



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 17, 1997

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The honourable Minister of Family Services who has 36 minutes remaining.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to continue my comments in support of our government's ninth budget with a track record no other province can boast of—and that is no increases in major taxes and certainly a balanced budget—which means a better Manitoba for our generation and for generations to come. I want to speak specifically about what this budget means to my department, the Department of Family Services.

We believe as a government that Manitoba certainly is the best place across Canada in which to live, to work, and to raise a family. We have been involved in the Department of Family Services in a number of very important initiatives that demonstrate our government's commitment to families and to working with community in a collaborative approach to address the many issues that we face. The community-based approach, I think, that we have taken will help us to work with others right throughout the width and the breadth of Manitoba to ensure that our services are delivered in the most appropriate fashion to meet the needs of the diverse communities that we do serve, the diverse neighbourhoods.

I am pleased to be part of a government which is committed to assisting Manitoba families to achieve greater self-sufficiency and independence. I think the Welfare Reform initiatives that have been undertaken by our government, the Department of Family Services along with the Department of Education and Training, are the right decisions. I know that some members opposite and even some members of the media from

time to time are very critical of the kind of approach that we have taken. We believe, as a government, very strongly that the best form of social security is a job. When we made our changes last year, we made them with a lot of thought.

We have a province, one of the few provinces across the country in fact, that committed single mothers to a life of poverty on welfare when we had a policy that said we will place no work expectations. We do not expect you to go out and work until your youngest child turns 18 years of age, and then we are going to say to you go out and find a job. Many of these single parents are 40 or 50 years old with no self-esteem, no education, and no ability to fit into the changing world, the changing climate that we see today. I do not think that is fair to any woman, and I do not think that is what we want for the women and children of our province as a lifetime commitment to poverty on welfare.

We changed that policy and our policy is very clear. I will articulate our policy again, and that policy does say that if you have all of your children over the age of six that are in school full time, we do expect you to search for a job. We will provide assistance to you through many different programs whether it be Taking Charge!, Opportunities for Employment, Rural Jobs Project, whether it be training through the Department of Education and Training to help, to assist single parents to enter the workforce and become productive members of society. Women whose children look up to them as a result of them gaining that independence in that employment, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you get one single parent trained and into the workforce, you are in fact having a positive effect not only on that single parent, but on that woman's or man's children. So you are not only improving the life of one Manitoban, you are impacting at least two, possibly many more children as a result of that. I think it is very important that we continue to move in that direction and assist those single parents.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the one exception to that policy, of course, is the single parent whose children are under the age of six, but in fact the taxpayers of Manitoba have supported that single parent because she

has chosen to take further education and training. When the taxpayers of Manitoba do invest in that single parent, there is an expectation that at the end of that training, at the end of that support, if there is a job available, that single parent will take a job. I think Manitoba taxpayers expect no less. I think that we are being sensitive in providing that support and that opportunity.

Many, many single parents, just like many other women who have young children, do choose a career or an option of working. When the child care supports are in place, and when the training has taken place, I think that our policy is fair. We will continue to support that policy. I would encourage all members of this House to support that policy. We have no quarrel with the single parent with young children staying at home by choice and making those decisions to stay at home and parent those children and nurture them through their early years. That is certainly not a problem and not something that our government would want to change. If, in fact, they choose to take training and they want to enter the workforce, we want to support that activity, but we also do place some responsibility on that individual when the taxpayers have supported them to some degree through training.

As I said earlier, we believe very strongly that the best form of social security is a job. Through Welfare Reform, we also have many other initiatives, not dealing only with single parents but dealing with other people, people that are single and employable, in trying to help them enter the workforce.

I know the City of Winnipeg has implemented some really good programs through community services, through Dutch elm disease control, which our government has supported in a very proactive way and will continue to support those kinds of initiatives. We have a Rural Jobs Project that is working with municipalities, and wage subsidies that are provided to the private and public sectors. If they do want to hire people off of welfare, we will continue to support those kinds of initiatives.

I want to tell you that our Welfare Reform is working, that as a result of some of the initiatives that we have undertaken, we have had a decrease in our

welfare caseload. We will continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to work away at that number.

I want to say to the House, I take some pride in the fact that we have seen not only 600 parents, we have seen a decrease of a thousand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the welfare caseload. I think that we are on the road to recovery. As this budget provides incentives and tax breaks to small businesses, that gives them the opportunity to create more jobs. More of those that have been on income assistance in the past will have the opportunity to work, to contribute and to feel much better about themselves as a result. We will continue with the programs that are working, and we will continue to develop the partnership with the community and with businesses, with organizations that are there to help create jobs, and to ensure that people are working and are able to contribute through the tax system with jobs. We have a very positive initiative with the Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite business community that have helped 260 of our clients and have worked with them. We do know that 82 of those clients are presently in the workforce, and the others are on their way to successful work.

We have an initiative with the Department of Northern Affairs, and there are 12 projects that have been started and 61 people in jobs today. We have industry-based partnerships with the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, with Telespectrum Worldwide, with Investors Group, with Reedy Creek Loggers in the Parkland area, with Midwest Drilling in Thompson. There are many clients who are now receiving job-based training with employment that will result from that training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue along with those partnerships as they work, and I have every confidence that we will be able to reduce the number of people that are on social assistance over the next year. As a matter of fact, our budget does reflect that because we see many of the initiatives that are in place right now working and working for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hear very often the New Democratic Party specifically in this House talking about what they would be doing differently and how in fact they would increase support for children in poverty. I want you to know that the New Democratic

Party speaks out of both sides of its mouth. When the New Democratic Party is in government, they do things very differently from what they do when they are in opposition, because they do not have to make decisions, and they do not have to be accountable for what they say or for their actions.

I want to quote to you some articles from the newspapers in British Columbia where it says: Welfare parents are worse off in poverty-fighting program. Now this is a New Democratic Party in government that has to be accountable for its actions, not like the New Democratic Party in opposition here that can talk the good talk but in reality when they are in government they do not walk the walk that they talk.

I have to hold the paper a little far away and I forgot to—are those magnifying glasses? I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to quote from the newspaper in British Columbia, the caring New Democratic government in British Columbia, and it says: when Monika Krause did her income tax this year, she was hit with an unpleasant surprise. The child portion of the B.C. sales tax credit for low-income families has been eliminated, and that means Krause, a single mom, living on welfare will have to make do with a little less money this year.

* (2010)

Shame on the New Democratic government in British Columbia. The tax credit worth \$50 per child was wiped out last year when the province introduced its family bonus program. Some single low-income families will be receiving more, but welfare parents, however, receive no additional money and with the elimination of the tax credit are actually worse off. About 70,000 welfare families in B.C. are affected by the change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you talked 70,000 families, you are talking at least double that number of people, probably triple when you look at the number of single parents that have more than one child, so let not the New Democratic Party in opposition in Manitoba talk about how caring they are and what they would do differently.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a quote from a single parent in British Columbia who says, and I want my honourable friends opposite to listen very carefully. This quote is: They make it sound like they were doing more to help poor people when in fact we are getting less. It is really a sneaky, backdoor way of doing it.

That is the New Democratic Party policy and that is exactly the way—[interjection] Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say, they can speak out of both sides of their mouth, and they can try to have it both ways in opposition, but we know in reality what New Democratic governments do when they have to make decisions.

I will quote one more line from this article before I go on to the next one that says, they are really just penalizing the poorest of the poor, said Nancy Parker of the Victoria Street Community Association.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say, shame on the New Democratic government in British Columbia that has been hardhearted and callous and actually cut support to single parents and families. Mind you, we do know that—and can I say that not only are welfare recipients and community organizations that support the poor in British Columbia complaining about the New Democratic government's policies, but we also have an article from British Columbia that says, party faithful rap Clark's knuckles over welfare cuts.

Let me just quote from this article: B.C. New Democrats delivered a slap on the wrist and a surprise to Premier Glen Clark's NDP government at their annual convention this weekend. Delegates voted overwhelmingly yesterday to ask the government to revise several aspects of its welfare reform package they believe make life worse for the poor. This party has an historic tradition of standing with the poor and disadvantaged, they say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again words, all words, but when it comes to practical application, the New Democrats fail miserably in the support of the people that they profess to stand up for, all talk and no action.

Can I say that the article goes on to chastise their own party by delegates at the convention but, at the end of the article, it says that Mr. Clark agreed there were

some problems with the new system but says that overall it has been a great step forward. I do not call it a step forward when they reduce benefits to welfare recipients and single parents have less to live on, and that is single parents with young children, and he refused to commit himself to making the changes demanded by the delegates.

So there you have a leader who is not listening to the party faithful, and I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder whether the New Democrats at the next convention in the province of Manitoba are going to stand with the Leader of the New Democratic Party or with members of his caucus who are all over the place and they are not really sure who is leading or who is in charge over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I move off welfare and on to other areas within my department, I do want to talk about the Taking Charge! initiative, which has worked in many instances to support in a very positive and proactive way single parents who are trying to enter the workforce. I wanted to quote from one letter from a single parent that I received who speaks to the program specifically, and I quote: Being on welfare was depressing. I really wanted the best for my children, and all I could offer was welfare and poverty. In May of 1996 I called Taking Charge!. That was the best thing I ever did. Taking Charge! staff treated me with respect and dignity. I graduated from my computer course with an average of 96 percent. I got a job as a data entry receptionist. I have been employed since December of 1996 and I love the work.

So that is one of the quotes from the many single parents who have had the opportunity to gain successful employment as a result of the Taking Charge! initiative, and I have to give some credit to the federal Liberals because this is a joint partnership. It is a partnership between the federal government and the provincial government. It is innovative. It is a one-of-a-kind program right across the country and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is working. It is working not only to support the single parents that have entered the workforce but also their children. If you look at an average of two children and one single parent, for every parent that gains meaningful employment that affects and impacts in a very positive way the life of three people. I am very pleased with the direction we have taken, and we

hope that the program will continue to be a success into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look to the budget—and I really look forward to the debate with my honourable friend my critic in the New Democratic Party because we have had some very meaningful discussions over the last few years through the Estimates process—I look at the issue of children and families that need our support through our Child and Family Support system. We have committed more money again to children in need of that kind of support, and we have also put out a document called Families First that looks at working at community partnerships in a very proactive way; I want to say a document that I have shared broadly in the community and had many meetings with community representatives on how we can do a better job of providing that kind of family support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to getting into the discussion in great detail around what the community has told us and how we are going to partner in a much more significant way, specifically with the aboriginal community in the city of Winnipeg. I have talked to many aboriginal women that really feel a need to be involved in a much more significant way through the child welfare system. We will be looking to new initiatives that will be announced that will work in a very positive and proactive way with our community.

* (2020)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole issue of early intervention, early child development is a significant issue and through the Children and Youth Secretariat we have some money available, and I do want to indicate that \$500,000 was announced in the budget for ChildrenFirst. That is new money that is in the Children and Youth Secretariat, but that does not include resources that will be redirected from other departments that are involved. When we look at the departments of Family Services; Justice; Health; Education and Training; Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and the two new departments that are involved in the secretariat and that would be Housing, and Native Affairs, there will be, as we identify initiatives and announce initiatives, money redirected from other departments but not only from other departments within government,. We have, I think, a

very good process ongoing and my colleague the member for Riel, the Minister of Native Affairs and Hydro (Mr. Newman), has been our government's representative on the inner city review committee.

The inner city review committee is a committee of all of the funders, the City of Winnipeg, the federal government, the United Way, the Winnipeg Foundation and the Province of Manitoba that have been working over the last couple of years to try to identify where our money is going to do what in the city of Winnipeg and whether in fact we have identified all of the needs or whether there are any gaps in service. We are coming to some consensus and some agreement that there are some gaps in the service, and maybe we should all be working together to try to fund those kinds of initiatives.

One of the areas is fetal alcohol syndrome. I want to indicate to you that we are going to be working in a very positive and proactive way with all of the other funders to see whether we cannot develop programs that are going to address the needs of where the gaps lie today. I am confident that we are going to be successful, in co-operation with the Children and Youth Secretariat and all of the other funders, in developing innovative new programs that will in fact deal with the issues, the very significant issues that we have to deal with in the inner city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to give some recognition and some credit to a couple of my colleagues who have done a lot of work over the last year. In the first instance, the new Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, my colleague the MLA for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), was very instrumental in taking to Manitobans a paper and a review of The Child and Family Services Act, and we are looking forward to that final report and looking forward to introduction of amendments in this session of the Legislature. I know that those amendments will reflect what Manitobans have told us through the consultative process. So I thank my colleague the member for River Heights for the contribution that he made and to all of the committee members that worked very hard and to all Manitobans also who made representation and gave us their suggestions and ideas on how we can modernize and update our Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to give some credit to you personally for the hard work that you have done over the last year on child care issues. We have had an ongoing fact-finding mission and worked very closely with the child care community in order to try to determine how we could provide more flexibility and a better system of child care in the province of Manitoba that would meet the needs of working parents. Indeed, you have done an excellent job of leading that process, and we have, as a result, been able to streamline a lot of the administrative procedures that we had in place that would facilitate a better way of delivering the service and the funding for those children who need our support through child care.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

We are in the process right now of a regulatory review that will lead to further changes. It is, I might say, Madam Speaker, one of the best processes that we have undertaken to date in my department. There has been co-operation; there has been a lot of hard work. Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau) has travelled the province and listened very intently, not only to those who are working in the system but to those parents who need our support through child care services. So I am very pleased that we are able to maintain the support to child care as we move through and continue through the process of the regulatory review, and I know that Manitobans in general will benefit as a result of some of the changes that have already been made and those that will be made as a result of the process we have undertaken.

We have still in place, too, the Family Support Innovations Fund that will be able to provide support, to some very innovative projects that have been undertaken throughout the province, and many in conjunction with our Child and Family Services agencies and many in conjunction with the community. We will continue to see innovative approaches in trying to work with families to keep families functional and together wherever possible, but also recognizing and realizing that protection is a priority. If children need to be protected, we will protect them, but if we have a crisis in a family that can use some intervention and some support to make that family a healthier family, Madam Speaker, we will

undertake to do that. We will continue to use the Family Support Innovations Fund for that purpose.

Family Conciliation services in my department also continue to be very important for all Manitobans, and we are anticipating and expecting that our services will include over 230 court ordered assessments, 700 mediation cases, 1,700 cases involving provision of information and referrals to other services, and 60 cases involving conciliation counselling.

Our government has also supported and just recently expanded a project known as For the Sake of the Children, a parent education program for separating and divorcing parents. It is a voluntary program where separating and divorcing parents can learn to deal more effectively with the needs of their children and more co-operatively with each other. It has been operating in Winnipeg for about 18 months now, and very successfully, I might add, and it is being expanded to Brandon this month. It has been well received by all participants, and I am sure that many children have been the beneficiaries of having parents try to work as co-operatively as possible through a separation or a divorce proceeding.

We have been able to maintain and enhance expenditures for women's shelters, crisis lines and women's resource centres. A new funding model for second-stage programs designed to meet the needs of women and children who have left abusive relationships was just implemented recently, and we do have the largest number of beds per thousand women over the age of 18 of all provinces. We have one of the best shelter and crisis systems right across the country.

Madam Speaker, can I ask how much time I have left? Five minutes?

The one area within my department that continues to require additional resources, and I want to indicate that we have increased resources year after year after year, is for children and adults with a mental disability. We continue to see an increasing need. It is one area that I have fought very hard for additional funding on a regular basis. We see over \$4 million for adults with a mental disability to help establish community residences, to provide respite services and to deal with the issues of children moving from the school system

into a system where they require some day programming and some other options.

We work very closely with the community, and we are working with the disabled community exploring options and recommendations on how we can best serve and meet the individual needs on a case-by-case basis of those who are some of the most vulnerable in our community and our society.

Madam Speaker, we also have seen an increase again in the support for children with mental disabilities, special needs, Children's Special Services, and we have another \$2.2 million in the budget this year to expand the number of families that we are able to serve with respite services and help to keep families together and provide the very needed supports that they have.

* (2030)

I am very pleased that we have been working along with parents that have recommendations for us on how we can possibly spend our money more wisely. There have in the past been parents that have been reluctant to give up respite services because they are afraid that if they do not require them today but might need them tomorrow they might not be available for them. They have some good suggestions and ideas on how we might be able to deliver the programming better and provide more services to more families. I am pleased to say that we are working in co-operation with them to try to find the very positive solutions to ensure, again, that some of the most vulnerable and needy children in our society and our communities have their needs met.

Madam Speaker, I do want to touch very briefly on the National Child Benefit and indicate to you that we have been working as a result of our premiers coming together across the country. As a result of major federal cuts to families with children, to Education and to Health, premiers right across the country, regardless of political stripe, came together and said there is a need for us to work together as provinces to fill the void that the federal government has left in policy and direction to meet the needs of children.

One of the things we have been able to accomplish in a fairly short period of time is to work very aggressively

on a National Child Benefit, which will look at taking children out of the welfare system and putting them into a system where the federal government will pay the support for children in low-income families, whether they be on welfare or whether they be working. One of the basic principles behind the whole initiative is to ensure that children that are moving out of welfare families and into working families are not less well off as a result of working than on welfare. Families should always be better off working than on welfare. The National Child Benefit is looking to try to address that issue by taking the benefits for children right out of the welfare system and having a benefit for all children under a certain income standard and the same across the country so that you are not penalized for moving into the workforce by having your benefits reduced.

Madam Speaker, we are getting very close, I think. The federal government has made a commitment, a very small commitment, of resources, and we think it is a small down payment or a partial repayment for what they have reduced to families and children over the last number of years, but it is a move in the right direction. I am pleased to say that all provinces, regardless of political stripe, have endorsed this process, and I think that says a lot for those that are in government today and having to struggle with the same issues as we are having to struggle with the province of Manitoba.

I support wholeheartedly our budget, our Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and our government as we work through the process of ensuring that services are delivered to Manitobans in the best possible way for the benefit of all Manitobans, this generation and many generations to come. As we relieve the burden of debt from our children and our grandchildren, we will be ensuring that future Manitobans have some hope and some opportunity. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, this, I believe it is the 10th budget of the Filmon government, certainly has the stamp of the Premier on it, and I think for the first time we see the stamp of the dauphin, if I may use that phrase. I do not know if I pronounced it properly, but—

An Honourable Member: Très bien.

Ms. Barrett: Très bien? Merci.

The leader-in-waiting of the government, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson)—this budget really, really has the stamp of the Minister of Finance on it. There are some parallels with the federal budget process in the last couple of years with this provincial budget process. The federal Minister of Finance Mr. Martin has put his stamp long and hard and heavy on the people of Canada. It is a very right-wing stamp. It is a stamp that his father, the late Paul Martin Sr., would be appalled at his son propagating the neocon theology, the neocon ideology, and I think the same parallel can be drawn or a similar parallel can be drawn with the Minister of Finance in the province of Manitoba. He, in conjunction, in lock step with the Premier (Mr. Filmon), has put together a budget that is duplicitous in the extreme. It is a budget that says on the one hand we have—[interjection] It is a shell game as the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) said.

How much money is in that rainy day fund? How much money is in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund? How much money has come from lotteries? How much money has come from the sale of one of our best resources, our best asset, the Manitoba Telephone System? What actually are the final figures?

Every year, the Minister of Finance gets up and he underestimates the revenue knowing that he is underestimating the revenue. Every year in the budget, they underestimate the revenue, and they choose to ignore the fact that they underspend in many major departments. They have underspent in Health, they have underspent in Education, they have underspent in Family Services. I am sure they have underspent in other departments, as well. This is the work of a chartered accountant. It is not the work of a man or a government who cares about the people of Manitoba, the vast majority of the people of Manitoba.

It is interesting, Madam Speaker—I think it has been reported in the media—that this government is run by the Premier and the Minister of Finance. I think we saw a real indication of that the other day after Question Period. I do not know which day of the week it was last week. It was when the critic for health care asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) about Pharmacare—the possibility, probability, likelihood, soon-to-come-to-pass change in Pharmacare—that will mean that people in hospitals will no longer get their

prescription drugs paid for, but they will have to pay for them through the Pharmacare system which means an average of \$1,500 more for an average family.

Well, the Minister of Health prevaricated and—what does he do?—thought about it. He was not quite sure how he was—

An Honourable Member: Speculated.

Ms. Barrett: Speculated on it, yes. And then after Question Period, the Minister of Finance got the Minister of Health in the back of the Chamber and was explaining to him what was actually going to happen in the budget. This is a clear indication—[interjection] Well, I perhaps may be speculating just a tad, but one can make a pretty clear assumption, a pretty clear assumption about that. This is a budget that is the work of bean counters. It is not the budget that reflects the needs of Manitobans except for a very few people in the province. The people who already have the most are the people who are going to get out of this budget.

You know, Madam Speaker, it does not have to be this way, because whether it is \$500 million, \$300 million or \$150 million, whatever the number is there is a major budget surplus generated largely from the sale of our own assets, the Manitoba Telephone System, generated largely from revenue gotten from Lotteries, granted, but there are hundreds of millions of dollars more coming into this province than is being spent by the province. The actual figures at the end of this fiscal year and at the end of next fiscal year, as they have shown throughout the last 10 years, will show that they actually underspend what they estimate to be the case. So there is no financial reason for this budget, for the fact that there are major cuts in every single major department in this government. There is no financial reason, there is only an ideological reason. There is the hand print of the chartered accountant who is the Minister of Finance and his Leader who wants him to be the next Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

* (2040)

I would like, Madam Speaker, to go through a few of the departments and talk briefly about the changes, the budget items, what they have to do. Let us carry the

analogy, let us carry the debit-credit analogy through if we can. Who are the people who benefit from this budget in certain departments and who are the people and groups that do not benefit? Who are the creditors? Who is on the credit side of the ledger, who is on the debit side of the ledger? I would like to start with the health care budget.

My colleague the Health critic, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), very eloquently outlined many of the cuts in effect to the health care budget. I would like to talk briefly about the trumpeting of the six capital projects that have been identified by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance.

One of those capital projects is a personal care home that is in my constituency. It is the Betel Personal Care Home that has been promised by this government since June of 1994 when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and several of his colleagues went to my constituency, probably for the first time other than driving through, and were there for the sod turning for the Betel Personal Care Home project. That project in June of 1994 was well underway. Architects had designed it; everything was going along quite swimmingly.

Then what happened? Six months later in the House I asked the then Minister of Health what was going to happen. Well, things were moving along, everything was under control, yes, it would be happening soon. I wrote the then Minister of Health a letter in February of 1995. It was the second Minister of Health in the last three years, the middle one.

The then Minister of Health wrote to me about the Betel Personal Care Home saying, February 1, 1995, 10 months after the sod turning ceremony, and I quote: I am pleased to inform you that this project is almost ready to go to construction. The architects are telling the staff of Manitoba Health that the project can be advertised for open public tender this month. I look forward to construction of this much needed project early in 1995.

February 1, 1995, 10 months after the sod turning ceremony, what happened? Gee whiz, it was a provincial election, so a provincial election was called

a month later. Then after that election, the Minister of Health, probably acting on instructions from the Minister of Finance and the Premier, froze all capital construction.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, yes, April 1995, almost two years ago, over three years since the Minister of Finance and others attended the sod turning ceremony for Betel Personal Care Home. So what do we find out this last Friday in the budget speech and in the press releases that follow it? What do we find out?

An Honourable Member: Is it for sure, for sure?

Ms. Barrett: Well, no, it is not for sure, for sure. It is one of six capital projects announced for Health again, but there are some switches, there are some changes that have taken place. There is another shell game being perpetrated on the people of Manitoba and in particular on the people who have been under the assumption, who believed the promises of the Minister of Health, the then Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, silly people of the Icelandic community to believe this government. They should know better and I think they do know better. Yes, this personal care home has been announced as one of six capital projects that are to be undertaken, but only if, I understand, I am assuming—now, I would like the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to correct me if I am wrong. I would be more than happy to have the Minister of Health put on the record that I am incorrect.

I am stating, and the people who are responsible for the Betel Home believe as well that they will not have the shovel turned three and a half years after it was supposed to be turned. There will be not one shovel full of dirt for the Betel Personal Care Home until the community has contributed 20 percent of the cost of that project.

An Honourable Member: It is not a tax, right?

Ms. Barrett: It is not a tax, it is a contribution. Total—[interjection] Yeah, well, the sod turning—the Minister of Finance made no mention of a “20 percent contribution.” The Minister of Health made no

mention of a “20 percent contribution” when they were more than happy to trot out to my constituency in 1994.

An Honourable Member: Did you have a sign up?

Ms. Barrett: No, they did not have a sign up.

You know what? The project is estimated, or was two and a half years ago, to be about a \$6.3-million project, 100 bed personal care home, that the then Minister of Health said was a very much needed project. Well, the Betel community has put in place, has expended almost \$1 million based on that promise, on that commitment. They have bought four lots that are now valued at approximately \$400,000. They have expended \$666,000 for architects' fees, engineers' fees, geologists' fees, \$40,000 for a building permit. They have been ready to rock and roll as the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) says for almost three years now, based on a promise by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the then Minister of Health, a promise, a commitment. And what has happened? In good faith these people have put forward almost \$1 million of their own money. They are going to have to raise \$1.2 million more before one shovelful of earth is taken from that location.

How are they supposed to do that? What kind of ridiculousness is this? When on the one hand the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance say these six projects are wonderful, they are magnificent, they need to go ahead, we are going to put them at the head of the list, at the head of this process that is going to have to be undertaken for all other capital projects. These people have put out a million dollars, they have to raise another \$1.2 million. For what? How long is it going to take them to do this? And you know what? The government does not need to do this because the government, no matter whose figures you figure out, is rolling in money. Why are they doing this?

There is no answer to this except the answer that I come up with which is this is a budget put in place by a chartered accountant who does not care about people, he does not care about problems of communities; he cares about the bottom line. The only thing that is important is for the bottom line to look as good as it possibly can. Now we can discuss the bottom line in the context if a private corporation, but we should

not-[interjection]. Actually I think chartered accountants provide a very important service to the people in Manitoba as do used car salesmen, as do politicians, as do lawyers. In this case I think the chartered accountant and the engineer have their paw prints all over this budget to the detriment of the people of Manitoba.

The other interesting thing about this Health announcement is that this Health announcement for the six health care facilities, three of which are personal care homes, says that there will be 140 new personal care home beds put in place once these three personal care homes are up and running. Heaven only knows when this will happen. It certainly will not be in this fiscal year. There are 140 new beds, but they replace 122 old beds, so the net increase in personal care home beds is 18. This is while, on of the third floor, half of the third floor, 50 beds are clearly identified as long-term chronic care beds, people who are waiting to get into personal care homes, who are sitting in a hospital where they should not be for financial and social reasons. They should be either in their own homes or in personal care homes.

* (2050)

This government is making a huge to-do about a net increase of 18 beds when these projects are finished. There is not a single one of them that would be able to get underway, I would guarantee you, before the next fiscal year, if then, and this is the shell game, this is the duplicitous action on the part of this government and its budget.

I would like to talk a bit about the Education budget. The government talks a great deal about \$24 million in capital for schools. The way I read the budget—and I could be wrong, but the way I read the budget it is \$23.5 million, not \$24 million. Half a million dollars is nothing to sneeze at, but that compares to \$27.5 million in the budget Estimates for last year, so that is a reduction of \$4 million in the capital projects for the public school system—this when we have between \$150 million and \$500 million in the bank.

The effective cut for the University of Manitoba will be \$8 million. You put that against the \$1 million that is going to go to students, and that will not begin to

cover the tuition increases that the universities are going to have to implement because of the cuts to the universities.

The community college system, which in Manitoba should be one of the best in the country, is becoming one of the worst in the country because of the cuts in funding. Compare the community college system in Manitoba to the community college system in Quebec. It is appalling. The community colleges have a decrease of \$170,000 in their grants. Now this is when we are talking about apprenticeship and working collegially with the community college system. What is going to happen? They have got a cut.

Now we talk about the debit side and the credit side. I did not talk about the credit side. I will get back to the health credit side in a minute, but the public education system has taken a huge cut over the last four or five years from this government—2 percent, 2 percent, frozen, 2 percent again. When you add that with the cost of living increases, you have got yourself close to 10 percent, I will bet, in effective reduction to the public school system. That is the debit side, but there is another school system that does not have to worry and that is the elite private school system. They have a \$4-million increase, a 13 percent increase to the private school system in this province, while the public school system, in effect, takes a 2 percent cut. So there are debits and credits in this ledger.

Back to the health care system. Who is seeing a credit in this budget? Well, I would suggest to you that, when they talk about the consolidation of the labs for purposes of efficiency and effectiveness, the people who are going to see the benefits of that consolidation are going to be private labs. This is not going to be the public system that sees the effect of this consolidation. Also, the private personal care homes, we have talked about this in Question Period and in speeches for the last months. The private personal care homes have seen a dramatic increase in their beds, in their support, at the expense of the public personal care home system.

An Honourable Member: I wonder why.

Ms. Barrett: I wonder why. Yes, well, 50-some thousand dollars in donations in '95 alone from the owners of the private personal care home system.

The costs for ambulances are going to be borne by the City of Winnipeg. The fact of the matter is that when you have nine times out of 10 each day at least one community hospital emergency room closed, that means for those patients, their emergency support is given in ambulances, not in emergency rooms. There is something wrong here with that kind of health care provision. Ambulances should not be giving the kind of emergency care that is being required of them when you close nine times out of 10 at least one emergency room.

The other thing is that my understanding is that the regional health authorities, their administrative budgets, their \$135,000 CEO salaries are coming out of the health care budget, out of the hospital budget. So the hospitals are on the debit side; the regional health authority administrations and CEOs are on the credit side.

I would like to talk briefly about the aboriginal community. Much was made in the Speech from the Throne and by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) tonight about the support for the aboriginal community.

The reality is that on the debit side there is almost \$5 million that has been cut from services to aboriginals just through the cuts to the Indian and Metis friendship centres, the grants to MKO and the Association of Manitoba Chiefs and the Access program, just out of those three program cuts almost \$5 million in reduction in services to the aboriginal community. Up against that the government trumpets \$1.4 million in Partners for Careers, \$1.4 million over three years. What is that? Less than half a million dollars a year to help high school and post-secondary aboriginal graduates find jobs, and \$1.3 million over three years for the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, a little over \$400,000 a year, nothing compared just to the cuts to Access and Indian and Metis friendship centres. This is obscene, Madam Speaker.

I would like to compare that—let us just balance that off. What is \$300,000 a year? You know what it is? Madam Speaker, \$300,000 a year for Aboriginal Health and Wellness is half of the cost of the Deputy Minister of Native and Northern Affairs' salary and moving

expenses. That is how you balance that out. The Deputy Minister of Native and Northern Affairs, over \$150,000 in one year for salary and moving expenses, \$69,000 I think for moving expenses to move the deputy minister from Ottawa to Winnipeg, compared to \$300,000 a year, just twice that, for Aboriginal Health and Wellness.

Excuse me, let us put our priorities here. This is obscene. This is absolute obscenity on the part of this government, with between \$150 million and \$500 million in the bank, but for them to spend \$150,000, \$160,000 or \$170,000 for the Deputy Minister of Native and Northern Affairs' own personal expenses against \$300,000 for the entire urban aboriginal community, 60,000 strong just in Winnipeg alone, and you wonder why people are upset. It is not just the aboriginal community that is upset, Madam Speaker, people who believe in fairness. Manitobans by and large believe in treating their fellow Manitobans fairly. They are taking a look at this budget and they are saying, who the heck are these people? Who do they think they are? They are sitting on half a billion dollars of our money and they are not providing for the basic health, education and welfare for their citizens, and they are not providing them for the most vulnerable of their citizens.

* (2100)

Let us talk about job statistics. Let us just talk about the job situation in this province. If I can find my paper, we will do that in a minute. In a minute I will talk about that, but before I talk about that—here it is. Okay, in 1988 the total full-time employment in the province of Manitoba was 412,000. In January 1997 it was 403,000, full-time employment.

An Honourable Member: Let us repeat those.

Ms. Barrett: In 1988, when this government first took office, 412,000 Manitobans were working full time, 30 hours a week or more. In January of 1997, nine years later, 403,000 Manitobans were working full time. We have not had a decrease in the population to make a difference in that. Do you know what? The job growth that this government crows about has virtually all been in part-time jobs.

Now let me talk a little bit about part-time jobs. The ceiling for a definition of part-time job is 30 hours a week. Now that is a pretty decent part-time job if you get 30 hours a week. How many people who work part time get 30 hours a week? In some jobs that is considered full time. There is no floor to the part-time job definition. So, if an individual works one hour a week, they are considered to be working part time. This is not a positive step for the people of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Why was that not in the budget?

Ms. Barrett: Why were those statistics not in the budget?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Because they are not true.

Ms. Barrett: Oh, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews), interestingly enough, talks about veracity. Interestingly enough, the member for Rossmere talks about veracity. I will not say anything more because I would be ruled out of order. I would like the member for Rossmere to explain to me why these statistics are not accurate. They come from the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics.

In 1989 the number of part-time jobs in Manitoba was 99,000; first year of the Tory rule. Today, nine years later, 123,500 Manitobans get part-time work. Almost all of these jobs are in the service sector which have far lower wages, far fewer benefits than jobs in the manufacturing sector. There has been an 8.6 percent decline in real wages since the Filmon government came into office. The Manitoba average wage has fallen from 91.5 percent of the national average, which is decent because our cost of living is also lower than the national average, to 88.1 percent in '95-96.

The job strategy of this government is a low-wage job strategy. Then let us talk about the unemployment statistics which overall for Manitoba are not bad. But there are several things that you need to—

An Honourable Member: The best in the country. What do you mean not bad?

Ms. Barrett: No, it is not the best in the country; Saskatchewan's is lower. Okay, but let me tell you what those statistics hide. Those statistics do not include the reserves in northern and central Manitoba where the unemployment rate in some cases is virtually 100 percent. It does not include youth unemployment, or includes youth unemployment, but we need to pull out sectors here. Youth unemployment is 14 percent. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) talks about, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in his budget talks, about how this budget is a marvellous statement for the youth of Manitoba. What a wonderful thing it says for the youth of Manitoba. Fourteen percent unemployment. That is unacceptable.

In northern Manitoba, excluding the aboriginal First Nations communities, the unemployment rate is almost 20 percent. In northern Manitoba the unemployment rate is almost the unemployment rate that it is in the Maritimes. but, hey, this economy is steamrolling ahead, this is the place for young people to be. You know what? Of those part-time jobs, which is virtually the entire growth in the job market over the last nine years, 30 percent of women employed hold part-time jobs. Children are poor because their parents are poor. Children are poor because their single-parent mothers are poor, and mothers are poor because most of them even who hold part-time jobs hold jobs that keep them below the poverty line. This is not an economy that is steamrolling ahead for a quarter of the population, the working population in this province.

I would like to move on, Madam Speaker. The government says that this is a budget that all Manitobans can be proud of. You know what I found interesting about this budget and the response that it got was, of course, the business community was thrilled. The CFIB and the Chamber of Commerce, you could not wipe the grins off their faces. This is wonderful. But even you know the changes to the payroll tax, they do not even come into effect until next year, until January, 10 months. Again, the shell game. When Dan Kelly figures that out, maybe the grin will go off his face just a little bit.

I wonder if the members opposite actually read the article in the Saturday Free Press. There is a whole page talking about people who responded to the government's budget. Two of those people I find very

interesting, and I would like to briefly speak about them. There was a woman who was on welfare. That is the traditional group of people that has never liked Conservative budgets. There was a student, another group of people that has traditionally never liked Conservative budgets. There were two men talking about this budget, and I would like to briefly talk about them because I think they represent the Manitoba that this government has lost touch with.

The first one is an insurance agent who came over 17 years ago from the Philippines when he was 17. He is 34 years old now. He is making a good salary; he is doing well. He says he is already in the 50 percent tax bracket and that is not going to change. He says he is paying a lot of taxes. He likes the fact that the deficit is going down. He thinks this is good for his kids. If a government cannot balance its budget, it should not be in power in this day and age. I would suggest that he is the kind of person that you would think would be very supportive of this budget, but then you know what he goes on to say? He goes on to say that the province should not abandon helping the poor and should direct more funds towards education to offset tax increases being passed by local school boards. Quote, if you have a good job, you will be fine as a result of this budget. For people with lower incomes, that is who will feel the impact. This is a gentleman who this government thinks is totally in support of them, and he is not.

There is another man, a telecommunications manager who lives in the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) own riding. He also is appreciative. He says that the government is getting its financial house in order, but then he says that does not mean the province should be cutting back on fighting child poverty or on its funding for public schools. There are folks out there who are not as fortunate as me. We should be able to squeeze some money out to help them, because if we do not pay for it now we are going to pay for it later. By focusing solely on debt reduction, the province runs the risk of creating a wider rift between the haves and the have-nots. Education is the key. It is the leveller amongst all people.

Now these are comments from two people who typically reflect groups in this province that have supported the government over its budgets in the past.

I think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Premier who, between them and Jules Benson, put this budget together I am sure, and trotted it into cabinet and told the departments and the ministers, this is what you will do. This is not a government run by democracy. This is a government that is run by three people, a troika, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Jules Benson.

* (2110)

This budget has been a big mistake for the government. This government has made a large mistake with this budget. Politically, they have misread the people of Manitoba and as a government which has a responsibility for 1.1 million Manitobans, they have dropped the ball. They have done nothing to support the needs of the people of Manitoba, and they have no excuse. They do not have an \$862-million deficit like they did have three or four years ago—their deficit, I might add. They do not have that as an excuse. They have the Fiscal Stabilization Fund which is a rainy day fund, as my Leader (Mr. Doer) said, to put a roof over the Tory electoral house, and the people of Manitoba, including people who have been very supportive of this government in the past, are seeing through this. They are seeing through the cynicism, they are seeing through the duplicity. They are seeing that this is a government that has lost touch with the people. They are seeing that this is a government who really is only interested in its own re-election, but even that, Madam Speaker, even in the most crass political terms, they have messed up. When the people that are responding negatively to the cuts in this budget start making those comments, then the government knows its days are numbered. I have been saying this in this House for years now. [interjection] Not eight years, seven years, far too many years. But you know what? It is the people of Manitoba who are saying this government has lost touch.

You know, what is going to happen to John Major on May 1 is going to happen to this government very soon from now. It is time for a change. It is time to get rid of the chartered accountants, narrow, negative, nattering nabobs of negativism. It is time to get the province moving again, all of the people of Manitoba. It is time to put that rainy day fund to the benefit of the youth of this province, the aboriginals of this province,

the women of this province, the public school system, the university system, the health care system, the seniors, all of those people who are being systematically destroyed by the actions of this government while they callously and deliberately put away half a billion dollars for their pre-election campaign. Shame on you all.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in support of the 10th budget of this government, the 10th budget in which Manitobans continue to experience no new increases in personal income tax and sales tax rates.

Before I begin I would like to take the opportunity to compliment you and to commend you for your work in the last session. I know it was a difficult one, and I, as one of the members, appreciate the work that you have done.

As the MLA for Rossmere, Madam Speaker, my constituents continue to tell me, and they tell me this consistently, that they are taxed to the limit, and I answer them that I am proud to continue to tell them that I am a part of a government that has been able to maintain the longest running tax freeze in Canada. As my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has said, the 1997 budget keeps us competitive, supports more job creation, enhances our standard of living, and shows our young people they can look forward to a prosperous life with good opportunities for employment here at home.

This is a budget that says to our young people, we will no longer borrow on your backs. We will not purchase the present with your future. We have a vision for this province, and that includes our young people. Our young people do not deserve to go into the future saddled with the burdens of my generation. My generation has an obligation to the young people to say that you have an opportunity in the future as well. We have overspent as a province; we have overspent as a country; and we have obligations to the future. There is no sense in mortgaging our children's future because we do not just mortgage buildings and property. We mortgage dreams, we mortgage visions when we take our children's money to pay for our living expenses today.

I say, Madam Speaker, this is a responsible government. This is a responsible budget. This is a government that is looking to the future and ensuring that our youth do not have to carry the burden of the irresponsible spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax.

This is a philosophy that the prior NDP governments adopted. This is a prior practice indeed of many Conservative governments, and it is a practice that is wrong. Even the former Prime Minister Trudeau has become a convert. He was the one who introduced us to the concept of deficit spending in Canada, and he has now said in response to the Liberals—and we can talk about the Liberal budget, but he has said: I had to do what I had to do in my time, and Jean Chretien has to now do what he has to do. And what Jean Chretien has to do, and what is worse, what we have to do and what our children have to do is pay for that philosophy that has mortgaged our future, and what we are doing is buying back that mortgage. It is not an easy road. It is not something that we all enjoy doing, but it is something that we have to do. We have to pay back the bankers on Bay Street. We have to pay back the bankers in New York City. We have to pay back the Swiss financiers because we chose to give those people our future, and that is a mistake.

Madam Speaker, sometimes when I listen to my honourable friends across the way challenge—[interjection] Pardon me.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): The minister tells us we have about the lowest debt burden in the country, so we are relatively okay.

Mr. Toews: Well, my friend from Brandon East says we have the lowest debt; we are relatively okay. Well, compared to a person jumping out of a 10-storey building and hitting the eighth floor down, we are pretty well off compared to the one who has already hit the ground, and what our obligation is is to ensure that we do not hit the ground and splat on the ground. So, relatively speaking, we may be well off, but I can tell my friend from Brandon East that if we do not stop that kind of philosophy, if we do not stop that reckless spending, we are going to hit that ground just as surely as any Third World country has hit the ground.

* (2120)

If I can remember, or if I can remind the member, I have travelled to Third World countries, I have travelled to many Third World countries, and, you know, these were the countries who spent during the '70s. [interjection] And I have travelled to the conditions in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba and throughout Canada. But the point is, I have been to the countries where they borrowed money and borrowed money, and at the end of the day it is not a question of choice, it is not a choice of what we spend our money in. It becomes a question of the bankers coming into your country and telling you what you are going to do, and for anyone to say, do not worry, we are only eight floors down and we got two floors to hit is irresponsible.

Madam Speaker, sometimes when I listen to my friends across the way, as I hear them today, what frightens them most is change. They are frightened of change. It becomes more and more apparent that when you listen to them, the one thing that they are most frightened of is change, and what frightens them is the future, and so they build little shells, and my colleague from Brandon East across the way talks about his time in the 1970s and paints such a rosy picture about Manitoba in the '70s. This was when the member was in full charge of government, motor running and busily dismantling the brakes and saying, well, it is a long road, we do not have to worry. Hopefully we will run out of gas before we hit the wall. Well, that is what my learned friend was doing during the 1970s, those days that he talks about.

And I can talk about when I was a public servant and working for the government of Manitoba and the jobs creation program that the Leader of the Opposition talks about, \$200 million for planting daisies. We all know that is how the NDP spent money and bought off the electorate. But the electorate is not fooled. Well, let me tell you about some of the instructions that my colleagues across the way talked to me about.

Well, the jobs creation program, I was a lawyer. I did what my clients instructed me to do, and they said, when I drafted up a contract so that people repay the money that they would borrow, they said to me, well, it looks too legalistic. I said, well, I am a lawyer. That is what I do. I draft up legal contracts. And they said to

me, do not make it look so legalistic. We will frighten off people from creating jobs because, really, Madam Speaker, they had no interest in recouping any of the money. All they wanted to do was throw that money in any direction that they possibly could, and they never cared about recovering that money. [interjection] No, it is not ridiculous. That is exactly what they did.

Well, those were my instructions from my learned colleagues across the way. They did not care. They did not care. There was always another budget and another increase and more to tax until they finally drove some of our best corporations out of this province and, you know, it was not just large corporations, it was not just small corporations. It was individual employers who had a future here, who were driven out of this province by that government of the NDP.

But I digress. All I wanted to make was the point that this is an opposition that is frightened of the future, that wants to put up walls to protect Manitobans and, in fact, what they are doing is creating walls to destroy Manitoba, to suffocate Manitobans.

The status quo is not good enough. One does not stand still in this world anymore. If we do not move ahead, we will be in the same position that any Third World country is. We must move ahead, and I say that under the leadership of our Premier and, yes, the direction in the budget, Manitoba is moving forward. Through our balanced budget legislation there is a solid fiscal foundation being built for future opportunity and growth, future opportunity in every sector that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) was concerned about. They raised all the spectres and all the fears in saying, oh my, what is going to happen? Well, we are not putting our heads in the shell. We are looking at the future. We are facing the future, and we are dealing with the difficult choices that they never had the courage to make. [interjection]

Madam Speaker, the member for Wellington says we are cutting. We are making choices that are difficult in situations, but I can tell you that the priority of myself and the government that I am a part of is for health care, for education and child and family services, and we are—[interjection] Now, the challenges that we face are daunting. The challenges that we face are intimidating, but we cannot back down. It is the role of

every member of this Legislature to cope with and manage change.

I listened with interest during the last session of the Legislature regarding the debates on the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System. All around the world deregulation is occurring in the telecommunications industry and not because privatization is simply a buzz word or in vogue or right-wing economics is in vogue. The reason is because it must be done. Every individual in the industry recognizes that it has to be done. It is hard to keep up with the rapidly changing environment, and if we want to serve our people, if we want to protect our services these changes must be made. I, for one, do not say that a solution is right because it comes from the right wing or that it is wrong because it comes from the left wing. I say the decision is right because it works and it provides the services for the people of the province of Manitoba.

You know, the member for Wellington, I listened to her quite carefully and quietly, and I am prepared to listen to her again, but the member espouses a short-term philosophy that says, well, there is a little bit of money, let us rush out and spend it. I mean, after all, we spent \$13 billion, or whatever the deficit is here, we spent it and it does not matter. What is another half billion dollars? Every dollar that you spend without justification is another dollar that you add to the burden of our children, and that is wrong. That is morally wrong. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (2130)

Mr. Toews: So now we give the money to the bankers that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is so eager to take from the bankers, pay any interest rate, take any amount of money. It is not real money. We do not have to pay for it. That is her philosophy. Well, that is a wrong philosophy. There is a reckoning, and we want to ensure that our children are prepared and will meet the future. It is hard to keep up with a rapidly changing environment, and yet to listen to the NDP during the debate on the privatization of MTS one could only come up with the conclusion that the NDP are caught in a time warp. Well, our future leaders, our

young people, they will not sit back and tolerate a baby boom generation that does not look beyond today to anticipate what changes are necessary and relevant to a society a decade from now or more.

The balanced budget legislation forces government to make those difficult decisions that we sometimes as politicians are only too happy to foist onto someone else. What the budget does, and what the balanced budget legislation does, is say, you are responsible, you make the decision. You know, Madam Speaker, I am prepared with this government to make these decisions, and if I bear the consequences at the polls in three years or two years or one year, that is something I will live with, but I know that the decisions that we are making here are decisions that are the right ones. They are not always easy to make, but they are the right ones. Even the former member for Flin Flon Jerry Storie has told his colleagues, wake up, balanced budget legislation, balanced budgets have to be done.

An Honourable Member: You are always right, you know. You are always right, eh?

Mr. Toews: I thank the member who says I am always right, and I am actually surprised that he would say it, but I thank him for that. It was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who mentioned it a couple of times, and I will not doubt his sincerity.

The balanced budget legislation forces governments to be creative and responsive to changing environments. Manitobans know that their prosperity is dependent upon their ability to adapt. In that context, Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly talk about a success story that I would like to share with you that is a success story in the face of our global economy. I think members opposite, as members on this side, recall the debate on free trade. I do not have to remind anyone in this House today how aggressively the NDP campaigned against free trade. Indeed, in the 1995 general election, the NDP were going door to door in my constituency telling my constituents that the free trade was destroying their prospects for tomorrow, that it was destroying their jobs, that it would destroy their economy. This was in the constituency of Rossmere where the prior-sitting member went door to door frightening our constituents about free trade.

In my constituency, Palliser Furniture is booming as a result of free trade. A few days ago I listened with interest to one of the presidents or directors of Palliser talking about free trade and in acknowledgement of the very important role that free trade had in creating the job opportunities in my constituency of Rossmere. He was commenting at the time on a \$14-million expansion that would create 400 new jobs in my constituency, and the president, if I can quote him, says that the company may need to expand again within a year. This is definitely a commitment to the community, he said

This was an industry that was being written off in the 1980s because of free trade. This is what he said. I remember his concerns back in 1988 about free trade, and members opposite were only too happy to jump onto that bandwagon and say this is an example, this is a person who knows what he is talking about and he says free trade is going to destroy his industry. Listening to him on the radio as well, I imagine it must have been fairly difficult for him to say and talk about what free trade has done for his industry and for his business and yet it is clear that since free trade, indeed, since 1993 when there were approximately 1,500 jobs there, there are about 2,500 jobs now. He indicates that the company's Winnipeg payroll is to hit 2,700 jobs by the end of this year.

This is not just an issue about free trade. This is an issue about a people, a province that is willing to work with and adapt to change. Many of these jobs could have gone to other places, but the one thing that Manitoba has is an excellent workforce, a well-educated workforce, a committed workforce, and employers recognize that and they are coming to Manitoba. The Minister of Finance's statistics indicate that over and over and over again, and it is recognized by independent experts in the area. Yet my colleagues across the way, stuck in the 1970s, trot out statistics from the 1970s and the 1980s about jobs that were created for two or three weeks full time on job creation programs that amounted to nothing more than planting daisies, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has said, stated over and over, and yet they do not look at the future. They do not look at the opportunities. They simply go back to the past. [interjection] Len, you voted against two balanced budgets. Len, how can you sit there? You voted against two balanced budgets. How can you do that? You complain about a deficit on

one hand; there are two balanced budgets and you vote against both of them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to continue his debate.

Mr. Toews: I know, Madam Speaker, that some of these comments hit home, and I know my colleague from Brandon East is trotting out the same old philosophy that colours anything that anyone brings up, and it is a philosophy of that past, it is a philosophy of the dinosaurs, and I can only say that the rest of Manitoba has moved beyond that point.

I have talked very briefly about how important the free trade initiative was and not only the free trade initiative, but the response of the people of Manitoba to the challenges of free trade. They have responded positively. Manitoba is a province that lives on trade and it has made us stronger, it has made us better able to adapt to the future, but it is not just the private sector that is adaptive, that is creative, that is assisting us in moving into the next century.

* (2140)

I would like to talk a bit about the balanced budget in the context of the public service. A balanced budget, as I have indicated earlier, means that there are choices. Right now in the context of our balanced budget and the limited resources that we have, we in fact have to make choices, and public servants are aware of the choices that they have to make. They are becoming creative, and they are responding to the demands that the people of Manitoba have placed upon us as a government and them as a public service. A balanced budget compels my department to be creative in the way that services are provided.

An example of this is the Civil Legal Services division. I was proud to be a member of the Civil Legal Services division from 1979 to 1985. In that capacity, as a lawyer in that department, I was counsel to the Department of Labour, and there was a tremendous fear, I understand it, when this government began discussing with Legal Services the possibility of creating a special operating agency. In fact, they have responded to that. If you talk to my colleagues in government, in cabinet, in caucus, one can see how

committed those public servants are. They are responsible for providing a full range of high-quality legal services on a cost-recovery basis to its clients, the provincial government, its agencies, boards, committees and some Crown corporations.

This status gives them the flexibility to hire staff as required to provide service levels appropriate to client demand. It allows them the flexibility to carry forward surpluses to future years and the ability to plan on a long-term, multi-term basis.

You know, the fear was that this special operating agency would signal the demise of public legal services providing legal services to government. In fact, the opposite has occurred. There has been an expansion of the number of lawyers and the services provided by that department, and they have been able to do so on a cost-effective basis. I can illustrate the same creativity in other areas of government.

A balanced budget also means that we are able to free up resources and to move into areas of particular need. We make the choices and we move into those areas of need. As we pay down our debt, we free up more money to be used for the things that Manitobans want the money to be used for, not simply the ideology of a government. This is giving true choice back to the electorate rather than we as government dictating to the people what has to be done, because there are no choices when we mortgage our future to the bankers of New York City.

Mr. Leonard Evans: That is exactly what Tommy Douglas said.

Mr. Toews: Well, if that is what Tommy Douglas said, then I agree with Tommy Douglas on that point, because I do not particularly like mortgaging our future to bankers in New York City the way the member for Brandon East did when he was in power.

A balanced budget forces all of us in government to be more watchful of the role that the federal government plays. What we have to do now, we look at the resources that we have and we have to hold the federal government accountable for how they spend their money and their dealings with the provincial government.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Do not use the Bank of Canada.

Mr. Toews: My colleague from Brandon East will be able to stand up and talk to the federal government about—

Mr. Leonard Evans: I did this afternoon.

Mr. Toews: Well, we will send his remarks on to parliament to see whether they found those remarks useful. As I have indicated, I am not adverse to even accepting quotes from Tommy Douglas. That does not bother me. I do not care whether a person is left wing; I do not care whether they are right wing. I care what serves the public of Manitoba.

One of the things that I want to talk about that I think should be a very serious concern to every member here in this Legislature is the offloading that the federal government continues to engage in, and I did not even say anything about the Liberals. All I said was about the federal government, because I can say the same thing about the federal Tories when they were in power, and hopefully they learned something, but what I want to say is that we as a provincial government have to be careful to watch that the federal parliament continues to be responsible for the areas where they have constitutional jurisdiction.

I found very interesting the comments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs interviewed on CBC Radio. This is our Minister of Foreign Affairs. Let me tell you what he says. After all these years in the federal parliament, he said, in talking about criminal law and criminal justice, in an interview on March 6, 1997: I think it is clear that as a federal government we do not have prime responsibility.

Now I spent some time in constitutional law, I have read our Constitution, and I can tell you one thing that the federal parliament is, in fact, primarily responsible for criminal law, and yet I heard the member from St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) a week or so ago stand up and say, it is the provincial government responsible for criminal law. The member for St. Johns, and you can check the record, should know better. He should know better. He is a lawyer. He served as an assistant clerk and he indicated that it was a province, so the member

from St. Johns is falling into the same trap that Axworthy wants us to fall into. [interjection]

Well, I want my friend from Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to go back to the member from St. Johns and say, whatever your disagreements with the Tories are, on this one I think you should support them, because do not let the federal parliament and the federal government weasel out of its responsibilities. The federal government says time and again, and has said in numerous places, that its responsibility in respect of our aboriginal people relates only to aboriginal people on lands reserved for them—clearly wrong. Clearly, clearly wrong.

* (2150)

The language of the BNA Act and the Constitution Act, 1867 indicates that their responsibility is for Indians and lands reserved for Indians, not Indians only on reserved lands. Those are the words of the BNA Act. They are primarily responsible for our aboriginal people, no matter where they are in our province, and we as a provincial government have a responsibility as well. They are citizens of the province of Manitoba, and they have the same rights, no less and no more than any other citizen. We will honour our constitutional obligations, and, yes, as Minister of Justice, I am mindful of the concerns that we must make the judicial system more sensitive to their particular needs. There is no question about it. But we have indicated there will be no separate aboriginal justice courts, and we know that the aboriginals in our province do not want a separate justice system, but they want a justice system that is more sensitive and that is more—

An Honourable Member: How do you know that?

Mr. Toews: Because they have told me that. Well, they have told me that.

An Honourable Member: Who is they?

Mr. Toews: Well, I had a meeting with the people from The Pas in my office who indicated they did not want a separate justice system, and what we are prepared to do in the context of our provincial responsibility, because we have no constitutional authority to do any more than that, that is, to create a

separate justice system, but we do have the authority to make that system more responsive to their needs, and that is absolutely necessary, absolutely necessary that we are mindful in terms of the personnel who are in our justice system, in terms of the programming and in terms of the sensitivity. There is no question about that, and I have indicated to that community that I am prepared to work in that direction.

The issue then in respect of the offloading is an important issue because, over the last number of years they have consistently cut back our programming, cut back our money that we receive for the delivery of those services. What we are saying to the federal government is that our Constitution requires co-operation between the federal and provincial levels of government. While the federal government may have primary responsibility for the criminal law, we operate under a delegated authority, and that has been a workable system for the last 125, 140 years, but the federal government has to understand, when they put into place programming—

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by taking a walk down Selkirk Avenue and telling people here what you might see in my constituency of Burrows in the north end. [interjection] I am glad to hear that members on both sides of the House are so familiar with Selkirk Avenue. Then I will not need to tell you that 40 percent of the stores are empty on Selkirk Avenue or for sale and that we have places that are causing us severe problems, like the drug dealers outside the Merchants Hotel and the prostitution that is happening around the Merchants Hotel and the needles that are on the parking lot behind the Merchants Hotel.

I want to tell you about the kinds of issues that are affecting my constituents and that result in phone calls to me asking me to do something about these problems. We have at least three known gang houses on Selkirk Avenue that the neighbours tell me the addresses of which I pass on to the police on a regular basis. These problems touch on me as well.

We have a very large number of people who are unemployed. A very large number of people are on social assistance, people who have time on their hands. In fact, I had coffee with one of my constituents

recently who was telling me what happens when people have nothing to do. She was speaking from personal experience. She said, when people have nothing to do, they get in trouble. Why? Because it is cheap, because it is fun and because, while a few get caught, the rest get away. They take the rap, but they do not squeal on their friends. So that is what happens when we have very high rates of unemployment and a lack of recreation facilities in the north end, as we have. And these problems are coming very close to me. About two weeks ago the person who rents the suite beside my office was stabbed and he died before he could get medical help.

The noise is a bit of a problem, and I thought of moving my constituency office. I asked my executive, should I move off Selkirk Avenue? Should I move to a place that might be safe or might be perceived to be safer? And they said no. In fact, one individual said that they were quite pleased when they saw that their MLA had an office on Selkirk Avenue. They said he must be a real person to have an office in our neighbourhood. And then she said, when this man was murdered and our MLA did not move his office, she said, I admire you for this, for not running away, for not abandoning the inner city, for not leaving this neighbourhood in spite of the violence, which is coming very, very close.

The man who died, his suite is three feet from the door of my office in a building with five rental suites. So I have decided to stay, because I want to identify with this neighbourhood. I want to represent those people. I have made a choice to represent those people in this Legislature.

Those problems are not the kind of things that you people on the other side have to face in your

constituency office. Well, I am actually glad to hear that you have some empathy for these kinds of problems. It means that maybe you will do something about them, that you will invest in your community, in our community and our city so that these problems do not get worse. You have a choice as to what you are going to do about these problems. And you can spend the money now or you can spend much more money later.

In our neighbourhood, we have a serious problem with break-and-enters, with auto thefts and with insurance redlining. We have so many break-ins, so many auto thefts that people have very great difficulty getting house insurance. Many companies will not insure houses based on postal codes. When the Manitoba Public Insurance company got out of the home insurance business, we said this is going to cause problems because it means that there will be fewer companies who will insure and the private sector companies will not provide insurance. And that is actually happening and on a very discriminatory basis, because they are doing it on the basis of postal codes and nothing else, or they are saying to people, we will insure you, but we will charge you a much higher premium, maybe 25 percent higher, or you constantly have to change companies, as I have had to do, or they will say, we will not insure you at all unless you have a security alarm system in your house or your business. So we have problems that people do not have in other parts of the city.

Madam Speaker: Order please, the hour being 10 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have 35 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 17, 1997

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