the excuse of the deficit. This government cannot understand that investing in the future means investing in the education of young people. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) has said it, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has said it. A number of people have said it on this side of the House, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), the former Minister of Education. We cannot expect that we are going to have any kind of an economy if young people are not trained to think, trained to understand how to get information, how to work together.

When I was interrupted by the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) I was going to make the point that there is all this talk now about back to basics. I would like for the members opposite to define basics for us, because basics today in this high-tech, competitive, as they would say, world are very different from the basics when they were in school. The basics are no longer just learning to read and write and do arithmetic. Basics are about how to use computers. That is a basic now. Basics are about learning how to interact and get along with people in a very stressful environment so we can do something about the kind of violence and the kind of abuse that goes on in our society. Those are the kinds of issues when I was a teacher and was working in the public school system that I was dealing with. I was dealing with poverty. I was dealing with child abuse. I was dealing with a number of kids who were taking drugs and alcohol. That is what is going on in schools. I would implore the members opposite to open your eyes, talk to some real people living real lives and not your appointed Tory friends who come to your focus groups.

The other thing is this Tory rhetoric about finding jobs. Young people have to go to school so that they can find jobs. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I do not know if you have tried looking for work lately, but there are no jobs. We help them make resumes. We give them little courses, but they go out there and they have three degrees, two degrees, high school education, and there are no jobs. So I think we have to start teaching young people how to create jobs. We have to teach them how to work

together, how to be entrepreneurs, how to—[interjection] Yes, entrepreneurship. I believe in it very strongly. My family comes from a long line of entrepreneurs.

Just to sum up then, this education policy is not only incredibly unfair, especially to areas like Springfield and Transcona, which, as the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) should know, is one-third of a rural school division and it is not getting recognized in this policy as a rural school division. The Brandon School Division has more urban centre residents in it, and it is being recognized as a rural school division and Transcona-Springfield is not. That is completely unfair. It is completely unjust, and if this government does not change and make the necessary changes in this policy, they are in for a big surprise. Thank you.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Acting Speaker, I guess I am somewhat pleased to enter into this debate because of what I have heard from the opposite side of the House. Some of the concerns that have been raised about education funding have, indeed, sort of repeated old ground that we have heard time and time again from the members opposite. It is not a new debate when you listen to the rhetoric that comes from the other side.

Most discouraging were the comments that we just heard from the member for Radisson, because obviously by her comments it is very clear that she perfectly misunderstands what is out there in the real world with regard to funding of education in this province, especially when she talks about the fact that Transcona-Springfield School Division is the poorest school division in the province. She needs to travel a bit. She needs to broaden her horizons, and then she may have a better understanding of where we are at—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Acting Speaker, on a point of order. I will inform the members opposite that I was in Brandon last week, and I have travelled across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Speaker, I congratulate the member for Radisson for discovering part of rural Manitoba.

We should take the debate this afternoon quite seriously, because indeed it is an important debate and one which focuses on probably the most important facet of our society and that is the education of our children. Mr. Acting Speaker, many members in this House have a deep concern about what is happening in education, and this is the correct forum to be debating these issues.

* (1720)

We have heard a call from the NDP across the way to throw more money into the education system. That is their only solution to the problem that faces us. I heard some comments from the members from the Liberal Party this afternoon, and I have to say that some of the comments that I heard from the Leader of the Liberal Party were indeed on track, especially when she said that it is not just money that is required in order to reform our education system; as a matter of fact, we have to find different ways of doing things to reform the education system in our province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is so true. That is the way to reform the education system, that is, to look at what the problems in the education system are and then address those problems. We have heard the public cry out about the need to provide some standards in our education system, to provide some ability for students to meet a standard so that they can be more successful when they leave our education system, whether it is at the elementary level, the intermediate level, the secondary level or the post-secondary level.

Something that the member for Wellington said today also sparked my attention, and that was that she talked about the opportunities of rural students to access the university education system. Mr. Acting Speaker, I have to say that in that regard it was this government that—[interjection] Oh, pardon me—Wolseley. I am sorry, I made an error. I said Wellington; it should have been Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). I am sorry. I correct that error. She said that perhaps there was a disparity between the opportunity that rural students had to access our university education system. In that light, it was this government that moved to have a first-year

university education system through the distance education mode.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that provided the opportunity for rural students to at least access the first year of university in their home communities, where they did not have to expend dollars for room and board and for travel in a community that was a distance to them. It would have been ideal to be able to provide that in each and every one of our remote communities, but that to this point in time has not been possible. Indeed, there are communities in rural communities that have seen the success of this project and have indeed requested that their communities be incorporated into this method of delivery of education to our students in this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when we talk about education reform, we need to focus on what the challenges before the education system are today. I have to congratulate the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey) for her vision in terms of addressing the real problems that are before us in education and talking about reform in terms of what our education system needs to be reformed to and how we need to address the challenges that are out there before us. It is not one person who can do it. It is not just this Chamber, this group of ministers who can do it. It has to be with the participation and involvement of the entire education community, the parents of the children of this province and indeed all of the people who are inhabitants of this province who have something to say about our education system.

We have been criticized for underfunding education in this province, yet when you compare the record of this government in terms of the funding that has been allocated to education with the record of the former administration, we stand head and shoulders above the way they supported education. Mr. Acting Speaker, we do not have to take any lessons from them, because indeed when the inflation rate was running—and I will give you some examples. When the average CPI in Winnipeg in 1986 was running at about 6.7 percent, the funding to education by the then government was 2.7 percent.

Mr. Acting Speaker, those are the kinds of examples that we can turn to when we hear the criticism from the NDP about the fact that we underfund education. Their only solution is that we throw more money at the education system.

I listened on my way into Winnipeg this morning to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). He was asked by the radio reporter about what some of his alternatives were to the situation that is before us in this province. I did not hear one, not a single alternative that he could present to the reporter and to the people of Manitoba. So they are defunct of ideas. They do not have any ideas. It is all old-think. No matter what area you address, it is the same with the NDP.

I have to say that at least we have heard some ideas coming from the Liberal caucus. One was to redo the boundaries. Well, yes indeed that may be a part of the solution, but should we have two divisions in this city? That is going pretty far out on a limb as far as I am concerned at this point in time, especially when you really have not consulted with the people in this city. At least he does have an idea and he has put it forward. I have to congratulate him for at least that, because we have not heard anything of that nature from the members opposite in the NDP party.

The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who was the former critic for Education, talks a lot about the problems he sees in education. Even after he has spent several years as the critic of Education and now has moved to a different critic portfolio, he does not have any vision of where this province should be going in education, does not offer it, does not provide the alternative. The only alternative they have is to dump more money into the education system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are some fiscal realities before us, some that we cannot hide from and we have to face them head on. Our intent is not to jeopardize the quality of education in this province. Rather, it is to seek different solutions to the challenges that are before us and to address them in such a way that the quality of education for the children in our school system, whether it is in the elementary, the secondary or the post-secondary system, is going to be maintained and enhanced.

Indeed, the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey) for this province is working very diligently with her staff to ensure that the children of this province are going to have an opportunity that is equal to or better than you can find anywhere else in this country. That is her goal. That is the goal of this government, and we are proceeding on that agenda.

I am very pleased to have entered into this discussion this afternoon and to add my comments to the comments of those who have already stood in this debate. Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It is my pleasure to rise to take part in this debate here today on something that is very, very important to all of us, and that is education in the province of Manitoba. I must admit though that my experiences dealing with education in other parts of the province of Manitoba are very limited in nature. I have only listened to the discussions that have taken place in this Chamber and, of course, in our own caucus with respect to education in other parts of Manitoba.

I listened with interest to the comments that were made by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) when he was adding his comments to the debate here today. I am familiar with the problems that he has encountered in his own school division, the Antler River School Division, where the parents expressed their concern at a public meeting not long ago for which the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) was a little bit taken aback by the attitude and, I guess, the strong and forceful way that the residents of his constituency put forward their position with respect to education. Of course, he was at a loss to have any answers for his own constituents at that time. I hope to this point, Mr. Acting Speaker, that he has at least come forward with some solutions to the problems for his constituents. He indicated that the key principle that he wants to see is fairness, fairness in the funding to all of the school divisions within the province.

A lot of my comments here today will revolve around the issue of fairness, because my colleague the MLA for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), myself, and the M.P. for Winnipeg-Transcona had the opportunity today to meet with the school division trustees for the Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12. In that meeting that we had earlier this past week, on Tuesday to be precise last week, we met with the trustees at that time as well, and one of the key features that stood out at those meetings was the issue of unfairness in the funding formula that is currently being used by this government with respect to funding education in the province of Manitoba. That was the key single feature, Mr. Acting Speaker, that stood out in the process.

* (1730)

While politics usually does not enter the discussion on the school trustee level, one would think that there would be members of all political stripe being represented on that school board, and yet it seemed almost—in fact, it was unanimous—all of the trustees of the Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 were unanimous in their position and their statement that the funding formula currently used is unfair.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) can sit there in his seat, and I hope that he has listened to those trustees today and he has taken back their comments and put them to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) and explained the position because he is supposed to represent the community of Springfield, which is represented in part by those trustees.

The comments that were made by the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), the MLA for Arthur-Virden, indicated that the Liberals wanted to go to one or two school divisions within the city of Winnipeg. Now that is obviously their position because they have stated that but what—[interjection] Maybe we are not quite sure what their position is here now. On the one hand, it is one or two school divisions, and on the other hand they are not sure what they want now. It is two positions on this, Mr. Acting Speaker. I guess it depends on whom you talk to within their caucus what the position is. I suppose once they have their leadership review we will find out more about what their true policy position is, I hope.

The member for Arthur-Virden indicated that he will not support anything that is unfair by way of funding through the Department of Education to the school divisions in the province of Manitoba. I am going to quote that back to the member for Arthur-Virden. I took very keen interest in that and noted that because I am going to give you some figures and some information that was put out by School Division No. 12 trustees this past week. It talks about unfairness in the system, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) heard it today.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) in her announcement on February 15 indicated that there was going to be a 2 percent reduction in funding to education. In my school division in Transcona they are at nearly a 3 percent reduction in funding, so I do not know where the Minister of Education gets the 2 percent figure from, but she is way off base. My colleague the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif

Evans) is significantly hit harder than the 2 percent that the minister indicated. It is quite a bit higher than that, two or three times higher. So I do not know where the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) gets the 2 percent figure that she uses.

For the Transcona-Springfield School Division, the nearly 3 percent reduction will mean a loss of nearly a million dollars on a \$32 million budget in the coming school year, something that they can ill afford to do. Last budget they were forced to cut positions and cut programs in the community already. On top of that, the Minister of Education has taken and capped their abilities to adjust the local levy within the community at a 2 percent level.

Now what the trustees are saying, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) heard it today, for the first time in a hundred years, Mr. Acting Speaker, the school divisions are asked—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Speaker, on a point of order, I was not sure if I heard correctly. I do not want to impute motives or anything like that, but I think I heard the individual from Broadway, who is a university professor when he is not in the House, suggest that the alternative was for higher taxes for the taxpayer—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. [interjection] Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona has the floor. I would appreciate hearing his speech.

* * *

Mr. Reid: Mr. Acting Speaker, just to correct and refute what the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) has said, it has never been a position of this party on this side of the House, the official opposition, to call for increased taxes, as the member has indicated that he has allegedly heard in this House here today.

We know that the people in the province of Manitoba are taxed and they are taxed heavily. We know that. The problem we have, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the unfairness with which the monies are allocated to the different school divisions in the province of Manitoba. That is our concern, and that is what we want rectified.

To continue with my remarks, Mr. Acting Speaker, revenue from the province to the Transcona-Springfield School Division has decreased by 3 percent, and it means a loss of nearly a million dollars in the next upcoming budget year. On top of that, they have between a million and a million and a half dollars of uncontrollable expenditures that they are faced with in the upcoming budget year. So they have a significant increase in problems for them, because they have received a million dollars less plus they have problems with uncontrollables out of their control, utility bills, salary adjustments, other things that are beyond their control. This government has failed to recognize that. On top of that, this government has asked them to make more cuts to the programs. They have already lost 17 teachers in last year's budget. They have had to cut programs. Our enrollment is increasing. For a while it was decreasing, but now it is increasing again in the school division. Transcona-Springfield School Division has the lowest expenditure per pupil and the lowest assessment per pupil in the city of Winnipeg, in metro Winnipeg.

We have, as part of our school division—one-third of it is made up of a rural component. Yet the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) refuses to accept that explanation when the school division trustees go forward and request assistance. She even goes so far in a letter dated June 15, 1992, to tell the trustees that—thanking them for the letter that was sent when the school division asked her to have a consideration for the urban-rural split that we have there and to give some consideration by way of funding. Instead she totally ignored the question that was put to her and went on to say, we are thankful that you accepted the new funding model that was put in place. That was not even part of the letter that was sent to them, Mr. Acting Speaker, so the Minister of Education refused to address the question that was put to her legitimately by the trustees representing the children and the families of the community of Transcona-Springfield.

I hope that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay)—and I see my light is flashing—puts those concerns to the Minister of Education to restore some fairness into the education funding model in the province of Manitoba, because for the Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 now that fairness does not exist. I hope that the Minister of Education will listen to those comments and call

a meeting with the trustees of that division so that they can present face to face their concerns to her and that she will address those concerns in an earnest way.

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): It is certainly a pleasure this afternoon to have the opportunity to take part in the debate as we resume the fourth session of the 35th Legislature of this province. I make that point because I would be surprised if, at any time before, in the history of the debates that have taken place in this Chamber, there has been one that covers the subject which we are covering today, and that is the overall approach to education but with the specific approach this year of a reduction in support to public schools and post-secondary education.

I would suspect, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we were able to go back to the first Legislature of this province, into the first session, if anyone had dared to estimate that by this time in 1993 we would be spending in Manitoba approximately \$1 billion on education, I would suspect that those people in the first Legislature in the first session would have been totally astonished and unbelieving at that kind of a figure. That is not \$1 million we are talking about, not \$10 million we are talking about, not \$100 million we are talking about, but \$1000 million that we are spending in Manitoba on education.

* (1740)

It seems a little strange to me that we should be so spiritedly debating the accusation that this government, the government of the day, the members on this side of the House, are not supporting education in Manitoba when the expenditure of education in Manitoba will be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion. Clearly, if we could back up to square one and say to our society, here is a government that is prepared through the provincial tax coffers as well as the local tax coffers to spend \$1 billion on an education system, surely everyone would be delighted with that opportunity to have that kind of spending power available to educate our children.

All of us realize very simply that the total loss of the primary, secondary and post-secondary education system in our society, if that were totally lost, within one generation the society as we know it would come to a halt. We would be back almost to the caveman days, because education, as has been pointed out many times this afternoon in the

debates, is of primary importance in our society. In fact, it is the cornerstone of our society. In fact, it is the cornerstone on which we build.

At the same time, the automatic spending in education does not mean that the quality of that education will increase. Are we suggesting that if we spend \$2 billion in education, it would be twice as good? Are we suggesting, if we spent \$500 million in education, it would be half as good? Certainly, the actual number of dollars that is spent on education is not in itself a yardstick of the quality of education that is available.

It is certainly obvious to anyone who has done any kind of study of government spending at any level of government that decisions are primarily made on the money that is available. It seems that almost all, if not all, levels of government tend to spend, or the spending expands, to fill the amount of money that is available.

The problem that we are encountering now has come about because senior levels of government at the federal and provincial level have had a habit of spending beyond what money is available. This trend has been going on in our country and our province for almost a quarter of a century now, almost 25 years. I guess the time of reckoning has come, because the people on this side of the House at least recognize that you cannot forever spend more than you take in, that sooner or later there has to be a day of reckoning. Now it has taken us 25 years to reach that point of recognition, I suppose, and as previous speakers have suggested from the government side of the House, there still appear to be some that have not reached that point of recognition as yet, but most of society has.

It is interesting to look across the country to the various provincial governments who are made up of various political parties of various political philosophies, and once they are in power they all have to deal with reality. They have to deal with the reality of 25 years of spending beyond what we are earning, what we are taking in. It has reached a point where we must recognize that and move to address that particular problem.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) coined a phrase this afternoon, or at least quoted a phrase, fiscal child abuse, which raised some eyebrows across the way and some immediate response. I do not think it was the minister's intent to cheapen the very real concerns we all have with physical and

mental child abuse that everyone in society regardless of political belief are trying to deal with. The fact remains that fiscal child abuse is an expression that can very well apply to the kind of financing that we have been doing in our country for the last quarter of a century, because it is not me that will pay back this money that we are borrowing beyond what we are bringing in. It is not necessarily my children who will pay that. It is the children in the education system who when they grow up must enter into the economy and who must earn enough money to pay back the principal that we are now borrowing to finance our standard of living. Pay back with interest, by the way.

So fiscal child abuse, as we say, is not an attempt to cheapen the term but is, in my mind, a very real description of what we continue to do with deficit financing.

If I have one criticism of our side of the House, of the government side of the House, in this whole question of education finance, the current question of education finance, it is the timing of the announcement. By that I mean the very difficult problems that the school boards have in budgeting, the fact that they have to have their budgets completed by the middle of March, and the fact that they do not know what the level of provincial support will be until a very short period of time before they have to make those decisions.

I think the overall message that we are trying to get across here is an excellent message. I think it is very timely, and I think perhaps it is the kind of message that needs to be emphasized that it is not necessarily just a one-year thing, it is not necessarily a one-time thing, it is not necessarily a one-time adjustment. It is an attempt by everyone to face the reality of the fact that we have been spending beyond our means, and that the problems facing our society in the future are going to be much greater if we do not face that fact right now and attempt to deal with it.

I think I have to make the point, Mr. Acting Speaker, before my time is up, that, as I have mentioned before, it has taken us 25 years to get into this particular problem, and it may very well take us 25 years to get out of it. The move to get out will be just as slow and gradual as the gradual buildup of the deficits and the debt that faces all levels of governments in this country.

I think the point we really need to emphasize is that it is not a question of political philosophy, that it is not a question of political party, that it is a question of all our citizens coming to grips with the fact that we must learn to live within our means.

I cannot believe that our education system will not still continue to produce fine graduates, very capable graduates and graduates who understand the reality of economics when we are spending \$1 billion a year on education. Thank you.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Education is the key that unlocks the door to opportunity. Fine words, Mr. Acting Speaker, fine words by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this Conservative government back in 1991. I certainly believe those words. We in the New Democratic Party believe those words. We only wish that the Premier and his colleagues actually believe those words. If they had believed those words, they would have been finding ways to turn the key to unlock the door to opportunity. Instead, this government has chosen to throw the key away.

Never before, in the history of this province, has our education system taken such a hit. The two percent and more cuts to base budgets of school boards, directed, dictated by this government is unprecedented, unparalleled and unquestionably unacceptable.

This action is so shortsighted and will cost so dearly down the road that it raises for many the question of the very rationality and sensibility of this government, and many are asking as a result of this drastic cut to our public education system, has this government entirely lost its senses?

* (1750)

Why is it forsaking one of its foremost obligations, the provision of a quality education to each and every Manitoban? Why can it not see what damage it is doing to our public schools which are central, which are pivotal, which are fundamental to the goal of providing quality education to each and every one of our citizens.

This government needs to be reminded just why Manitobans need quality public school education. That need is based on the principle that the social well-being of our province-wide community requires that every student be educated appropriately in order to attain a fulfilling and productive lifestyle. As well, it is based on the principle that the economic prosperity of our province depends on the

population becoming more highly educated, more competent, more creative and that the future viability of the Manitoba economy will be determined in large part by the educational attainment of all of its citizens.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this essential importance of public education to the future social and economic well-being of Manitoba demands that this government show leadership, show foresight and skill. It must have coherent plans and financial commitment to ensure the provision of quality education to all students throughout the province and it must be able to address the obstacles to equal educational opportunity.

It is being said, Mr. Acting Speaker, by many that the public education system is the last remaining institution for creating equality of opportunity and equality of condition, for creating a level playing field, for reducing systemic inequalities, for being an equalizer in our society. Now this, too, is being taken away.

This Conservative government's education policy, like its economic policy, is really based on the old philosophy, the survival of the fittest. This government's drastic education cutbacks will hit the poorest neighbourhoods in our communities, the most vulnerable members of our society, the poorest among us. It will mean larger classrooms, higher student-to-teacher ratios, fewer aides, less personalized approaches, less time and energy to identify problems like child abuse, less time and ability to recognize signs of suicide, less time and energy to curb and detect violence and detect learning disabilities and problems facing the students of today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if the members opposite do not hear our words today then maybe they will hear the words of a teacher working in an inner city school as quoted in the January 1991 edition of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg newsletter. I quote from an article written by Suzanne Adkins, a teacher at David Livingstone School.

What do my students expect of their day at school? Certainly, I hope most of them share my hopes, but for others the time spent at school is time spent away from serious home problems. School can be a break from the bleak environment of poverty. Breakfast in the nutrition room fills an empty stomach and the clothing depots cover cold

hands, but these are just physical needs and problems.

As an elementary school teacher, I am part of an equation where compensation, motivation and co-operation equal education. It is a challenge to make learning relevant when the child has had very limited experiences of the kind that children of more affluent families enjoy. Through in-services and research into new programs and methods, teachers endeavour to better assess and address their students' needs. Co-operative teaching with specialists like resource teachers and teacher librarians affords new insights into meeting students' needs, but this requires time to consult and plan together. A successful learning environment is nonthreatening where students are motivated to take chances with reading and writing and where positive experiences and feedback encourage a child to try again and try harder. Individualized early intervention programs for at-risk children are designed to prevent students from falling between the cracks. The article goes on, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Clearly, the point has been made very well by this teacher on the front line in an inner-city neighbourhood. Without adequate funding, early intervention programs that are so vital to future generations will be lost. Cuts to quality education at a time of high unemployment economic insecurity are absolutely a recipe for disaster. Schools can and ought to help counter the harsh realities of unemployment and economic uncertainty. They can try to make up for what is wrong and missing in their students' lives: parents who are overwhelmed and cannot find jobs, parents who move around in search of affordable housing, parents who are not together or not around because of alienation and isolation and dependency.

Mr. Acting Speaker, without a doubt, the cuts of this government will be disproportionately felt by the neediest in our society. Many kids will move from crowded classrooms to crowded homes and now may not even be able to find quiet study time in community libraries because of actions being contemplated by the city.

In conclusion, let me just ask the question, can we afford this government's cutbacks to education? Absolutely not. In the name of decency, human dignity, and just plain old good economics, we ask this government to change its mind, rescind its

education cuts, and put the key of knowledge back into the door of opportunity. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? No? OK? Six o'clock. The hour being 6 p.m., in accordance with the rules, I am leaving the Chair and will return at 8 p.m.

ERRATUM

On Wednesday, December 16, 1992, Hansard No. 15, the following comments should have been included in the Hansard on page 615 under the heading of Nonpolitical Statements immediately following Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, we would also like to join with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the members of this House in wishing all Manitobans the best of the holiday season.

As the Premier has said, we have many cultures, many ethnic backgrounds in this province, but the basic thing is that every culture has the basic ingredient of good morals, good ethics and good family values, and I think we can all celebrate, and we can all contribute.

Most importantly, I think we should remember those people around the world who are not that fortunate, who are having a rough time, either politically or otherwise, so we should wish them all

the best and we hope that 1993 will be a better year for all of us in this world. Thank you.

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

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a nonpolitical statement today regarding the significant event happening in Winnipeg, namely the human rights tribunal of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

I have had the chance to attend some of the hearings, and I do believe that this is a significant event, partially because of the charges that were laid regarding the violations of the human rights legislation.

I want to talk a little bit about the importance of this event. I want to talk a little bit about the importance of all members of the House, of the media, of all members of the community recognizing the significance of this human rights tribunal, because I truly believe that, as we learn better and better to stand up for our own human rights, we are learning to take responsibility for ourselves; and, as we learn to do that individually, we can learn to do that as a society. As we take responsibility for standing up for the human rights of others, we are becoming indeed a more responsible society.

I would just urge all of us to take very seriously and to pay close attention to the efforts of the tribunal happening in Winnipeg. Thank you.

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Monday, March 1, 1993

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