



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I beg to present the petition of Wendy Lewis, Lynette Rynski, Derek Sigurdson and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lisa Chodirker, Stephen Routledge, Christine Burne and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I beg to present the petition of Emily Tarmasz, Harry Sell, Alice Munch and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Warren Hooper, Sandra Desautels, Margaret Edwards and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I beg to present the petition of Gertie Becenko, Bev Forbes, Frances Rose and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to private home care services.

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jake Friesen, Lloyd Stoesz, Dennis Stoesz and others requesting that

the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) consider reviewing his decision and retain a system of orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Home Care Services

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): I beg to present the petition of Mel Wiens, Susan St. Onge, Keith Boyd and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ben Wipf, Walter Budz, Robert Vopni and others requesting the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) to consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Home Care Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I beg to present the petition of Paul Sokoliuk, Agnes Derbowka, Vernon Ballan and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I beg to present the petition of V.K. Wood, H.K. Chapman, Deborah Chesley and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I beg to present the petition of Dave Stacey, Jason Skazyk, Kerry Gudmundson and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Mark Smith, Carol Simms, Lucille Langhorne and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jennifer Penner, Deb King, P. May and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I beg to present the petition of Brian Leitch, Helen Vuckovic, Ruth Major and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Henry H. Klassen, Margaret Watt, Gary Froese and others requesting that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

* (1335)

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to non-government organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1340)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Then I would request the co-operation of all honourable members in listening attentively to the Clerk as he reads the petition. Honourable members do indeed want to hear the petition.

The Clerk, to read the petition.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1345)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1350)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1355)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). It complies with the rules and the practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because

it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

* (1400)

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to

request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Delegation—Northwest Province, South Africa

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I have a brief ministerial statement.

Many members will remember that we were honoured almost a year ago by the visit of Premier Popo Molefe and a senior delegation from the northwest province of South Africa. Today we have a second delegation from the northwest with us here in Manitoba. They are here as a direct result of our co-operation agreement which focuses both on governance and on building economic development and trade links. Our agreement is the first of several between South African and Canadian provinces and was made possible in part through the support and assistance of CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the International Development Research Centre.

If I might direct the attention of the members to the Speaker's Gallery, I would like to introduce Mr. Job Mokgoro, the director general and secretary to Cabinet, Mr. Jan de Waal, the director of corporate services,

Department of the Premier, Ms. Henda Pretorius, acting deputy director of Department of the Premier, Mr. David Ceruti, the project manager, Strategic Change Management, Mr. Hannes Du Preez, businessman, a farmer and director of the Agribank and ABSA Bank and Mr. T. Gaelejwe, a businessman and hotel owner from the northwest province, as well as Professor Stefan Coetzee, chairperson of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council.

I know that all honourable members of the Legislature will want to join me in extending a warm Manitoba welcome to our friends and colleagues from the northwest province.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for his statement today and join with him in welcoming our visitors from the northwest province in the country of South Africa. We look forward to meeting with the delegation as we did with the previous delegation that visited our great province. We on this side have been very proud that we have worked in solidarity with the people of South Africa for a number of years with initiatives that we took over the years to support the antiapartheid movement in South Africa and we are pleased that in a small way Manitoba, through its trade policy in the '80s, was able to help work with South Africa to ensure that the people in South Africa receive the vote as we believe democracy dictated for a number of years.

So I know there are a lot of members of this House who are very proud to welcome our visitors today and I also know there are a lot of very, very active people in our community who were very active in the antiapartheid movement over the last number of decades in support of the people of South Africa to obtain democracy. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would also like to draw all honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have seated this afternoon five Grade 9 students from Sioux Valley School under the direction of Mr. Dave Thiessen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey).

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am tabling today Departmental Expenditure Estimates Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1996/97.

* (1410)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Assessment Validation Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 2, The Municipal Assessment Amendment and Assessment Validation Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale et validant certaines évaluations), and that the same be now received and read for the first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I would like to table the Lieutenant Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Over the last week we have been asking the government to provide independent evidence on the merit of their decision to privatize home care here in the province of Manitoba. We have cited the Kane and Kane report. We have cited other documents indicating the government was heading in the wrong direction. We have asked the Premier for independent studies or advice that led to the government's making what we consider to be a very wrong decision on the home care services here in Manitoba.

Last evening, Dr. Evelyn Shapiro appeared before a number of clients and a number of citizens of the

province and provided a considerable amount of evidence of why the government's policy and ideology to privatize home care would in her opinion cost more and provide less service, particularly less service in the area of continuity of care with the workers, with the people and clients who require this very vital health care service.

I would like to ask the Premier, will he put his minister's decision and his government's decision on hold, and will he meet with people with expertise in these areas like Dr. Evelyn Shapiro, and make a decision based on health care merit, not on the ideology of the government?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member should be consistent. If he is going to refer to opinions placed before the public by people like Evelyn Shapiro, then he should not stick to just the one opinion. There are other opinions that have been made available by Evelyn Shapiro and others. But certainly with respect to her work with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, when it comes to other health issues honourable members opposite choose to say, well, there is no credibility. I think they call it a Tory-funded Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation. So let not the honourable member play that sort of selective game with the people of this province. What we are trying to do is improve services for our home care recipients in Manitoba and to do it for many, many years to come.

Mr. Doer: I would like to table a document presented to the minister yesterday by Mr. David Martin who is the provincial co-ordinator for the Manitoba league of persons with disabilities. I would like to table that for the Premier's attention.

Madam Speaker, it is the Premier who is making the decision to privatize home care. It is the Premier's staff who are directing some of these decisions in health care. It is the Premier's former chief of staff or chief communicator who is involved in some of the communication strategies about these ill-thought-out decisions.

I would like to quote from Mr. David Martin, who is in fact a person who deals with many clients, who says that many disabled people are worried about their future with home care and he has not found one person, one client who has been in favour of the government's policy

to privatize this very vital service, this very vital home care service.

I would like to ask the Premier, would he put this decision on hold? I am asking the Premier, the head of the government, the person where the buck stops, will he put on hold the decision to privatize home care and meet with David Martin and other clients of home care service who are begging this government to stop privatizing home care and listen to them?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I have met with Mr. Martin on many occasions. I know colleagues of mine have done the same. Mr. Martin's contribution to our self-managed Home Care program is very, very much appreciated.

Honourable members opposite had to be dragged kicking and screaming to agree with giving some people some autonomy and allowing them to make choices and decisions for themselves. The honourable members opposite ought to be scorned and criticized a lot for that particular position they have taken with respect to self-management for people and independence. Honourable members opposite only like to whisper their support for that in case their union boss friends hear that they support it.

Privatization—Consultation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The minister has just indicated to this House that he has met with Mr. Martin about this issue. In Mr. Martin's brief—and I would ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to read this because I think the minister is misleading the people of Manitoba—he says he has never, ever been consulted by the provincial Conservative government about the privatization of home care.

He goes on to say, Madam Speaker—and I address this to the Premier—that the government is making such a large decision about something that impacts on their lifestyle, on their independence. The government is making this major decision which they were never, ever consulted on.

I would ask the Premier now, in light of the contradiction from the Minister of Health, in light of this contradiction to the people of this province, to listen to David Martin and other clients who have never been

consulted, contrary to what the Minister of Health has said, and put this decision on hold.

Will the Premier now himself consult with health care economists and health care clients about a very wrong decision on the service and cost to people who rely on home care here in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member should understand something. David Martin and many others have followed very carefully developments in health care in Manitoba. It was way back in 1994, I think it was, that the Seven Oaks Hospital project was undertaken and a report prepared and produced. At that time, I remember a front page news headline talking about these being possibilities for the future. This was long before the election. The honourable member—all the petitions that he has written up refer to things that were said before and after. This sort of thing that we are talking about, the use of competition to provide better services for people, was discussed way back when, and never the subject of anything but openness on my part with David Martin or with whomever I happened to be talking.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the most needed services by home care clients is the home support program. Home support costs in Manitoba according to Professor Shapiro are the lowest in the country. In Manitoba, the costs for this service are \$10 per hour, whereas in other jurisdictions such as B.C. they are \$17 an hour and Quebec, \$16 an hour.

Can the Premier explain to us in this House today why the government is taking the most cost-efficient program in the country and privatizing it when it already is demonstrated to be cost-effective and efficient?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, there is a selectiveness here that does not bear out all of the facts. What Dr. Shapiro forgot to mention, or did not mention in any event, was that in most provinces in Canada the concept of contracting out these services is underway. But when we are talking about costs, Dr. Shapiro forgot to mention that in most provinces of this country, with the exception of Quebec and Manitoba, there are user fees charged.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister, therefore, when we are talking about cost and user fees that he still has not refuted from his original document, can he explain why Professor Shapiro also said yesterday, why is she hearing rumours in the system about things like core costs, core plus costs, core—[interjection] The minister laughs—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1420)

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister explain why his document has wording to the effect and why Professor Shapiro said she is hearing in the system about things like core, core plus and core plus plus payments? Can the minister explain what that is?

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I am sorry if I am amused by the—I am not sorry. I am amused by the honourable member's question because he talks about rumours and Dr. Shapiro asking about rumours, and he wants me to confirm or explain why Dr. Shapiro is concerned about these rumours.

He is the person who is passing the rumours around. He and his union boss friends are putting out stories about user fees and cuts to services. Maybe that is where Dr. Shapiro got it, because she certainly did not get it from me.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I will let perhaps the bemused minister—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Perhaps the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) will answer this question, if the bemused minister will not.

Can the Premier explain why and where savings are going to be made in the program since the Premier has said there will be \$10-million savings in the privatization? His own minister has said there will be no savings in the privatization, and the associate deputy minister says she thinks there might be \$10-million savings, but they are not sure. Can the Premier explain that?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member has already made this case for me. He has, by putting—with the use of incorrect information, I might add—by trying to make the point that there is no increase in spending in home care, which any review of the budgets of this province will demonstrate there have been repeated increases year after year, but I cannot demonstrate that we can show you that we have value received for all of those millions of increased spending.

We are up to about 113 percent here in the city of Winnipeg alone in terms of increased expenditures in home care for the past eight years, and yet I cannot show you that we have increases in service to clients to that particular extent. We know, by improvements in efficiency of scheduling services and other improvements brought about by allowing competition to be brought in, that there will be savings. At the same time we are adding \$8 million, finding savings. These are ways that we are going to be able to provide service to people for many years to come.

If we depended only on honourable members opposite, they would be out borrowing money and so on, but they cannot do that anymore because the bankers of this world see New Democrats coming and say, stay away from my door.

Health Care Facilities Closures

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, in December the Minister of Health indicated that Seven Oaks Hospital and Misericordia Hospital would be closed; Seven Oaks would be closed and turned into a geriatric centre, Misericordia into a walk-in clinic. When asked about savings, he could not answer. He said that the costing would be done before February. In February we were told the costing study still was not ready. We are losing skilled doctors, nurses and other staff, putting patients and their families under great and unnecessary stress and holding up real reform of the hospital system.

Will the minister tonight tell the patients and staff of Misericordia Hospital, at their vigil at which he is going to speak, that he is now going to abandon this ill-advised, ill-considered, unplanned plan?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I hope that I will be able to have an opportunity

to tell those who are there that the plans brought forward by the design teams are the subject of cost-benefit evaluations at the present time. If the honourable member thinks we should not undertake those things, let him say so.

Mr. Sale: I would have done the studies first, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister finally acknowledge that the real savings in closing these hospitals, whose combined budget is over \$96 million a year, will not likely even reach 10 percent of this total and may well be less? Will he finally admit that he has no plan and virtually no costing data at all at this time?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, if the honourable member is so interested in savings, let him track down his good friend Bob Rae and find out how much the closure of 10,000 acute hospital beds in Ontario saved that particular government. Let the honourable member ask his friends in Saskatchewan how much they saved by closing down 52 rural hospitals in the NDP province of Saskatchewan.

If the honourable member is suggesting that we should be proceeding with either abandoning or accepting recommendations without the benefit of a cost-benefit analysis, let him say so.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister then commit today to releasing the costing data before any decision is made so that Manitobans can judge for themselves the merits of closing and changing these hospitals in Winnipeg?

Mr. McCrae: Until the cost-benefit analysis is completed, I do not have anything to make available to the honourable member, but like everything else in this process, it has been an extremely open process, and I am—[interjection] Well, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was invited and took part to some extent in the discussions in the forum put on by KPMG, which is all part and parcel of this process. The honourable member for Kildonan himself was involved in that. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), I do not know. Did you show up? I forget. But the honourable member may have been there as well, so do not tell me that it is not an open process. That is exactly what it is, and that is why there is so much debate about it—because it is a very open process.

Home Care Program Privatization—Rural Manitoba

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, even though this government has no studies or reports to prove that home care will improve under privatization, they are continuing on this path, and they are misleading people in rural Manitoba by saying that there will be no changes to the delivery of home care in the rural area. In fact, all direct service workers in rural Manitoba have received a letter saying there will be no changes in how home care will be delivered in rural Manitoba.

I want to ask the minister how he can make statements like that when his own cabinet document says that the rural health authorities will take over all delivery services, including home care services, by April 1997.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for that question because I do not want there to be any confusion about the announcements that have been made and the initiatives proposed.

Honourable members know that there are some people who have been misled into thinking that there would be changes like user fees and changes like cuts in services. This is the reason that I wrote to home care clients. And I will do it again, Madam Speaker, and again and again if it is necessary, to counter the misinformation that is put out by honourable members opposite and some of their friends in the union movement.

In rural Manitoba the rural health associations will indeed be responsible for the delivery of the whole range of health services, including home care, in the future. So I am not able to say that forever and ever there will be no changes because I do not know what approach the rural health associations will take.

No doubt those associations will be watching the performance of the home care system here in the city of Winnipeg. If they find that it meets the expectations we expect that it will, they may indeed move in that direction. But that is for them to decide and not me. As long as standards are maintained at levels that are satisfactory to the government of Manitoba, the regional health associations will be in charge of the delivery of services.

Ms. Wowchuk: Why then did the minister send a letter directly to its workers saying there is going to be no

change when he is saying right now that it is open to change? What kind of image are you trying to create in rural Manitoba, saying that there is not going to be a change?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that questions are to be a single question, not multiple-part questions, and they are to contain one carefully drafted sentence.

Mr. McCrae: I hope the honourable member is not attempting to split hairs here. What I am talking about with respect to changes with the clients of our home care system is to counter the allegations, untruthful, malicious and mischievous allegations made by certain people in our province with respect to user fees which we are not bringing in with this initiative, with respect to cuts in services which are not part of this initiative. Indeed, the only place that there are no user fees in this whole country are Quebec and Manitoba.

* (1430)

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask the minister if he can tell this House whether the regional health authorities will have the opportunity to continue to offer not-for-profit home care service, as is in place right now, or whether they will have to contract out services as is being proposed here in Winnipeg. What are the options for people of rural Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: I have answered that question already. The regional health authorities will be responsible for the delivery of home care services in the regions. It is their decision as to how it is done. The point is that certain levels of service and standards have to be reached or else there will be problems for those associations.

Home Care Program Privatization—Rural Manitoba

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, this government, and its contingency plan for a possible home care worker strike, has instructed the local hospital in Winkler to make 10 acute care beds available. Yet, in this area, of the 165 home care patients, 65 are heavy-care patients.

Will the Minister of Health tell the House what will happen to the 55 heavy-care patients who will not be able to get into Winkler hospital?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I certainly do not wish to see people left without services because their care providers make a decision to withdraw services. Let us say that I feel very strongly about that. I hope the honourable member does too and does everything that he can, and maybe persuade our friends in the New Democratic Party, to work with their friends in the union movement to ensure that people do not withdraw services from their patients. But a responsible government has to be prepared for such eventualities. Just in case the New Democrats decide that they do not want to put the patients first, we are going to have to have a contingency plan, and we do.

Labour Dispute

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Will the minister be providing additional funding to the hospitals to compensate for extra demands made upon them, even if he has to use lottery revenues to make up for the shortfall in funding?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): With due respect to the honourable member, it is not my intention to discuss all of the aspects of the contingency plan because, Madam Speaker, I hope we do not need one, frankly. But, we have clients who need services and we are not going to turn our backs on them.

Mr. Kowalski: Have the extra demands that will be placed on the Manitoba hospitals in the event of a spring flooding been taken into account in the contingency plans for the home care strike?

Mr. McCrae: Well, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) has warned us that that is a potential and a possibility and a probability in a lot of areas, so obviously it is something that you have to have a contingency for.

Independent Schools Funding Formula

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

In 1990 when the Filmon government made its agreement with private schools to increase the funding to 80 percent of the provincial public school grant, the private schools naturally anticipated considerably increased funding, but by 1996 it was clear that the government was intent on systematic reductions of public

school grants; consequently, the funding for private schools would also be less.

Could the minister confirm that private schools requested a new funding formula based on the total cost of educating a child in the public system, a formula which holds out for them now the prospect of increases?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member, of course, presumes that funding for education continues to go down. She presumes that the expenditure per pupil will continue to rise. I tell her that boards across this province are working hard to contain the expenditure cost per pupil to reduce it if they can and that her assumptions that funding decreases will continue if we can get to our debt concern and if we can get to our federal counterparts are both erroneous assumptions.

I can indicate to the member that the funding for independent schools will rise in a few years to 50 percent of the cost per pupil of educating a child in Manitoba, which equates in dollar terms to the same amount as the earlier descriptive of 80 percent of the funding. Six of one, half a dozen of another, whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, did the minister tell school trustees across Manitoba, as they faced a \$15-million provincial cut, that when they voted yes this year to tax increases, as some of them did, they were automatically voting yes to a proportionate increase to private schools?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, having been a trustee, I could indicate that when trustees are voting for tax increases, they do so based upon all the things in front of them that affect them, and they work very hard to make sure that they do not have tax increases. In every instance, trustees work for that.

Madam Speaker, as I indicated before, the member's assumptions that education funding will continue to decrease and that per-pupil cost will continue to increase are assumptions and speculation. In terms of whether it is based on cost or on funding, there are advantages and disadvantages either way. I am saying to her that funding equates in dollar terms to the same.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, could the minister tell us why she continues to refuse to place that agreement on the table? Let us look at the numbers. Let us look at the figures—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the question has been asked many times and answered many times. You know, we could just rehearse this and rehearse this until we are finally ready to put on our show, but I think we have been through the subject over and over again, and I do not think there is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1440)

Social Assistance Food/Clothing Allowance

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, last year when we asked questions about families on social allowance having to use their food budget to pay their rent, this government said that those are choices that people have to make. It seems that with the budget, the government is now making that choice for people by cutting some \$10 million from social allowance entirely from the food and clothing allowance for recipients who are tenants.

I want to ask the Minister of Family Services to explain and justify taking the entire budget cut to the poorest families in Manitoba entirely from the food and clothing allowance, while guaranteeing some \$50 million from provincial tax revenue to the landlords in Manitoba.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me again the opportunity to reannounce what we announced with our welfare reform package.

Within the Department of Family Services, the issues that we deal with and the people whom we deal with are some of the very most needy right across the province, people with mental disabilities that we have responsibility for support for. Those children who are a

part of our child welfare system, we have to provide support for. We provide support for women who have been abused, women and their children who need refuge and some security in their lives. We provide support for daycare services, child care services throughout the province and also support for those who are not working and are on welfare.

Madam Speaker, we managed to maintain with this year's budget the support and the levels for those with disabilities, for seniors, for those single parents with young children, and for women and children who need the support of our shelters and abuse system. We have maintained the support where we feel it is most needed, and the most vulnerable have been protected.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Family Services or the minister responsible for residential tenancies or perhaps the Minister responsible for Housing to table one study or analysis to justify ensuring that landlords keep \$50 million and that tenants on social allowance are going to have to lose 21 percent of their food and clothing allowance—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me the opportunity to repeat that we believe, as a government, that the best form of social security is a job. The focus we are placing on our support is to look at employment first and provide the opportunities through new projects and new programs to try to help people train and enter the workforce. As we have said before, we do not want for the women and children in the province of Manitoba a lifetime of poverty on welfare. We want more from our system than a dependency on welfare as their only means of support. We are working very diligently to try to help those who are on social assistance become independent and build their self-esteem and provide support for their children through meaningful jobs.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, with \$98 million of taxpayers' dollars going from the city and the provincial governments to landlords for often substantial housing for people on social allowance, I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services, who is on welfare, landlords or unemployed families?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow

me again to look at where we have placed the priorities in the Department of Family Services, and our priorities are on those and providing support to those most in need. We have managed to maintain the support and our social allowance rates for those with young children, for those women who are in abuse shelters and for their children, for the elderly and for those with disabilities. We are, in many instances, putting in place support programs for those who are considered employable to help them find the opportunities and the job opportunities that will help them become independent and self-sufficient. We believe that the best form of social security is a job, and we are working towards that end with the decisions that we have made and the changes that we have made through welfare reform.

Goods and Services Tax Harmonization

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Recent newspaper reports have stated that the Prime Minister and the federal Finance minister have been holding secret negotiations with provincial Premiers to gain support for harmonization of the GST with the PST. Atlantic provincial governments are now actively considering harmonizing based on a promise of transitional financial assistance.

My question to the minister—[interjection] If honourable members would give me a chance, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: My question to the minister: Has the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or himself, the Minister of Finance, met with the Prime Minister or the federal Minister of Finance to discuss the possibility of harmonization of the GST with the PST?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I am not aware of any meetings on this issue with the Prime Minister. I have had meetings with the federal Minister of Finance on this issue amongst many others over the course of the last couple of months. I am certainly prepared to, in more detail, provide our position on the issue.

We have had a series of concerns about harmonization that we discussed in this House on many occasions. One of them is the loss of revenue to our provincial Treasury. Another one is the shift from businesses to consumers. Another one is the broadening of the base to a whole range of items that the provincial sales tax currently does not apply to: books, children's clothing, and so on.

The federal government has offered some transitional funding as it relates to the loss of revenue for provincial governments, but that only addresses one of the concerns. So far those other concerns remain outstanding. As a result of that, we are not anywhere near any agreement on harmonization.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the minister for that answer. This is a follow-up to that, Madam Speaker. Can the Minister of Finance assure Manitobans that they will not be enticed in any way by some type of short-term financial incentive by the federal government to harmonize our PST with the GST to help the Liberal government off the hook on their election promises regarding the GST?

Mr. Stefanson: As I responded to in the first part, the issue of loss of revenue to our Treasury is one of the concerns, and the federal government has put forward some offers in terms of transitional funding. But that is only one of the concerns, and even if that gap could be bridged, there are still these other concerns which have not been addressed, as I said in the previous answer. They have not been addressed to our satisfaction, and obviously there is no benefit to Manitobans to be harmonizing with the GST.

Elimination

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I thank the minister for that answer. Would the minister be prepared to advocate with the federal government a new, fairer tax, namely a financial transaction tax on stocks and bonds, which could be as little as one-tenth of 1 percent on such transactions and yet raise enough money to abolish the GST in Canada entirely?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): If the member for Brandon East has any details on his proposed tax increase I would welcome assessing them and looking at them, but—

An Honourable Member: He is very experienced in that area.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I know this has been a long afternoon, but I certainly would appreciate the co-operation of all honourable members in showing courtesy to each other, whether the opposition is posing a question or the government is responding.

The honourable Minister of Finance, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. Stefanson: Just concluding, Madam Speaker, we certainly recognize the expertise the NDP bring to tax increases, but Manitobans have told us consistently they feel they pay enough taxes to all levels of government—federal, provincial, municipal, school boards and so on. If he has some particulars he would like to share with me, I would be more than pleased to look at them.

* (1450)

Manitoba Hydro Employment Reductions

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, this past February the Dominion Bond Rating Service, which I have a copy of here and I am sure that the minister does, stated that, and I quote: Manitoba Hydro, with its low variables, semivariable costs, helped by high hydro generation, is probably in the best competitive position of any of the Canadian electrical utilities, and it should be able to compete in any market east, west or south.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. The honourable member for St. James, to complete her question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I would ask that side of the House allow us the opportunity to ask questions, which is our right.

Madam Speaker: Just ask them.

Ms. Mihychuk: Yesterday, in Question Period, the minister admitted that Manitoba Hydro, which has already cut 500 jobs and taken Filmon Fridays, is being

restructured but declined to give any details. Can the minister now tell the House how many more jobs are going to be cut at a time when Hydro has record profits and contracts through Limestone that go to the year 2006?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): It is a very opportune moment that the member for St. James asked me this question because I happened to be going through a press release that she issued some time ago on the issue of map staking, where she indicated that the province was about to get into map staking with no public discussions or consultations, in her press release. The reality was absolutely opposite, and the member for St. James brings information and innuendo continually to public debate that is not true at all.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James, for one very short question.

Privatization

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I think the minister is confused. I am not talking about map staking, I am talking about Hydro.

Madam Speaker, can the minister, in all seriousness, assure this House and Manitobans that he or the Premier's Office will not privatize any unit of Hydro or any service that Manitoba Hydro provides?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for Hydro, for a very short response.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, I certainly was aware the member was talking about Hydro. What I was talking about is the member's accuracy in bringing forward information.

Let me just say to the honourable member, and she had a briefing this morning with Manitoba Hydro, that Manitoba Hydro is undergoing an internal reorganization which is designed to ensure that it continues to be one of the most competitive utilities in North America.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Easter Service—Legislative Building

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to advise this Chamber that I had the pleasure of attending an Easter hymn service at 5:30 a.m. Easter Sunday morning, on the grand staircase in this building, accompanied by 1,000 citizens from Manitoba.

We were treated to a magnificent array of hymns sung by members of the Manitoba Choral Association, directed by no less than Bramwell Tovey, William Baerg, Henry Engbrecht and Mel Braun, accompanied by the Winnipeg Symphony Brass and organist Lawrence Ritchley. The event was broadcast, Madam Speaker, on CBC-FM from coast to coast in Canada. The program was hosted by the learned Dr. Murdith McLean, warden of St. John's College, and the renowned Howard Dyck.

It was a delight to hear the combined voices of Manitobans singing out the glory and praise of the Easter festival, and we owe a sincere debt of thanks to the hardworking volunteers, one of whom is my constituent Patricia Rabson of River Heights and also the many technicians of CBC who made this occasion possible. I am proud that this program was carried coast to coast from the heart of our country, our wonderful Manitoba. Thank you.

Social Assistance—Policy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Dumb policy ideas which discourage individual initiatives. Number one, would it make sense if you were on social assistance to want to increase your income by working? Would it make sense to take in a boarder? Not in Manitoba. One of my constituents who is on social assistance wanted to take in a boarder to increase her income. She was told that if she did she would be cut off social assistance. Whatever happened to encouraging individual initiative and independence? What happened to common sense?

Under the existing work incentive program people on social assistance are allowed to work and keep a percentage of their earnings. The amounts are meagre. Until recently, it was \$50 per month. Everything over that amount is deducted from the welfare cheque dollar for dollar. In effect, the poor are the only people in Manitoba who are taxed back at the rate of 100 percent.

This, too, discourages initiative and independence, something about which the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) is constantly talking. If the minister was serious about encouraging initiative and independence she would get rid of this dumb policy which prohibits my constituent from taking a boarder in order to supplement her income.

Stay tuned, Madam Speaker. This is only the first in a series of dumb policies, policies which need to be changed.

Victoria General Hospital 25th Anniversary

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words this afternoon in recognition of the Victoria General Hospital's 25th anniversary of its present location on Pembina Highway.

Since 1971 the Victoria General Hospital has been an important part of the community in south Winnipeg. The commitment to excellence shown by the administration and staff at the Vic makes our hospital a model for the health care standards all Manitobans have come to expect. Throughout its history the Vic has worked hard to focus on the changing needs of the community. This hospital has anticipated and adapted to change, rather than merely reacting to it, while maintaining quality patient care as their first priority.

The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) joins me in congratulating the CEO at the Victoria General Hospital, Marion Suski, the board of directors, the dedicated staff and the volunteers who have made the Victoria General Hospital what it is today. They will continue to work to ensure the high quality of health care for the future.

Madam Speaker, as our province continues its reforms to the health care system, the Victoria Hospital continues to work in a proactive manner with the community, its patients and our government to ensure that the Vic moves strategically to work within the health care system to better reflect the changing needs of our community. Thank you.

Fine Increases—Winnipeg Police Services

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I rise to talk about a government news release today about fine increases. I

have mixed feelings about these increases in fines because, having been a traffic officer with the Winnipeg Police Services, I had most of these fines memorized and now if I ever go back to police work I will have to memorize them again. [interjection] That is right.

What I want to share with the government is my knowledge from my years of experience on the police force that to be a deterrent not only does there need to be a strict punishment or a fine, but there has to be a good chance of being caught.

One of the biggest impacts on safety on our highways would be photo radar. It would have a far greater impact than an increase in fines, which is nothing more than a grab for money by this government. If they were really interested in safety on Manitoba highways, they would do what they have done in B.C. on March 1, introducing photo radar, and within one month the number of speeders has decreased dramatically which has increased the safety on B.C. highways.

I would encourage this government or the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) and the Minister in charge of MPIC (Mr. Cummings) to get together and do something that does more than generate money for this government but will make our highways safer.

* (1500)

Female Poverty

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak today about the institutionalization of female poverty in Manitoba. Today, as Chapter 1, the story will continue. First we get the theory: the so-called balanced budget legislation, which because of its limited perspective, dictates that the budget will be balanced by cutting programs, implementing user fees and implementing hidden tax increases. After the theory comes the practice: a series of cuts announced prior to the April 2 budget to health, education and health care, and then we get the budget itself in its full-blown draconian glory.

Clearly, women who are forced to access social services at a much greater rate than their male counterparts will suffer disproportionate hardship. Sixty percent of single parent families live below the poverty line and 85 percent of these families are headed by

women. Many are dependent on social assistance. Some 75 percent of social assistance recipients are women. This means an income of 50 percent to 60 percent below the poverty line, and take off an extra 10 for the current cuts.

Those women who are single parents and have children over six will automatically be considered ripe and ready for the workforce or for training, though some have special circumstances, like one of my constituents with two children over six, both of whom are severely asthmatic. Jobs are as scarce as hen's teeth, while training programs are numerically inadequate and often inaccessible. The net result is a vicious cycle of poverty with many entrances and only carefully concealed exits. In this way Manitoba's women are kept poor, ill-educated, unhealthy, ill-housed and badly fed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and on the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, and on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in further amendment thereto.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): It certainly is a pleasure to rise today and respond to the budget presented earlier in this session, and I would like to begin by welcoming back to the House yourself, Madam Speaker. I know it is a difficult job and seeing it performed day in and day out I have grown to appreciate your judgments and look forward to dealing with in the future. To the Clerk's Office and staff, honourable members and to the Pages, welcome.

It is a great honour to rise in the House as an elected official and I use the words "great honour" to emphasize the privilege I feel to represent the people of Turtle Mountain that I represent as a constituency and also the people of the province of Manitoba.

I have learned in the short term that I have been here that it is a great responsibility that the people have put

on myself and on everyone that serves as an elected member and also as a member of government which has to make decisions that will direct and hopefully lead the province into the next century.

As a member of the Legislative Assembly, we were elected by people who nine years ago wanted change. I think that the whole emphasis of the budgets that we have brought forward since that time and the budgets that we have seen this time are dealing with the changes that are going on around us. It is also an honour and, again, as a representative of those people I feel a need and a must that I ensure that their needs are met. Again I would emphasize, that is what I feel the recent budget was all about.

I would like to take a few minutes to address what the government has accomplished with this budget. First and foremost I believe this budget demonstrates our government's commitment to handling the public purse with respect and with responsibility. I can certainly see that it is easy to solve everyday problems and everyone's problems with more money, but I can also see from experience and from being here that the money and the availability of money is no longer there. The people of Manitoba have asked us to operate within a restricted limit, and that limit is the budget that we are dealing with.

I would also like to suggest that it would be easy to govern with the ideas that come forward from across the floor, but I do believe that that method demonstrates a lack of vision. Instead, what the Filmon government has achieved after nine years without major tax increases is an environment that welcomes, establishes, develops and promotes growth in all sectors of Manitoba.

Certainly each and every member has the right to critique a budget when it is tabled. I have sat here and listened in the last few days to members on both sides making their presentations. I would like to suggest that there is one thing that has disturbed me and has disturbed me deeply. I would like to note that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) did not respond so much to the budget as he did launch a personal attack on the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba and the ministers of the government of Manitoba. I feel that that is a large disservice to those people who are serving the general population and the people of Manitoba and by what I see has been put forward in a very faithful and very generous way.

I would like to suggest that the personal attack put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, and I would like to ask him one question. That question would be, is this constructive? Is this helping to resolve the many difficult challenges facing the people of Manitoba or is it merely an opportunity for the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) to reaffirm his own leadership abilities to a group of people that seem to be wandering aimlessly?

The debate on the budget has moved back and forth from one member to the next across the floor from good budget to bad budget. At this time I would like to put my comments on the record. I took the opportunity to get a definition of the word "budget" from the Webster Canadian Dictionary. It reads, budget, a listing or plan that shows how much money is available and how it is to be divided up and spent for various purposes.

In my opinion, the budget does exactly that. We have presented to the public, the people of Manitoba, a document that shows how much is available—that is called revenue—and which also explains how this money is to be divided up by various governmental departments. That is called expense.

In this budget, we have also shown the people of Manitoba that we are the most efficiently run government in Canada, and for that, again, I offer my congratulations to the ministers in cabinet and to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba, for showing leadership not only for Manitobans but for all Canadians. The areas that are most important, I believe, and the people of Manitoba have told us this, are the same. We have shown that the government of Manitoba cares about health care. In fact, we have shown we care more than any other province in Canada by allocating 33.8 percent of our entire budget to this department. This is more than any other provincial government of any other political stripe in Canada, and, again, I think that shows well for the leaders of the province of Manitoba. I would also hasten to add, Madam Speaker, that this is more than the members opposite have ever directed at health.

We have shown the people of Manitoba that we care about education. We have allocated 18.7 percent of our budget, again more than the members opposite ever budgeted, for education. We have shown the people of Manitoba that we care about social services. We have set aside 12.2 percent of our budget for this essential component of our society, and I would challenge the

members opposite to compare that figure with any of their previous budgets. Madam Speaker, these three departments clearly represent the government of Manitoba's, my colleagues' commitment to the people of Manitoba.

This budget, Madam Speaker, also sends a very clear message to rural Manitobans. As the MLA for Turtle Mountain, I had the privilege of serving as a co-chair on the Working for Value Rural Task Force, which took seven weeks to travel throughout rural Manitoba this past February and March. From this tour, I became very aware of what rural Manitobans were telling this government. They were saying to us that this government listens. They were saying that this government had a vision.

* (1510)

From February 5 to March 21, the panel, consisting of my colleagues Mr. Jack Penner and Mr. Franklin Pitura, travelled throughout rural Manitoba. I must admit, Madam Speaker, it was a very new experience to me to travel to many communities that I have not been into before and to meet the friendly, vibrant people that live in those communities. We were there to listen to those people who are shaping the future of Manitoba's economy and also the structure of the future of Manitoba in the years to come. We were very happy, and they were very happy to hear from us, that the progress and the future of Manitoba did not lie in future tax increases which would only hinder their efforts for success. We were there to hear what they wanted in terms of deregulation, what they wanted in terms of assistance, be it in a direction or in accessing assistance through government agencies. We wanted to hear what they were looking for and presenting in terms of ideas to diversify their businesses and economies, and, quite frankly, I was overwhelmed by the attitude that we met.

The individuals that we came in contact with were thrilled to have the opportunity to meet with others, to share new ideas, to debate current and existing regulations and things that are put into place by government from time to time but most of all they were there to speculate on what the future would look like. What will the future of Manitoba look like in rural Manitoba and how can it benefit all Manitobans? We were also there, Madam Speaker, particularly to listen to the success and the success stories that people in rural

Manitoba have put forward in diversifying their businesses to prepare for the next generation of living in rural Manitoba. The message we send to rural Manitobans with this budget is our commitment to sustaining growth in rural Manitoba and the rural economy.

Recent announcements which have been received with open arms were the establishment of an irrigation initiative, and we have provided easier access to capital through financing programs such as those offered by MACC. These initiatives will encourage diversification into livestock, into value-added products, value-added processes which are being highly praised throughout Canada. We have enhanced crop insurance, which will allow producers access to affordable, quality crop insurance, and I will add that this enhanced program is the first of its kind in Canada.

We have successfully launched a \$12.5-million Community Works Loan Program. During the tour that was one of the strongest messages that came forward from rural Manitobans: Give us the ability to move forward on our own in our own communities with our own ideas. I believe we have answered that question. I would suggest Rural Development's Grow Bonds Program, which has leveraged additional investment of more than \$21 million in rural Manitoba, has been a very successful program, and I see only bigger and better things on the horizon for this program.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative, Madam Speaker, has generated more than \$170 million of investment. This is investment that perhaps would have come over time but is here today helping not only rural Manitobans but all Manitobans. The government has developed the rural youth programs where over 3,000 jobs were created for rural youth since 1992, and I believe this has also benefited many people in the province of Manitoba.

We have offered provincial, municipal tax-sharing payments increased by 6 percent, bringing the total to over \$23 million. Finally, Madam Speaker, the government of Manitoba has announced an overall increase of 10 percent for rural economic development, meaning that this year we will be contributing over \$19 million to ensure that growth continues not only for the people of Turtle Mountain but for the people of Manitoba. These are the directions that this government

is taking which affect my constituents directly and, I might, add the directness outlined in this budget which benefits all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I want to address the topics that I believe and we hear every day are first and foremost on people's minds. I believe it is easy for the opposition to stand and rise every day and question the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) about health policies and health procedures in the province of Manitoba. I would like to suggest to them that we all have individual instances in cases that we can bring forward not only to the government but to the people of Manitoba, where we have people that are suffering and suffering greatly. I would challenge anybody on the other side that would question any of our ministers or our members on this side of the House as to their sincerity in regards to the current health care situation. I think that we are all respected people that sit in this House and that there is none of us that would come forward with a plan devised to hurt the people most in need in the province of Manitoba.

This government is setting the standard that others must follow in health. We are spending more than any other province, and our budget sets aside more than the members opposite ever did. I sometimes find it a little bit unusual and a little bit hard to sit here day in and day out and be lectured by an opposition that has never met the commitment that this government has to the people in health care.

I fully agree with this government that says to the people of Manitoba, wherever possible, if you can pay for this and the money that we can save can help the people that are really in need of the programs out there, then that is the direction that we should go, Madam Speaker. I do not believe that I, as a personal statement, would want the government to pick up eye care for me when I can personally afford it. When there is someone that cannot, that should be provided for them.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that in the privatization of home care, I have had several calls from rural Manitoba with great concerns. These concerns are not as directly related as to what the opposition would be, but their concerns are dealing with: We know we need good health care; we know we need good home care; let us do the best job we can afford to do.

I believe the province is offering that in this budget. I believe they are offering leadership and examples and

methods in which we can provide the best possible care within the constraints, and I say constraints, but I also emphasize the fact of the largesse of our health budget as compared to other provinces in Canada.

In education, again, Madam Speaker, by way of introduction, this budget allocates more towards education than any budget brought forward by the members opposite in the '80s. We are preparing our children for the technological challenges of tomorrow, and we are doing it today.

I would like to refer to the two youths, young people that helped us on this task force. Day in and day out I hear of the doom and gloom on the other side of the House, and I was expecting to find ill-prepared, unwanted-to-work young people coming forward on this task force. I found that to be exactly the opposite. These people were prepared, they were well educated and they were willing to work. They were very willing to work. There was seldom a day went by that these people did not put in the extra time and effort, recognizing that we too were on a limited budget and that everyone had to pull together to make it succeed. I would like to commend them here and today.

We are also meeting the challenges in education by allocating over \$1 billion in total of our budget to the future Manitobans of this province, the future taxpayers, the future wage earners, the future leaders of this province. We are suggesting that more parental involvement take place in the direction and the formation of our education for our children. Who better to ask than the parents of the children what they need to prepare them for the future? I feel we have done that, are doing that and will continue to do that over the next several years.

* (1520)

I would like to suggest, Madam Speaker, we have added \$1.7 million for education renewal, bringing the total to \$5.4 million. We have introduced a new \$12-million learning tax credit, making us the first province in Canada to provide a refundable learning tax credit. As the parent of a graduating university student, I can tell you, and I regret to say, that it is probably four or five years too late for me, but it will provide for those young people that are going to school. It will give them an extra source of revenue when they are doing up their

taxes at the end of the year. I think it has been long overdue, and I commend the government for moving forward with this initiative.

In education, I would suggest that the bottom line, and I use bottom line in several connotations here, has to be what our children learn, and that is what this government is committed to.

In rural development, I have commented on this earlier, but I still want to single out a few of the highlights again. I believe that the overall increase of 10 percent for rural development is of benefit to all Manitobans. Rural Manitoba, over the next 10 to 15 years, I would suggest to all members, will be the economic driving force in the province of Manitoba. We have seen several new announcements and new initiatives brought forward, and I would suspect that with the environment that we have created for the new businesses and the businesses looking to expand, Manitoba will become very, very promising in their eyes.

The provincial municipal tax-sharing payments increased by 6 percent to a total of over \$23 million. Again, we are quite often accused of suggesting that governments are passing the buck, passing it on to the next group of people. I think this clearly demonstrates our commitment to the province and to the people of rural Manitoba.

I think the successful launching of a Community Works Loan Program, which I mentioned earlier, in our travels on the task force, it was brought to our attention again that these are what the people in rural Manitoba wanted. They wanted to have a say and input into the decision making that affects their livelihoods and the communities with which they live.

I do not think we could ever discuss a budget without bringing forward many of the economic growth indicators that we use from time to time to not only justify the direction that we are moving but also to put the facts on the table as to what is actually happening out there and not what is perceived. I would suggest, and the figures will confirm it, that Manitoba experienced retail sales growth at double the national rate. I would say that speaks very well for the economy.

Our population growth in Manitoba is at a nine-year high. Manitoba's world exports continue to boom with strong increases in the foreign market. In 1995, our

export sales to the U.S. grew at the second highest rate in Canada. When you look at where Manitoba fits into the map and into the population base in the country, I would suggest to you, that is a very good compliment to the management of the province of Manitoba.

Manitoba experienced the largest percentage increase in total investment in Canada, and, again, I would suggest that a lot of that investment is happening in rural Manitoba where the attitude is we are open for business and ready to move on.

Manitoba reached an all-time high in manufacturing investment and the largest increase in manufacturing shipments in 20 years. Manitoba experienced three consecutive double-digit increases in farm cash receipts. I would like to congratulate at this time the government for those successes. I think that it is the strong management that they have put forward that have been able to help these things occur.

Finally, when I made my opening comments, I suggested to the members of the House and particularly, I guess, to the members opposite that we are definitely in a period of change. I think regardless of whether we walk around with blinders or blindfolds on there is still change that will and must occur, and we must position ourselves to be in the best possible position to deal with and perhaps make change occur in the best possible way.

I can remember in my own personal experiences the debates in rural Manitoba as a very, very young boy when Hydro was coming into southwest Manitoba. It seemed that it was something that everyone thought was a passing fad. I can remember radios being made in our basement with crystals. Unfortunately, these things were happening far faster in the metropolitan areas, but they were still happening and we still had to make the necessary changes.

I can remember reading about the debate of the floodway and what it would or could or might or might not do for the province of Manitoba. Another change that brought forward and brought people in Manitoba to the table, not to necessarily agree on all the issues but at least to debate and come to a consensus.

I remember, Madam Speaker, McDonald's opening up their first restaurant and selling hamburgers for 10 cents and many of the people in rural Manitoba saying, I cannot believe 10 cents for a hamburger. There must no

beef in it. Where is the beef for 10 cents? But they did it and they changed and they continued to change.

Actually it was not at high school, it was at university where we were introduced to computers. Now my son, who is 10 years old, is being introduced to computers, and I think that is a remarkable thing for children to have that opportunity. I still am illiterate on the computer, but I am learning with his help. It is something that he is giving me the instruction as to how to make it work better and beneficial to me.

Madam Speaker, I bring these examples forward because I would like to suggest to you that change has occurred, will occur and will continue. If we do not open our eyes and see the future or at least vision the future, then we cannot prepare for the future. Change will occur and must occur.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would just like to quote a small paraphrase from a song that was written, again, years ago but it is something that I am sure that the members opposite and all members except for the youngest of people will probably remember. I would ask that all members consider this whenever they are making decisions or whenever they are making decisions to jump up and challenge the people in government as to their means and methods and motives when they are making decisions on behalf of the Province of Manitoba.

I think we can all learn from it. I think that it is something that will benefit us all in the future. The phrase goes like this, when we are talking about change, it suggests, it says, come senators, congressmen, please heed the call, don't stand in the doorway and don't block up the hall. The times they are a changing and we must adjust to the times and to the changes.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the government of Manitoba on presenting this budget for all Manitobans. I would like to congratulate my colleagues in the ministers positions and to the Premier of Manitoba. I believe that Manitoba is moving forward and will continue to move forward, and I look forward to the prosperous years ahead of serving the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

* (1530)

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I take this opportunity to join with others to debate this very

important 1996 financial document that we have before us the past few days and the next few days to come.

I have been in this House for a number of years. I have had the privilege of being with the Schreyer government as well as the Pawley government, and I must say, the impression I have of this budget is that it is a continuation of tearing down, of undermining the basic health and social programs that we put in place back in the '70s with the Schreyer government, and it carried on with the Pawley government. I remember we brought in Pharmacare in 1973, \$50 deductible, and we paid 80 percent of the balance. We established a very strong home care system, the very best in North America. Hospital expansions occurred. We put the nursing homes under the medicare system. They did not used to be before 1973. We established a rural dental program for children.

This government, Madam Speaker, has abolished the rural dental program for children, which is a real shame. Even Sterling Lyon would not go that far. Nursing home rates have gone up to the moon, and they are so high that people can apply for supplementary welfare and get welfare while being in nursing homes because the rates have gone up so high. This is a ridiculous situation. I have had this information. I have talked to my own constituents. I have seniors living in nursing homes in Brandon who get supplementary welfare because the Department of Health has taken too much of their pension away by way of nursing home fees. That is an absolutely scandalous situation.

I say, Madam Speaker, generally we have had an undermining, a tearing down, a deterioration of the health and social programs that we put in place beginning back in the 1970s.

But I want to make it clear, this Budget Debate is not about whether or not a balanced budget is a good thing or a surplus is a good thing or a deficit is a bad thing. Everybody realizes we have to pay our way, and so we are not debating the merits of financing. The Budget Debate is essentially about philosophy, about political ideology, about priorities, social priorities, but I think back to our years with the Schreyer government. We brought in many new programs, and if you look at the figures, Madam Speaker, by the end of our eight years in office, Manitobans' relative debt position had not deteriorated. In fact, I think it actually improved a bit, that is, if you measure our debt in terms of the amount of

interest you pay on the debt as a percentage of spending. That did not really increase at all. It did increase a bit under the Lyon years, but it did not increase.

So our relative debt position did not deteriorate under the Schreyer government in spite of all the new programs that we established, as I mentioned, Pharmacare, nursing homes under the medicare system, et cetera. The Pawley government, we lived in a time of some very serious recessions, and we made a deliberate decision to attack unemployment in Manitoba through the Manitoba Jobs Fund and deliberately increased the deficit, deliberately to provide jobs for Manitobans, including some very major assets that were put in place that we are still benefiting from today. Also, we were affected by a very high interest rate regime at that time.

Nevertheless, toward the end of our term in office, we were moving out of the heavier expenditures and moving into a surplus position, and I would remind members also that the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government has had a history of balanced budgets or surplus budgets. It was the Devine Conservative government that came along and put that province in deep, deep debt. I believe the Romanow government now is working on a balanced budget. They are working to the best of their ability to cope with the burdens that they have been left with.

So do not come to this House or speak to the people of Manitoba about the merits of surpluses or balances. The fact is we realize we have to pay our way, but it is how we get the money and how we spend the money that is critical and what importance we put on health care, what importance we put on public education, for example, what importance we put on helping the poor among us.

I think this budget contains a lot of fairy tales, a lot of myths. One is that we have the longest running tax freeze in Canada for the ninth consecutive year. We have heard this time and time again, but I just take one example. Look at the 1992-93 budget. We had a property tax credit of \$75 eliminated. We broadened the sales tax to even include Big Macs, and the equivalent tax increases in that budget totalled \$114 million. It is in the budget documents. I am not making these numbers up, Madam Speaker.

There was a study compiled by the Department of Finance at the time which was made public, which

somehow or other got out, which said that the tax increases of \$114 million in '92-93 were equivalent to an 11 percent increase in personal income tax in Manitoba or a 20 percent increase in our sales taxes. So let it not be said that there have not been any tax increases under this government.

Of course, when we look at what has happened to the fee increases in nursing homes, that is a serious increase in tax on those people living in those institutions. When you raise Pharmacare deductibles, you are transferring a burden onto Manitobans, and I would say that that is equivalent to a tax for those people. The abolition of eye examinations obviously is a tax for those people who no longer will qualify for annual eye examinations under our medicare system. There is the increasing of tuition fees. These are all real additional costs for the people of Manitoba, so let it not be said that people in Manitoba are spared additional taxes or charges because that is not the case.

Another myth is that the budget protects priority social programs and confirms a commitment to health care which is second to none. Let us again look at the facts. You can quote all these percentages if you want about the percentage that we spend, but the fact is our hospitals are shrinking. We are cutting hospitals, I believe, this year by \$53 million. I know the Brandon Hospital has been downsized year after year, and, again, it is going in for some downsizing. We know welfare recipients have been cut. They have had a 20 percent cut on top of other cuts. We mentioned Pharmacare reductions. Public education is being cut by another 2 percent this year. Daycare is being hurt as well. So let it not be said that this budget protects the social programs and confirms any commitment to health care. That is just nonsense.

Madam Speaker, another myth is that the government is confirming its commitment to fiscal responsibility in this budget. Well, I say, they have been playing around with this Fiscal Stabilization Fund now for too many years. It has been like a shell game especially back when it was established by Clayton Manness, when we should have had a surplus in the first year that they came into office—thanks to policies of the previous NDP government in large measure—but instead we have a deficit being shown because they put \$200 million into a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Also, there is such a matter as underestimating revenue growth, and we believe that is what is happening in this particular budget. It has

been said that perhaps the government is putting monies away, squirreling monies away into some kind of a surplus situation to provide some slush funds that would be available when we get close to the next election and to be used for political objectives of the government in power here.

The budget projects 1.5 percent revenue increase, based on an economic growth forecast that they are using of 1.4 percent, and yet the minister elsewhere in the document says that the provincial economy is steamrolling ahead. Well, surely, Madam Speaker, that is contradictory and how can one say with a straight face that there is a commitment to fiscal responsibility? I am particularly upset about the budget because if any group in society is being hurt it has got to be the seniors. They have been hurt because of the real health care cuts that are occurring because of the Pharmacare cuts, because of the increase in nursing home rates and now because of privatization of home care. So they as a group are being hurt in particular.

I would also add, Madam Speaker, that as a group the people who are poorest in this province, for whatever reason, are also being badly hit. The poor are getting poorer at the expense of others who are not nearly as poor, and it is, I think, immoral the way this government has carried on with cuts to people who have to seek welfare.

Madam Speaker, I would also say it is immoral to use private companies paid for by taxes to provide home care services. I simply think that it is simply unacceptable to have companies being able to make profit on the backs of the sick and the elderly, courtesy of the tax system that they can use.

I would like to talk a bit more about revenues, because I believe that this government, indeed all governments, have to look for new sources of revenues today in order to provide the funding required for the various social services, health care and education services, that people demand.

* (1540)

I was reading an article recently about corporate welfare, about the biggest social programs in Canada being those for corporations. The whole area of tax loopholes, write-off deferrals is an area that should be

looked into by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and he should be lobbying the federal government to end these or to scale them back because while we do not have figures on how much of this affects Manitoba, we do know the impact in Canada as a whole. For example, corporation tax rates, it is estimated that, if we had a compulsory 13 percent minimum corporate tax rate, which is only three-fifths of a tax rate for a wage earner making \$20,000, we could raise another \$528 million in Canada.

The fact is there are many corporations which pay no taxes. Seventy-two corporations in 1992, which is the latest figures we have, with more than \$25 million in profits, paid no taxes whatsoever. Another 1,136 corporations with profits ranging from \$1 million to \$25 million and totalling \$4.5 billion also evaded Revenue Canada. Altogether, 66,000 profitable corporations paid absolutely nothing toward the upkeep of this country, and one example that is provided is Imperial Oil in 1994, which made \$167 million in profits and paid no income tax. I say that is an area that has to be looked at seriously by government. Admittedly, the federal government has to take the lead, but the province can do its part in pressuring the federal government to move in this direction.

What about our friends in the banking community? Bank net profits from 1984 to 1993 totalled well in excess of \$39 billion on which they were taxed an average of 19.2 percent, well below the rate paid by most of their employees. So how about a surtax on excessive profits and get a little more from our banks?

Then there is the whole area of tax write-offs, Madam Speaker, and one prime example is the Canary Wharf situation where we covered the costs of bad loans that the Reichmanns had engaged in in that particular venture. Corporations are allowed to write off bad loans against their profits, and this means that taxpayers have indirectly in this case subsidized 44 percent of the big banks' mistakes, a \$6-billion write-off in 1992 costing each taxpayer \$90. When the Reichmanns took over the Gulf Oil company, the government let them depreciate Gulf's assets for a second time for tax purposes, which cost the government \$500 million in lost revenue or \$30 per taxpayer.

Then there are other examples. Tax deferrals. There is an endless array of tax avoidance techniques available.

In 1972, using one example, tax deferrals totalled \$2 billion, and now today, or the latest figures I have here, which are a couple of years old, they have gone from \$2 billion up to \$40 billion. Shell Canada alone successfully deferred \$891 million, so it is estimated that, if the federal government began to charge 8 percent interest taxing this debt they have, they would bring in more than \$3 billion of revenue.

What about meals and entertainment deductions? Again, here is an area where the government could do the taxpayers a favour and reduce, if not eliminate, this benefit. Paul Martin did lower the deduction to 50 percent after one of his Newfoundland members went public with his particular research, but the deductions still cost the Canadian taxpayer \$245 million annually.

What about individual tax abuse? Last year, 250 Canadians earning \$250,000 or more managed to reduce their taxable income to zero and avoided paying any taxes, and there are all kinds of techniques that they used to do this. There is an example about tax breaks for the rich that we had from Ontario, the Harris handout. He is proposing a flat 30 percent tax cut. With that cut, Harris will give a millionaire's family, a spouse and two children, more than \$60,000. A poor family of four making \$30,000 will get \$496, and money for the millionaire is equivalent to the welfare cuts to 17 single-parent families, that is, a mother and two children. With an income floating around \$2 million, the Bank of Montreal chief, the CEO of the Bank of Montreal, Mr. Matthew Barrett, will receive a gift of \$100,000, courtesy of this Harris tax cut.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could go on—[interjection] Beg your pardon? Not bad.

So we could go on. The point is that the Manitoba government, indeed all provincial governments, share in this income loss, in this tax loss, that I made reference to over the past few minutes, and I would say that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) owes it to the people of Manitoba to do some research in this area as to the impact on Manitoba and lobby the federal government to either end them entirely or to cut them back.

I would say that in the budget document itself, I note that when we talk about capital tax on banks, we have

not changed that over many, many years, although I see just about every other province has increased the capital tax on banks between 1987 and 1996. Maybe this is another avenue of revenue for the minister. Perhaps he should be looking at that as well. At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mentioned the need for revenue because this government, although it is now crowing about surpluses, has had a string of deficits year after year. While they criticize and complain about debt inherited from the previous government, let no one be misled to think that our debt today is lower than it was when they took office. As a matter of fact, total net debt in this province is roughly a third higher today than it was when they took office back in 1988. So the debt has not gone down. The debt has gone up, no matter which way you look at it, percentage wise or per capita, and that is because this government has engaged in some massive deficits. I think back to 1992-93, when they had a massive deficit, and it would even be higher if they were not able to take money out of the surplus in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They were playing around with that fund, as I said, like a shell game, and this is why I accuse the government of fiscal irresponsibility, because we have not been open and honest as we should be with the people regarding the bottom line.

The point is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has had huge deficits most of the years it has been in office. As I said, in 1992-93, it has the dubious privilege of having the biggest deficit ever of any government in the history of Manitoba. So let it not be said that this government has done such a great job in getting a handle on debt in its term of office.

* (1550)

Reference was made earlier to how great the economy has been doing in Manitoba, and certainly it has been much better in 1995, part of '94, than it has been for many years previous, and we have seen a lot of developments. I might add, I was pleased to note the announced expansion of the Simplot plant in Brandon. This has been reported on, and while it will not necessarily mean any more jobs, it will mean an increase in output and a more efficient use of those facilities. But when we talk about 1995 being a fairly good year, we have to remember it was helped by the federal infrastructure program which stimulated construction industry. We benefited by a relatively cheap Canadian dollar, which has benefited our exports and benefited our

manufacturing industry in particular. Not only does it benefit us in terms of enhancing exports, but it also tends to cut down on imports because it is more expensive to import competitive goods with the cheap dollar. We were helped also by a lower rate of interest, and I think we were also helped by world mining prices being at fairly high levels. So, all in all, 1995 was not that bad.

But my question is, is Manitoba's economy now steamrolling ahead? I do not think we are necessarily steamrolling ahead. As a matter of fact, we may be coming to a fairly sudden halt or a rather serious slowdown, if not a serious slowdown, in the next year ahead.

I am looking for a moment at the figures on investments, and while the government bragged about Manitoba's investment picture last year, it is reported by Stats Canada that the total capital investment in Manitoba in 1996 over '95 is going to be the second worst in Canada, only after Newfoundland. We are going to have a decline of total investment of 8.9 percent this year. We are the worst in the country, next to Newfoundland. As a matter of fact, if you look over the years, in many years we have had negative investment in this province under this government.

If you look at private investment, where is all the private investment that is supposed to be attracted by your taxation policy, which, incidentally, has not changed much over the years? But private capital investment, again, is the second worst in Canada. We are going to see a decline in private investment of 7.2 percent this year, according to the forecast offered by Stats Canada. Similarly, public capital investment will be down by 12 percent, and maybe members opposite may not want to hear this, but manufacturing investment is scheduled to drop 18.1 percent in 1996. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 18.1 percent will be the decline in manufacturing this year. So let us not go on with the myth that we are steamrolling ahead ad infinitum. The fact is, when you get a decline in investment, it will in the future affect the rate of growth.

In fact, if you look at the numbers again, you will see in 1996, the level of investment is lower than it was in 1990 when this government achieved its majority. The level of private investment is going to be lower in 1996 than it was back in 1990, and similarly with public investment.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the government would be wise to take a look at these numbers and contemplate what it might mean for the economy of Manitoba in the months or the years ahead. Our employment growth in the first three months of this year was 0.3 percent, but I note that Canada's growth was 1.2 percent. In other words, jobs grew four times as much across Canada as they did in Manitoba in the first quarter of this year. In fact, we are the fourth lowest in the country in terms of job growth.

Unemployment has not gone away. In the first three months, our unemployment has increased from 47,000 to 48,000 people, and I would say it is an underestimate because a lot of people have been discouraged from looking for work. That is a 1.4 percent increase in our unemployment, whereas Canada as a whole experienced a decrease in unemployment of one-third of 1 percent in that same period of time. This is the first quarter of 1996.

When it comes to housing starts, now this is really pathetic. Back 10, 15 years ago, we used to have 4,000 or 5,000 urban housing starts a year, and now we are down to 1,215 as of this last year—1,215 urbans. That is pathetic. Now we get information about March that Manitoba, again, after being down so far we are going to be down even further. As of March we dropped 15 percentage points in housing starts whereas all of Canada went up by 12.5 percent. So the housing situation is in a very sad state.

Similarly with tourism, tourist statistics show that Manitoba is the second worst in the country in terms of Americans visiting Canada, nonresident one or more night trips to Canada, in 1995 over '94. Similarly, if you took the whole period of '88 to '95, when this government has been in office, the American trips into Manitoba declined by 1.4 percent. We were the second worst in the entire country. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the economic statistics that we have which show an economy that is floundering, and that while we had a fairly good 1995, 1996, possibly 1997 will not be as good. Frankly, we have to have an economic policy that is much more aggressive, much more imaginative. We cannot build economic growth on VLTs and telemarketing jobs. The government has to act—

An Honourable Member: Right on. Especially GWE.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Right, especially GWE. The government has to act as innovator and entrepreneur.

There is so much to be done. So let us get on with an aggressive industrial strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if you could tell me how much time. Three minutes? Thank you.

I would suggest, in conclusion then, that this government has produced a financial surplus, but has created a serious social deficit. You know, it is a fallacious argument to say that this government is saving the taxpayers money. They say the government is going to save \$20 million on Pharmacare cuts, but from the perspective of Manitobans, from our society's perspective, there is no saving. The people in Manitoba will pay for those drugs. Unfortunately, some may not and end up in hospitals and nursing homes and, indeed, cost everybody a lot more because of that particular move because of the failure to take the medication that they should be but are not able to because of the cost. They may have to make other decisions whether to put the money into food as opposed to medicine. So it is a fallacious argument to say that you are saving the taxpayers money.

Similarly with social assistance cuts. You are saying you are going to save \$15 million on social assistance costs. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our society will pay for this dearly with higher health costs, with higher policing costs, with increased demand on food banks, with increased homelessness of children. All of us are going to pay. There are going to be real costs incurred because of this so-called saving that the government is engaged in with social assistance. So I say, the government's arguments to justify the cuts that we see in this budget are totally fallacious. There has been no proper accounting of the benefits and the cost to Manitoba as a whole, to our society as a whole, and that is what is needed. I would submit if that type of study was done, you would see that this government is taking the people of Manitoba, taking the province, backward.

So, in conclusion I repeat, yes, we may see some financial surplus, but Manitobans are now faced with a very serious, massive social deficit. Thank you.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege for me to follow the other veteran member of this Chamber in this debate with respect to the budget that is before us. He like I have lost track of the number of Budget Debates that we

have participated in, I am sure, but it always is an opportunity to be able to speak about subjects near and dear to one's heart in a not too structured way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may not want to believe me, but I know that there are some members opposite who will accept the feeling of conviction that I nonetheless have, and the feeling of optimism that I have, that even in this somewhat rancorous session, I can convince, and I will try to convince in the next 25 or 20 minutes, to have honourable members support this budget, because I support this budget. It is a worthy budget to support, and if we listen to what we are saying, if we just turn down the sound volume a little bit, we are really saying the same thing, and I am going to try to identify for you why you can and why you should and why out of conviction you must support this budget.

* (1600)

By the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would not be the first time that members of the opposition supported a government budget. When we were in opposition, I can recall one specific occasion when we did support a government budget. One need not walk like clones through here or just simply be cracked around by the Whips of our party all the time in terms of how we behave in this Chamber. So let us elevate the consciousness of our own thinking and try to see through the debris of rhetoric whether or not we cannot find some common ground.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what have we heard since we came together from members opposite? A constant, constant call for the expenditure of some additional monies on those areas of social programs that we all agree with, health, education, family services. There is not a disagreement with us in this Chamber on that, not at all. This budget provides for an opportunity and one that has only come to us in the last 22, 23 years, presents in such a clear and precise way of where we can find—and I will without notes be specific—672 millions of dollars to spend on the issues that they cry out for and need attention everyday in this Chamber without the imposition of additional burdens of taxation on our citizens.

Now, you know that to be true. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) knows that to be true. That is the amount, of course, that we pay out

annually on a service charge of our \$7-billion debt. I will not try to abuse honourable members opposite about who ran up the debt. The fact of the matter is collectively we all share a great deal of responsibility in the fiscal state that our nation and our province now finds itself in. So let us try to resolve, and I believe that the budget before us, I believe that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in bringing down this budget has shown us in a clear, a precise way a path, if you like, about resolution to the budget.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was important for me because you lose sight of it. Deficits, debts, these are not words that have a great deal of political sex appeal. It is taken a lot of effort on the part of those who have been concerned about it to bring that to a level of consciousness in the general public, but it is there. It is there. The people of Manitoba now understand. The people of Canada now understand what uncontrolled spending has meant to the affairs that worry all of us. What has perhaps been most forcefully brought to the attention of all Canadians is the fact that it is not just the mean, old Tories that have had to do this, that it is Liberal governments, that it is New Democratic Party governments. It is governments from all sides of the political spectrum that have come to exactly the same conclusion, that we have to address the fiscal problems that our province and that our nation face.

I can recall attending a meeting where the issue was raised, and there was a comment made by, I believe it was, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) speaking at one of our recent cabinet tours, indicating the fact, with some justifiable pride, that we were now introducing our second budget in a row with modest surpluses, that we were no longer operating in a deficit situation. So the question we were asked—and it was a legitimate question. The Premier was saying how important this was to our overall credit rating, our bond rating, and how it is being noticed in the financial houses with whom we deal. The question in the audience in the question period was, well, Mr. Premier, if we are now in a surplus position, no longer running a deficit, why is our bond rating so important?

Well, of course, the bond rating is extremely important. Of that \$7 billion of accumulated debt, most of it matures in seven years. There is a constant throw over. We borrow \$300 million to \$400 million every year, a small upgrading of our credit rating represents \$50 million, \$60 million, \$70 million. The budget that

we presented is helping to maintain and improves opportunities of improving our credit rating, and, again, without the imposition of onerous taxes, the imposition of other penalties on our citizens, we can earn those dollars to have available in the very fields that you ask for every day in this Chamber.

So why not join forces? My friend the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), he coined a new doctrine here for us in his speech, the CCG policy, common collective good, I believe he called it. Well, it is, of course, in our common collective goodwill that we join together and try to work ourselves out of this fiscal problem. The bait, the lure, the reward, the promise is 670 millions of dollars that can be applied to home care, can be applied to education, can be applied to family services if we act in the common collective good.

I mean, that is not pie in the sky. That is money that is there. You understand that, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). You understand also that we need to be competitive, particularly us in Manitoba. Let us understand our situation. As proud as we are of our beautiful province, it does cost more to do business when you suffer the kind of winter that we have had than if you are living in balmy Vancouver, for instance, or in other parts of the country.

So to be up at the upper echelons of taxation rates as we were under their regime simply is not good enough. That does not create jobs. It does not help job creation in this province, and the fact that we have, in these seven, eight successive budgets, progressively improved our status is not going unnoticed, and it is not going unnoticed in the boardrooms of Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, wherever around the world. They are coming to Manitoba, and job creation is steadily improving.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why should I go out of my way to be unkind to members opposite, but let us talk about what real jobs are. I do remember, because I sat in the House, the constant barrage, the propaganda of their Jobs Fund. In the eyes of too many members opposite, the only job worthwhile creating is a government one. So they ran the whole program on a massive Jobs Fund program. Where are those jobs today? We are paying the debt. We are paying the interest charges on the money that we borrowed for them.

So I earnestly speak to all members opposite. This is not a fuzzy target that I am asking you to consider. I am asking you specifically to focus your attention on the

upwards, very close to \$700 million, I am told. I think it is about 660, 670 millions of dollars of monies that are there to us, and we can incrementally earn them in 40, 50 and 60 and 80 million chunks if you support the kinds of fiscal initiatives that are being presented to you in this budget. I will work very diligently within my group to try to influence my government, my comrades, to see that those monies are indeed spent in the appropriate ways, and you would be surprised how often our views would come together in terms of prioritization of where those monies should be spent. I am just putting forward the case as strongly as I can, but that is a doable objective.

* (1610)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$670 million is just about the total amount that we spend on our public education system. I think our budget is \$700 million, \$800 million. Can you imagine having those kinds of extra funds available to this government or any other government in the future and not at the expense of burdensome tax increases that have the double-edged problem of making us less competitive in the job creation business in this growing global economy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the honourable members to think about that. Every time you ask for some additional attention to be paid to our health care system, every time you ask for some additional resources to be directed to our educational system or to our welfare system, I am simply pointing out to you where those additional resources are and how we can get them. Is that not a worthwhile reason to reconsider just the ideological, dogmatic opposition to this budget? You could really go home to your constituents and tell them that, you know, I can find 500, 600 additional millions of dollars without increasing the sales tax, without increasing personal income tax, without doing any of the those things. Surely, they would advise you around their kitchen tables to do just that, to stand up for a budget that is worthy of support, and you would cause—I will tell you what you would do. You would have a great more people looking at Manitoba about how we are getting our act together and how we are starting to do things right. It is a golden opportunity for you to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I speak in support of this budget, although I am, not at all, all that happy with some aspects of it and have not been for a number of years. I do not quarrel for a moment with the priorities that my government has established for itself and for the people of Manitoba and that I have, with enthusiasm, supported.

But I am distressed, speaking for a department like Agriculture, speaking for departments like Natural Resources that I was privileged to lead on different occasions, and speaking for the economic development departments of government about the amount of attention, the amount of resources that we in this budget and in this Chamber pay to them.

When I was first privileged to be Minister of Agriculture for Manitoba in 1966-67, the Department of Agriculture received the attention, or more importantly the resources, of 6 percent of the total revenues of the province—6 percent. Today the challenges to agriculture are every bit as great, if not greater. Removal of governmental support programs, including federal programs, have dramatically decreased. Today the Department of Agriculture, under this budget, receives the attention, more importantly the resources, of somewhat less than 1 percent of the total revenues of the Province of Manitoba.

The Department of Natural Resources, another economic developing department—at that time it included mines—looks after our rich forestry resources. It received, in the late '60s, 6 to 7 percent of the total revenues of the province to run its affairs, to look after our parks, to manage our forest, to manage our fisheries, to manage our wildlife. Today it receives less than 1 percent of the total revenues of the people of Manitoba.

I include the Department of Highways and Transportation. For those of you who are not maybe totally familiar with what happened particularly outside of the Perimeter, to be able to move goods, to be able to move grain, to be able to move produce safely and efficiently on our roads, and competitively, needs that dedication of resources to the infrastructure. I would suggest the people in the city of Winnipeg understand that too in this time of the potholes, which is a phenomenon that is more commonly dealt with by urban residents. That department which by the way to the surprise of many is a revenue-earning department. It is in a revenue-surplus position. It takes in more money in license fees through the Motor Vehicle Branch than it spends on roads, and never mind the gasoline tax. It in the late '60s received the attention of, and I always repeat, the resources, meaning money, roughly 6 or 7 percent of the total tax revenues of the province at that time.

What has happened? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no complaint with it. Times have changed, emphases have

changed. We have developed, and very much to the common collective good, a health care system that is equal to none in the world. We have introduced many other phases of governmental spending that were not there in those years. We now spend \$55 million on looking after children in daycare centres which we did not in those years. I do not quarrel with that expenditure. The times are different. We have many, many more single parents, people with families are growing up in a single-parent status. We have many more double earners or double workers in households for different reasons. All I am pointing out to you is that it concerns me, the realization that certainly from the day this session started until the day this session ends we will hear only the emphasis of the social services programs that government runs, and very little attention, if any at all, to the important business of wealth creation.

Let me speak just a little bit about wealth creation. There is a myth that is going on about what creates wealth. Very few things actually create wealth. I do not create any wealth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a politician, as a minister of the Crown. I pay my fair share of taxes, and more so now since the last readjustment of indemnities where that one-time tax-free allowance has been removed. I should not confuse that with wealth creation.

The only wealth that I produce is being produced on my ranch as the new spring calves are being dropped on the ground. They will become in 12, 14 months thousand pounds of edible and salable beef. The farmer that puts two bushels of seed in the ground and harvests 60, 80, 90 bushels produces wealth. The miner that goes into the ground and digs out rock that you and I could not distinguish, but there is nickel, there is gold, there is zinc, and there is copper in there, produces wealth; forestry produces wealth.

With the greatest of respect, and I do not want to be misquoted, because I know they are all tax-paying people, but our educators do not produce wealth, they are consumers of wealth. They certainly contribute to our well-being, make us better able to find the kinds of job opportunities, but the system itself is a consumer of wealth. Our entire health system is a consumer of wealth. They do not create wealth of and by themselves. But we do not argue that, if we have a healthy population, if we are in the workforce, we are going to do better. But let us understand it. Lawyers, God bless

them, and many of them do very well, but they do not create wealth. They provide a service for which they get paid sometimes, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. Our entire justice system, we have thousands of people working in the justice system across the land. They pay taxes, but they do not produce wealth. That is a service. These are all services that we in our collective wisdom, because of our well-being, could surround ourselves to live in a more civil, more amenable society.

When our ancestors, our pioneers first came and settled right here in Manitoba on their quarter section of farms, the school was not the first building that was built. When there was enough wealth in that little community, they could afford that one-room school, and they could afford to hire that teacher. And, as that community grew wealthier and more wealth was created, they could afford a little hospital in that community. We spend so little time in this Chamber, and members opposite, the government-that-wants-to-be does not concern itself with the creation of wealth. In fact, they have a problem with that word, as they have a problem with profit and all those things. Without profits, of course, we have no way of taxing people. But, in their minds, of course, everybody should be working for the government, and they honestly believe that, as long as they see on their pay cheques, they are paying a pretty hefty chunk of income tax, that they are producing wealth. They are not producing wealth, in my humble judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1620)

Wealth creation of the kind that enables strong and vibrant societies to sustain themselves has to address how they handle their natural resources that providence has provided them. So honourable members opposite ought to, in my opinion, look at that aspect of what governments can do to foster the well-being of the province.

If I am wrong, read Hansard for the last two weeks that we have been in office. When an economic initiative is, in fact, announced on this side of the House, it is generally criticized by members opposite. They generally find some environmental reason to criticize, whether it is a Louisiana-Pacific initiative, or whether it is a paper or potato initiative, the concern about water, irrigation and so forth that is used, where do they suppose do we pool together and create collectively the

wealth that enables us to do the very things that they ask for in this Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those two things, I have identified for them an obtainable fund of money, \$650 million, \$670 million that they could vote, that they could get near at achieving for their needs, for their stated needs, by supporting this budget. I would request of them that they pay more attention to the business of wealth creation in this province, because that really and truly is in the common collective good. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a very tough act to follow. After two senior members of this Legislative Assembly, I could only hope to aspire to the level of debate of these two members. [interjection] One member says after 29 years maybe I will be able to aspire to that level of debate, but I have a few years to go.

I woke this morning with a flu, so I do not know how long I will be up speaking on this budget.

I did not approach this Budget Debate—the third since I was elected in September of '93—with a great deal of enthusiasm, which is very uncharacteristic for me. I have always been known as a very optimistic, enthusiastic, energetic person, but like the Leader of the Opposition—I actually enjoyed the first 10 minutes of his budget speech—there is not a lot to be happy with. I think one of the reasons for my lack of enthusiasm is something I talked about in the throne speech, about something I have never experienced before in my life, that is cynicism. In over 20 years on the police force dealing with murderers, with robbers, with drug addicts, with prostitutes, I never became cynical about human nature, because I had the underlying belief, thanks to the upbringing of my parents, that there but for the grace of God go I, to every person I had contact with as a law enforcement officer, that I was no better than any person I arrested nor was I any less than any person I dealt with.

But three years in politics has made me cynical. I talked about it in the throne speech, when I hear people say that they want a better health care system, they want a better Pharmacare system, they want a better school system, but they do not want to pay higher taxes. This cynicism is because people are so self-centred. Maybe for someone who would like to be re-elected, it is probably not a wise thing to say, to talk about the

cynicism, but do you know what? Re-election has never been important to me. It was not important before the last election, because I was elected to effect change; I was elected to change my world, change my community in any small, positive way I could, so I have never hesitated to say things that maybe are not the most popular views. I do not believe in finding which way the population is going and running to the front of the pack and calling it leadership. That is why I would like to take a look at some of the popular views that are the underlying foundations for this budget.

View No. 1: Taxes are bad. View No. 2: Government is bad. The less government, the better off we are. The public service is bad. The less of a public service we have, the better off. Well, if we really look at this, what is the public saying? If we had no taxes, if we had no government, if we had no public service, what would we have? We would have survival of the fittest. We would have the law of the jungle where the strong survive and the weak die. Is that not a coincidence? The strong survive. That is the election theme for the Conservative Party in the last election—Manitoba strong. A very simple message, but what did it really mean? It really meant Manitoba for the strong, Manitoba for the well-connected, Manitoba for the wealthy, and let the weak be to their own demise. You know what? Yes, yes, there is a public view there for more self-reliance, less government, less public service, less taxes.

But do you know what—and if someone wants to quote this in the next election and use this against me, I do not care—taxes are not bad. Taxes are payment for service, and if people want service they pay taxes. Do we want to do away with all taxes and have survival of the fittest, survival of the wealthy, survival of the people who can afford their own health care system, survival of the people who can afford their own Pharmacare, pay for their own drugs, survival of those who can pay for servants to take care of their aged, their infirm? Is that what we want? No, that is not what Canadian society should be about, but that is the underlying foundation for this budget, that taxes are bad. Do away with all taxes. Taxes are payment for service, and the public wants service.

The other ironic part about this budget is that it uses that cynicism, that public view that taxes are bad, to disguise them. They talk about no tax increases—in how many years? I know personally that my take-home pay,

as a result of having Pharmacare drugs delisted, by having less of a property tax credit and so many user fees—it is a tax. A tax by any other name—but, you know, to feed into that public view, to run to the front of the pack and call it leadership.

The other part is about public service. You know, this government continues to denigrate the role of public servants in Manitoba, like to be a public servant is a shame. What we just heard, put very eloquently by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) about how public servants do not create wealth—well, I was looking at the personality profile for one of Manitoba's most honoured public servant, and that is Charles Curtis, who recently retired, and members from all sides of the House congratulated this man. I think he is an example for young people to look at, to show that to be a public servant is not a shame. It is not wrong to serve the public.

* (1630)

As a police officer I served the public. As a teacher people serve the public. It is nothing to be ashamed of because you do not create wealth. Well, you know what? If that is the key for credibility, creating wealth, then I know many drug pushers who are great citizens of Manitoba then. I know many drug pushers who have made a lot of money and have invested money and now own shares in some of this government's favourite corporations. So, if that is the measure of value to the members of the government, creating wealth, then I will introduce him to some prostitutes, some drug pushers. I will introduce them because wealth creation is not the only judgment of the value of someone.

My cynicism for politics does not go to the members. I know how many hours the members put into their work, regardless of whether I agree or disagree. That is why I am so thankful to the Speaker of this House because as a member of three independent Liberals it is constantly a battle to keep dignity in here when certain members try to diminish our role in this democratic process and try to say that we have no point in being here, that we have no purpose. As one member from the opposition told me, decide which side you are on, pick a side.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

My side is Manitoba first. I will not go according to partisanship, but I will go issue by issue. As it happens, many times the opposition's platform, they happen to agree with ours, but the government members, I found many times, have treated us with respect and dignity. Thank goodness, Madam Speaker, for your role here to protect the three independent members from the tyranny of the majority. Our voices could be drowned out by the majority constantly, and by the majority I mean not only the government's side but the opposition's side. We are only three members and we could be easily drowned out. We could easily be pounced upon, but in this democratic process we have a Speaker who looks after what we are entitled to as equal members in this Legislature. I thank Madam Speaker for her role to impartially make sure our privileges are protected in this Chamber.

I have heard a number of times about the money that could be spent if we did not have this large deficit. I was very happy to hear the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) say, let us get past who created that deficit. We all created that deficit, and do you know what? I do a lot of work with young people, young adults, young people who are just starting their families, just starting their businesses, just out of university, and know what? There is a generational unfairness. They say you are the generation that got cheap tuition. You are the generation that got business start-up loans. You got cheap loans to start your farm business, to start your whatever business. You had the benefits of all these social services. Now that you are coming to retirement, you say, hey, we have to pay for them. Cut them all off. Not only do they have to pay for it, they do not get the benefit of it, and they are angry about that.

The other part is, what is this budget really about? Is it about fiscal responsibility? I think not. This budget is about power. This budget is about the Conservative Party keeping power in Manitoba, to underestimate the revenues so that they will have a fund, an election readiness fund, and know what? This adds to my cynicism. This adds to my cynicism about human nature, because I am challenging Manitoba voters to remember what is happening this year. Remember about the cuts in Pharmacare. Remember about the cuts to education. Remember about the surplus at the same time and the windfall revenue funds, but this is the government of blame. That is what they do when they create policies. First they look, who can I blame, and then they create a policy around it.

But which direction are they going in? They are creating this election readiness fund, and I challenge Manitoba voters to remember what is happening this year. In year three or year four when they lower personal income taxes, when they lower our provincial sales tax, how many people are going to say, well, it was not so bad what they did with Pharmacare, it was not so bad what they did with the health care system, my taxes are lower?

What do we really value? What do we really value as a society? Depending which way Manitoba society is going, that is what is going to make me decide whether I am going to run for re-election because I do not want to represent a society whose main purpose is wealth creation, that does not care for its young, that does not care for its weak and its infirm.

What are the values of Manitoba society? I challenge Manitoba voters to remember this year and not be bought in the final year and return this government to power for another four years.

The other part that adds to my cynicism is the media. And, know what, a lot of politicians have this love-hate with the media. We want to use them to get out our message. We want to use them when we have a story, when we have a press release, but then we avoid them when we do not want to talk to them. We favour them. We stroke them sometimes, but sometimes I think they exaggerate their importance to the democratic process.

The other day on CBC, the Leg report, with Jennifer Dundas and Paul Samyn, and do you know what—it is always very dangerous for any politician to criticize any media, because they can do a lot more harm to me than I could do to them, but again I do not care. I am here to effect change.

When Jennifer Dundas and Paul Samyn, in their Notes from the Leg, were commenting on our parties putting forward a MUPI on budget day, their comment was, if a tree falls in the forest and we do not report it, it is not important. What they are saying is because something happened in this Chamber and they did not report it, it is not that important. I think they are amplifying their importance to the democratic process.

Yes, they are very important to the political process, to get that mention in their two columned article or get that

15-second slot, but they are not that important when it comes to the democratic process.

I will tell you what is important. Several weeks ago there was a rally at Seven Oaks Hospital, and there was a woman there, a young lady, who had, three weeks prior to that rally, admitted herself to the Seven Oaks psychiatric ward because she was suicidal. During this rally there were a number of people who were going up to the podium talking about how important the hospital was to them. This lady asked the organizer if she could go up and speak. She went up there, and she said it was very difficult in her condition and to speak in front of friends and neighbours about how she had been admitted to the psychiatric ward at Seven Oaks Hospital, but she felt it was very important to say how important the hospital had been to her because she had grown up in the neighbourhood, she had seen it built. She felt comfortable. It was the only hospital she could have gone to. She spoke from the heart, and then she broke down, she cried a little. She was not the only one crying. There were a lot of people who were affected by the effort of this young woman.

About an hour later I was helping clean up, and this woman walked up to me and she pointed a finger at me and said, you are responsible for me going up to the podium. I thought, oh, god, I am going to get a complaint here. She said, you know, about six weeks prior to that I had spoken to her Jewish women's group about youth crime, and when I had talked to that group what I had mentioned is that we cannot expect government bureaucrats to police the courts, to fix all our problems with youth. We have to take individual responsibility if not as a community then as individuals, and to do whatever small part each one of us can play with the youth in our community. She told me that when she saw me at the rally she remembered those words about individual responsibility, and I inspired her to go up and make that monumental effort at the podium.

* (1640)

That is the democratic process, that is what politics is about, not getting a mention in Paul Samyn's article or a five-second clip from Jennifer Dundas on CBC. That is what politics is really about, and I am proud to be a politician, and I am proud to be able to positively affect people's lives.

This government is sort of inconsistent in that when you are dealing with teachers and talking about the province's ability to reward teachers and give them a fair wage, you talk about how poorly this province is doing in relation to other governments. But when you are campaigning you talk about how well your economy is doing. But an impartial source, Paul Samyn's article in the Free Press, talks about a disappointing decade, the fact that over the last 10 years, eight of which this government has been in power, the gross domestic product in this province really has not increased over the last 10 years. It has levelled out. In fact, when you take into account inflation, our gross domestic product has actually decreased. So really who has benefited in the last eight years of this government's mandate? The strong. Manitoba for the strong, for the well-connected, the Barb Biggars, the Besseys, the KPMGs. Those are the people who are profiting, the strong, the well-connected, the people of wealth that can go fly south for medical care, that do not have to rely on our medical care here in this province.

Madam Speaker, I will end my comments with saying that it has been difficult to speak on this budget because it is a discouraging time. I always try to remember in these Chambers to separate the policies from the personalities. But it is difficult when you see so many people in your constituency, so many friends and relatives hurt by this government's policies in a negative way, to separate the policies from the personalities, but I will continue to do that, respect all members of this Chamber and know that in spite of what the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) says about the \$672 million, once this is paid off and once in three or four years when federal transfer payments will increase, I wonder if we are going to hear as much about federal transfer payments when they increase as we do when they decrease, that, oh, we are going to spend a lot more money in education, in health and social services. Well, I wonder, will they? Or are they going to be following Ralph Klein and Mike Harris in the race for the lowest taxes in Canada, in the race for the most giveaways? Will we be racing them for anarchy? Will we be racing them for the jungle where only the strong survive, Madam Speaker?

So with those words, I will end my comments.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Northern Affairs):
Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to be able today

to rise to participate in this debate on our provincial budget.

I certainly, like all members I think, have appreciated or have come to appreciate the effort that was put in by so many in the adoption of the new rules. We have had certainly an opportunity this winter to do a lot of work that otherwise we would not be able to do, and I wanted to speak a little bit to that later in my address on some of the things that we have managed to accomplish or are in the process of accomplishing in the portfolios for which I am responsible. As well, I would like to address some of the changes that have been made specifically in my Department of Energy and Mines.

But before I do that, Madam Speaker, I am always a great believer that this speech gives us an opportunity to put into context the budget and put into context the efforts that are being made. I sat in this Chamber last week and listened with great interest to the comments of the honourable Leader of the Opposition, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), speak about his impressions of this budget, and he made an argument that this was a government, in his words, that had no vision and was drifting.

Madam Speaker, being someone who was elected to this House in 1988 when we came into power and being someone who watched very closely the previous administration—and I am not here today to get into that debate—but having watched that period of the eighties in Manitoba and having watched the period of the 1980s across Canada, seeing where governments across this land, at the provincial level at least, are struggling to come to grips with positioning their provinces, and I think as well simply in a practical way the country, as well, to deal with the issues that we must face now in 1996 preparing for the next century, the last thing in fact I think any objective, truly objective, observer would say about this administration, and I would say as well administrations of a variety of political stripes in most provinces, the last thing that could be said is we are in fact without vision.

I think, Madam Speaker, that the Province of Manitoba today has a greater vision and sense of what has to happen, what has to take place and where we must be and position ourselves than we probably ever had in the last 30 years. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), my friend and honourable colleague, talked

about a generation which feels cheated because they today do not have the benefits of those who came before them and yet certainly have a far greater tax burden, and to some degree people of my generation are part of that. I grew at a time when many of my friends, if we were lucky, got one year out of the Registered Homeowner Savings Plan, one year of benefit. We did not have that benefit to have tax deferral on the purchase of our first house, like many in this Chamber and many in our society had over a number of years. We did not have the benefit of so many of the programs and expenditures of dollars often done on borrowed money that today we are having to finance out of our budget and operations.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that those who come after me, those who today are in their 20s have in many ways less support in their lives from the public sector than my generation and certainly generations after and yet will have an even larger burden of taxation. When I hear members opposite or I hear members in the public deal with specific issues—and, yes, yes, no one on this side of the House likes to make changes in the Pharmacare program that see a reduction in expenditure and less service in some areas. None of us on this side of the House enjoy seeing reductions in budgets for education or health care or social services.

Our colleague the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), I know, shortly after the budget asked a very impassioned question of one of our colleagues about some of the issues that he was facing on changes in our social allowance program. I have known the member for Burrows for some time, we worked together in many committees, and I would say a very sincere individual. I could tell when he spoke that he spoke very much from the heart about the difficulties that he saw that people had to deal with as a result of the kind of decisions we have made and how it affected their lives, and he was very, very sincere about that. Nobody likes that. I do not enjoy having to have the member for Burrows have that feeling nor myself as a member have to deal with some of those similar problems. I do not think any of us do.

One of the realities that has happened, and the member from his seat talks about how you justify a surplus. The reality of it is, how do we justify the accumulated debt? That debt has to be repaid. We also have to face a further reduction in our transfer payments next year, and we, I believe, have an obligation to the people of this

province to ensure that we are on a regular, steady and, I think, least destructive, if possible, means making the kind of reductions to prepare for. The member thinks we should have put off decisions this year for next simply because we have to face that full impact next year. I can tell the honourable members that that would have been a far greater pain, far better to do things in a gradual way.

* (1650)

In fact, Madam Speaker, an interesting observation on the media is the commentary across the nation about how provinces have been dealing with their fiscal reality. We looked at newspapers who talked about Ralph Klein and his very dramatic efforts, some about Mike Harris, certainly Bob Rae when he was in there, McKenna, and they have sort of become the stars and the darlings of the media. But let us not forget that the Filmon administration in the province of Manitoba bit by bit, year after year, has been working away steadily and regularly at getting our province's financial affairs into order. The result has been, we have not had the massive public sector layoffs that we have seen in other provinces. We have not had the dramatic closure of hospital facilities as Saskatchewan and Ontario and British Columbia and Alberta and others were forced to make. We have not had the kind of very dramatic reductions in expenditure to education in universities which jolt the system, and there is no doubt it does. It jolts the system. Some would argue sometimes that that is a good thing to happen but, more often than not, it is a very difficult thing for a system to react to.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, as someone who has been a member of this House and a member of the Executive Council since 1990, that I have come to observe in that process—I was intimately involved in many of the reductions in the civil service as the Civil Service minister, and I have been intimately involved in reductions in the departments I have been charged with—is, year after year, by giving responsibility to managers to ministers to managers to deputies down the line in systems, we have been able to find better ways of doing things, to find services that were no longer required, to find expenditures, in some cases, that were just simply wasted because we have done it in that kind of, I think, gradual manner over a number of years. Although many would want to paint a lot of these things as very draconian, let us put it into context.

Is any member of this House prepared to stand up and say that we should be back on a similar course that governments followed over the last 30 years, of living beyond our needs, continue to borrow? Government is about choices. Government is about making choices, and often, in these particular times, they are not necessarily between good and bad choices; they are between tough and difficult choices. Every decision we have made, my colleagues and I in caucus and cabinet, have agonized over, as had our senior bureaucrats in working them through. Some of them have been easy. I recall the former member for Riel, who was Minister of Government Services, some budgets ago, discovering that we were spending over \$20,000 a year for linen towels in this building and for the judges, which could have been easily replaced with about \$1,500 worth of paper towels. That is a small matter, but \$20,000 a year is half a staff year. That makes a big difference, but we had gotten down to the point where we were finding those kind of things in the system that others—and, quite frankly, if we were not in the same circumstances probably—never were to find, because that is an expenditure that gets easily buried in the system, but we have been working away at that to put ourselves on that firm footing.

Madam Speaker, none of us on this side of the House enjoys in any way seeing the kind of reductions in services to people who have come to be accustomed to them, but let us also remember that these kinds of times require change and the ability to deal with change and the willingness to deal with change, and that is not always easy for people involved in it. It is not easy for us as individuals. It is not easy for our constituents. It is not easy for people who are affected with change.

Often change and rethinking how we do things can result in a much better scenario than we had before. I can think, in my own departments that I have had the privilege of being minister for over the last number of years, of a host of services that we provided decade after decade in government, which time and technology made obsolete, quite frankly. Their purpose had disappeared, but we continued to provide them because we always have provided them.

Now, I have to compliment a great deal of effort on the part of our staff in finding these things and working through new ways. I know the Department of Labour today provides more and better service than I think that it has in years with probably less people and less resources and far more effectively.

The Department of Energy and Mines, and I would like to address that for a moment, we have taken a reduction in the size of our Energy Management Branch. This is a perfect example of reassessing priorities. When we approached this year's budget—the priorities of our department and the times necessitate that we make choices and priorities—a priority with which we had to deal was the expansion and support and growth in the mineral exploration and development of the mining business in Manitoba, and that takes resources. It takes resources for our Geology department. It takes resources for our Marketing Branch. It takes resources for our incentive program. As part of our putting that package together, Treasury Board, and rightly so, has said to us, what can you find within in reprioritizing your department? We had to look, and with our Energy Management Branch, which, by and large, was a creature of the 1970s when we were into an energy crunch and was set up to deal with a lot of those issues, quite frankly, a great deal of its purpose and reason to be had either no longer existed or had been pre-empted by other services that government offers.

For example, the Power Smart program that Hydro works very well, handles very well, that particular program handles a large portion of our energy conservation requirements in a practical way. So do we have a purpose for that anymore? No, only a more limited purpose, and so we had to make a decision, and we consolidated that Energy Management Branch with Petroleum, which saved us a senior administrative position and we saved some half a million dollars or so in our budget that we could then put into our high priority area, which is mineral exploration and mining development.

So those are the choices you make. Is it tough on the people involved? Absolutely. Did we enjoy making those decisions? Absolutely not. I am pleased to say I think most of our staff, through our redeployment efforts, are finding other job opportunities within the Civil Service, and we are juggling to accommodate. Is it the right decision? Absolutely. It is the right decision because it sets the right priority for where we want to be in government, Madam Speaker.

The same is true on every issue with which we have to deal. My colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has been under—and I would suggest that he has very ably defended the actions and policies and decisions of this administration against the barrage of attack on issues.

But some numbers conveniently get forgotten. On the Pharmacare program, Manitoba expenditures was one of the fastest growing areas of the health budget, and when we compared what services we in Manitoba offered to what other provinces had traditionally offered, we had one of the best Pharmacare programs in Canada in terms of what it paid out. Was it sustainable within the current time? It was not, and so we had to make decisions. I mean, did that make us happy? Not at all. We would love to have been able to maintain that kind of generous Pharmacare program, but we had to make decisions to bring it into line. We did not make radical decisions to say we are going to cut it out totally and not have it. We adjusted it to what we could afford, targeting the needs of those who are most in need.

You know, Madam Speaker, the New Democrats across the way should at least give us credit for the fact that that program targets and increases the benefits to that program to those least in need, because I think Manitobans as a fair people would like that. But to make the argument this is a terrible and drastic decision, when you compare it to what other Canadians have across the country and what is affordable, I do not think that is particularly fair. In fact, I would even suggest, if I am not mistaken, the New Democratic provinces are going through the same thing. If the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) were the Health minister, I think, in all fairness, he would probably be bringing in similar changes as our current Minister of Health is doing, because the reality of the monetary and fiscal situation would also face him. So I think one has to certainly take those things into account.

* (1700)

Madam Speaker, the dividends of doing what we have done over the last eight years in bit by bit getting our finances in order are starting to be seen across this province. We have greater capital investment than we have seen in a long period of time. I think an important point to be made is that we are doing it, we are seeing that—we are not doing it; private investors are doing it in essence because they have a confidence to be here. There are opportunities here. It is happening without the construction of a hydroelectric dam. Over the history of this province, the big years of capital investment usually coincided with the construction of a hydroelectric dam. The unique thing about where we are today is, it is happening without a hydroelectric dam or a huge portion

of public expenditure. It is very encouraging, very solid. We are certainly seeing it in the mining industry, the Pine Falls paper mill in my constituency, which was supported with a loan authority of some \$30 million.

I look to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). I think, to date, the Pine Falls Paper Company has not drawn one penny on that loan authority. As an indication, we do not know exactly how much they will draw, but to date they have not drawn a penny out of that fund, because they are doing well. They are a well-functioning company, good employees. They hit the market at the right time. A lot of good work went into that, on the part of a lot of people, to make that a success. It is employee and management owned, and it is doing very, very well.

We are seeing the same in our agrifood industry. You know, when we saw the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), I know, who is the Agriculture critic for her party—when we saw the withdrawal of the Western Grain Transportation subsidy, I think there was a sense among many in this province, and she certainly brought it to the floor of this assembly, that that was going to be an absolute disaster. Yet, with improved prices and a lot of innovation, we are seeing things happen that four or five or six years ago we may never have contemplated happening.

Now, I do not want to get into the issue of good or bad about WGTA and those things, because there is a long history and issues and lots of sides to it, but the fact of the matter is, we are seeing a lot of resilience and a lot of activity in our food and agriculture sector that maybe a decade ago we could never have anticipated.

The potato industry, we are quickly moving to being the No. 1 potato producing province in Canada, with a wonderful processing industry. You can go to a McDonald's in Chicago or Milwaukee or Tokyo, and it is a Manitoba french fry.

In the mining sector, as I mentioned, that I am responsible for, one of my first acts, Madam Speaker, as Minister of Northern Affairs, when I was appointed in 1993, was to go out that fall to Snow Lake to face 300 or 400 people in the community hall, where the last mine had closed, and people were talking about skidding their homes into Flin Flon. This fall we opened two new mines in that community. Now, I know my critic, the

member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), in a speech the other day in the House, talked about the number of employment levels compared to the '80s. In this debate, without the television cameras here, let us be very realistic. A big part in mining has to do with mineral prices. We saw some pretty low mineral prices in the latter part of the '80s and the early '90s, and that had a damper on activity.

One of the judges, I guess, of how well a province is doing in what it can control in mining has to do with exploration. Are people prepared to take the risk to go out in the field and look for new deposits if they do not believe this is going to be an economical place in which to develop a mine? Maybe a decade or two ago there were probably seven or eight countries in the world that were very attractive to the mining industry. Today there are 70. It is an international industry, and Canadians, as I have come to learn, are miners to the world. Canadian mining companies and miners and exploration people are mining in virtually every continent and country of this globe where mining activity takes place. We have seen them leave Canada continually because Canada, quite frankly, in other words, province by province, has not been competitive.

Beginning with my colleague the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), followed by the former member for Pembina, Mr. Orchard, and now myself taking over from him, we worked very hard to move Manitoba into a very competitive position in marketing. That was the mandate given to us by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The result is, we have to go and sell that. Over the last year, I think I have personally visited with nearly 60 mining companies in a variety of cities. Between myself and my deputy minister and some of our staff, we visited over a hundred. We had 25-plus new companies who had not been in this province for years or had never been in this province here in November looking for properties and to do activity in this province.

That is because we now have a good product in terms of what government does. We certainly have been out there selling it, and we are starting to get the response. The industry is still going to be subject to international metal prices and a host of things we cannot control, but in the things we do control, we are trying to do them right. That is important, and we are starting to see the results of that. Obviously, gold prices make possible the Bissetts and the TVX New Britannia Mine, but the fact

that we have a good climate in which to build and that we are competitive means that they actually happen.

What is very telling, and you do not have to believe me, the president of TVX Gold, whose company developed the New Britannia Mine, one of two mines that has given a whole new life to Snow Lake in the constituency of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jemissen)—one of his comments at the opening, and he has said we can use it in our advertising, that he will open another mine in Manitoba tomorrow as soon as he has the deposit, because it is the best place to be. So things are working. Things are moving along in that area.

I want to address Hydro for a little bit, because we have had some exchanges with the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) on this issue, and today perhaps I did not make myself clear in my reference to the member's press release. I want to speak to the member for St. James for a moment about this, because I have a great deal of respect and time for the member for St. James. We spent some time together in travels up North to a variety of openings and things in the last while, as well as with the member for Flin Flon, and both members are very supportive of the mining industry. I want to thank the member for St. James for her very supportive comments on our Mineral Exploration Program.

I would just remind some of her colleagues who may be critical of us publicly putting money into a mineral incentive program when other areas of social services may be being reduced or education. Their colleague supported what we were doing and said so publicly, so I hope there is some consistency on those opposition benches.

But, Madam Speaker, the issue of map staking—here we have a proposal. It comes from the department on map staking, within the department. They start a consultation process to see what the result is. Does this minister know a lot about map staking or not? I admit, I am not a miner. I am here to be a minister of the Crown, and I learn as I go along, but we said we are not doing anything unless we hear what people think about this issue. Is there a great desire to move to map staking? I do not know, so we will go out and consult. While we are consulting, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) issues her New Democratic Party press release, and she says with no public discussions and

limited advice to the industry, the government is bringing in map staking. Did she pick up the telephone to ask me about it before she issued this? No. Did she write a letter to find out if this was true? No. Not at all, because that is the game of politics, is it not? Right? The innuendo.

The fact of the matter is that, from the first responses we have got back from the prospectors and a number of those companies, it became evident, all of the problems with map staking, and I made the decision that that was it, it was over. We are not going to do it. It just did not make sense. So she comes to the House, and, again, this business is built on credibility, and when you do these kinds of things and then you rise in this House with all kinds of taking every change or every action at Manitoba Hydro and holding it up as a big privatization coming, it is the same kind of thing. It is the same kind of political issue. [interjection]

* (1710)

Well, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) asked about privatization. I have no idea what will happen four years, five years, 10 years, 20 years, a hundred years from now, and if she is asking me to predict anything beyond my mandate as minister, I cannot, but let me answer the question of the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Wolseley. If the member for Wolseley would let me answer the question I would be pleased to do it. I am going to give the member for Wolseley a very precise answer. I think I have about five, six minutes left to me?

I think if members opposite instead of just throwing these things out would actually spend some time examining the changes taking place in the electrical utility industry today across North America, and I would invite them to study the process of privatization in Ontario, one would quickly come to the conclusion that today in Manitoba there are not the conditions that would probably even make privatization possible because, for privatization to take place, unless you are going to turn it over to a regulated system, you have to have a competitive environment. There is not enough alternative generating capacity in this province to create a competitive generating environment, quite frankly. So it becomes a moot question, unless you are just going to sell it and continue to have it regulated to get your money

out. Well, what do we own? We own about 8 percent of equity.

When you start analyzing the issue, you quickly come to realize, whether one supports in principle privatization or not, that the kind of criteria you need to successfully do it do not exist in Manitoba today. I do not know if they ever will. Maybe they will or not, but they do not today, so it really is a moot question. In fact, if you study Ontario you will find that one of the big issues facing the Ontario government is to ensure that they have enough competitive generating capacity that they will have the competition they need.

The other problem in Ontario is, they have very high-priced electricity, that they are very uncompetitive, and they are facing competition today from gas turbines and also from American utilities. They have to deal with their issue and get competitive in the market. We have one of the most competitive utilities in North America. I am looking forward to bringing our annual report to a committee of this Legislative, because I think we have a very great story to tell. We have a few problems, which we acknowledge. One of them is our debt to equity ratio simply because if we have two or three years of drought we would not have the wherewithal necessarily to carry ourselves, because in that case we would be net importers. We have some weak spots which are well known by people who analyze the industry. Those can be corrected over time, but we are in a tremendously competitive position.

I know I am getting short on my time. I have two minutes. I look forward to more discussion about this at another point, but the real challenge in electricity is the fact that 25 percent-plus of our revenue for Manitoba Hydro comes from sales in the United States. The United States is vastly changing its market, and if we are going to continue to sell into the United States successfully we are going to have to be able to deal with whatever reciprocal arrangements are required on the rules. I do not know what they are going to be because they are still being developed, but I will tell you, Manitoba Hydro says to me that if we play our cards right, quite frankly, we can increase the value of what we sell into that market without increasing our capacity, just the value of our products, and that is the challenge and that is a lot of what is there.

I tell you, I am very interested in seeing what happens in Ontario because, given the change in Ontario, we have

a market there. In fact, I would suggest to my colleagues opposite that one of our big problems today in Hydro is, we do not have the capacity for all the potential sales we may be able to make, so there is a lot to be looked at in the next while. It is a very fluid marketplace in which we are operating on the regulatory side. I cannot tell the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) today what U.S. regulations will be in place tomorrow where we sell, but we have to monitor, we have to position ourselves.

I make this observation today that Manitoba Hydro has the potential to do extremely well in the new electrical market that we will be facing in the next few years, and this government is committed to ensuring that it does just that.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when I was first asked about what I thought about this budget, I indicated that I feel that it is one of the most vicious budgets that I have ever seen, and it is a budget that attacks the most vulnerable in our society. We do have very many vulnerable people in this province, many people who want to work but have not got the job opportunities, and many people who are not being given the tools to learn the skills that they need to get a job in this province.

Madam Speaker, when we look at the statistics, Manitoba's poverty rate of children is 22.5 percent; close to 60,000 children are living in poverty. Those are some of the highest numbers in this country, and that is something that we should not be very proud of. In fact, we should be very ashamed that we have such a high poverty rate. We hear the numbers about our unemployment rate being low, but in fact there are many people in this province who are not working, people who fall outside the unemployment statistics. In fact, in this province, we have close to 43,000 people who are unemployed, and we have a high number of people living on welfare in this province.

Why are they living on welfare? It is not that they choose to be there. Many of the people whom I know in this province and many people in my constituency who happen to be unfortunate enough to have to rely on social assistance are not there because they choose to be there. They are there because there are no job opportunities, and now we have a government that is saying, well, you

are not working, we are going to cut your social assistance. Where are some of these people going to look for work?

I look at some of the communities in my constituency where there is very high unemployment. For example, I will look at Camperville and Duck Bay, and, yes, there are people in those communities, single mothers whose children are in school, and the government is saying that assistance is going to be cut down. Where are these people going to go to work? There is no work there, and the government has cut away the supports that would give them the opportunity to go to work. For example, the Access program, which was a very successful program and helped many people in those communities—in fact, a large number of the teachers that are teaching in those schools in those two particular communities that I mentioned started out on Access and took the northern training program and are now having a model role in their community. So it is not that people do not want to work, but this government is attacking those people, saying that they are offering them a hand up, that they are offering them a job, when in fact there really are no jobs there, and when this government has taken away the tools that people would need.

There is nothing wrong with putting money into job creation. I heard the member across the way criticizing the Jobs Fund and how terrible it was. I guess they also criticize job training programs that were in place that actually gave real jobs to people. We have to look at ways that we can create jobs. We have to look at ways that we can eliminate the poverty that we have in this province, and we have to ensure that we have the social safety net there for people, that we have a good health care system, that we have the social supports there for people through Family Services, through our health care, and through education, that people are given the ability to play an important role in life and in their community.

That is not happening under this government, and that is why I feel that it is a very meanspirited budget, attacking those who have the least ability to defend themselves or fight for themselves in this case.

I find it interesting that the government says that they have not increased taxes, and that is right. The income tax has not increased, but, Madam Speaker, there are many, many offloads by this government and many, many changes that this government has made that are tax

increases. We look at the Pharmacare program. I should have brought with me the brochure that the government was distributing to just about every house—[interjection] No, it is a different one, a nice orange one that they distributed at about every house in the Swan River constituency saying that \$230 was going to be all you would have to pay for your Pharmacare. That was one of the promises that were made, and what has happened now? Well, we are seeing that people are paying far more for their Pharmacare than they ever anticipated, but that is just one of the many broken promises that we see that this government has made, promises they made prior to the election that they are not prepared to fulfill right now.

* (1720)

Nobody before the election talked about the change to home care either, and I find it quite interesting that we still are not getting the truth out of this government when it comes to home care. They tell us that in the city it is going to be privatized, but in rural Manitoba they are sending letters to all home care workers saying nothing is going to change, but regional health boards are going to be changing home care. So there are many things that this government is saying now that they did not say before the election, and they have not been truthful. Madam Speaker, they have not treated the people of Manitoba well.

I want to refer to a few things that affect other parts of my constituency, and I would like to refer to the Agriculture budget. I must say that I am disappointed to see the Agriculture budget decreased by over 10 percent this time at a time when agriculture is going through tremendous change. The Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik) just spoke about the change of the Crow and the impact of that on rural Manitobans, and I must say that we are very, very fortunate that the price of grain did come up, because had the price of grain not come up and farmers would have had to pick up that extra cost, the transportation cost, it would have been devastating in rural Manitoba. I think that members across the way who are from rural Manitoba and all members should recognize that this is a short-term bonus that we are getting with high grain prices. We do not know how long that is going to last, and we have to face that, to be prepared, that if those prices drop, there is going to be real problems in rural Manitoba.

It is unfortunate that the government does not recognize that and start to address it. They had a large amount of money that is being saved because of the change to GRIP. They could have used that money to support farmers, to develop some diversification and help small farmers. I am very concerned about small farmers, and I am going to tell you what is happening in my constituency. There have been several pieces of land that have gone up for sale, and not one of those pieces of land has been bought up by a small farmer or a new farmer. All of this land is being gobbled up by very large operations.

You may say, well, what is the difference? So what? Who farms it? It makes a big difference because every time a family is displaced off of farm property and a new family does not come in, that has a negative impact on the community and a negative impact on the area. So I am very concerned that we are seeing the population of rural Manitoba drop the way—a large amount of land is being taken up by larger operations, and we are not having new families encouraged to establish themselves in the farming industry.

We hear about the high income, the high return that farmers are getting. It is true, the price of grain is going up, but you also have to recognize that the margin of profit has not gone up because the input costs have gone up tremendously. Fuel costs, fertilizer costs and all of these are ending up with a very narrow margin for farmers.

Madam Speaker, there are concerns with what is happening in rural Manitoba. We have a population loss, people moving out and really not the jobs that we should have created there. We have to look very seriously at how we are going to do that. There are a few other issues within agriculture that I want to address, and I am pleased that the one section of the budget that I see that the government has addressed is the compensation. They have increased the compensation for wildlife damage, and I am pleased that the government finally realized that there is a big problem with wildlife damage. I look forward to the discussion that we will have. Hopefully very soon, we will see the report on their recommendations, what position the government is going to take on the recommendations, on wildlife damage, because people in my constituency and in a lot of the province were not happy with the way the government addressed the serious problem that farmers were facing

with big game damage, nor were they happy that the government would not consult or listen or take the word of rural Manitobans more seriously when they were facing the problems that they had with big game damage this year.

The province made a commitment that they would—the Minister of Natural Resources' staff and the Minister of Agriculture's staff made a commitment that they would listen to rural Manitobans before they made any decision on how they would handle the big game problem, but unfortunately they went ahead with the plan and did not listen to the people in our area, in particular, referring to the capture of elk. The people in our area had many suggestions on how this should be handled. The government chose to ignore that and spend thousands and thousands of dollars on capturing and building fences but would not address the concern that farmers had about their compensation.

It seems very strange. We can say on one hand, they say, oh, we do not have money to help farmers with their big game damage, but we do have money to build fences and to keep animals in captivity before we have had the public discussion about how this process should really take place.

On that issue, with respect to the elk capture, I think the government really put the cart before the horse and did not handle it well. We look forward to having further debate on where they can find money for these kinds of things, as I say, like building fences and DNA testing on animals. They are going to have money for DNA testing on animals, but they are not going to have money for health care for people. So I am finding some of those things very interesting, and I look forward to a much further debate with the minister as we get into the Estimate process.

Madam Speaker, I think that our aboriginal people are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, some of the people who suffer the most because they face the most severe poverty. It appears from this government that they do not think the aboriginal people have contributed anything to our society and have not even included them in any of the discussion in this budget

One of the issues that is very important that I feel that this government has neglected very badly is the issue of settling treaty land entitlement. It is an issue that has caused concern to people in my constituency, particularly people from the Swampy Cree Tribal Council who are involved with the Repap negotiations and, of course, the Louisiana-Pacific forest management licence. I think it is deplorable that a government has the ability to make deals with big companies and give our forest away but for our original people in this country who, when our ancestors came to this country, they were willing to share with us their resources on good faith. They shared those resources with us. Now, years later, this government refuses to deal with a very long outstanding issue. They have no trouble signing agreements with big companies and talked about economic development, and they had no problems agreeing that, yes, these people would get jobs. In actual fact—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Swan River will have 15 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 1996

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