



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, March 18, 1997**

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

**PRAYERS**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

**Mobile Screening Units for Mammograms**

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

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**University of Manitoba Bison Women's  
Basketball Team**

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise before honourable members today to express congratulations to the University of Manitoba Bison women's basketball team on winning their second consecutive Canadian Interuniversity Athletic association championship.

Our province's domination in university women's basketball continued with a 73-62 win over York in the national final in Thunder Bay on Sunday. It marked the fifth straight year that the title has gone to a team from Manitoba after the University of Winnipeg Wesmen won three straight titles between 1993 and 1995.

In winning the title, Manitoba displayed a work ethic and demonstrated the character champions are made of. While we congratulate the entire Bison team, special recognition goes to Coach Colleen Dufresne and three graduating players who undoubtedly were the team leaders, Terri-lee Johannesson, Lorissa Crellin and Vicky Neufeld. It was also a fitting end to Terri-lee Johannesson's college career. The first team all-star led the team in scoring, inspired her teammates through her leadership and for the second straight year was named the tournament MVP.

**An Honourable Member:** Would she be an Icelandic-Canadian?

**Mr. Stefanson:** I think she might be. I would ask all members to join me in congratulating the University of Manitoba women's basketball team on their second straight national championship and for the pride and distinction that they have brought to our entire province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Sport in congratulating the University of Manitoba women's basketball team on winning their second consecutive CIAU championship.

It is true that Manitoba does have a strong history of producing championship basketball teams. This is the fifth straight year that the Canadian championship has come to Manitoba, and special congratulations are due to all the players and the coaches, as well as the other support staff and volunteers that work with university college teams.

\* (1335)

I think we must also remember that all these young women as well as the coaches come from high schools, and hopefully most of them come from high schools in Manitoba. The concern that we have is fewer and fewer of these Manitoba university athletes are going to be coming from high schools in Manitoba because this government continues not to support sport, extracurricular activities, high school athletics, physical education programs. I would bet that in the future there will be fewer and fewer people who come from our high school programs with the kinds of skills that these young women have, because of the effects cutbacks in education are having on the ability for high schools to conduct extracurricular activities like basketball, other sports, arts programs, music programs and the like.

So although we want to give credit and recognition to these fine university successes, we want to also put the government on notice. If they want to continue to see this kind of success, they have to put some investment

into the education and opportunity of all Manitobans in the future.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### Personal Care Homes Public Inquiry

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, another family has come forward with the personal care home situations in Manitoba. The Normand family, dealing with what they feel to be the premature death of their father, is now launching a court suit against the Holiday Haven Nursing Home, which, of course, is funded and accredited by the provincial Conservative government.

They are alleging gross negligence, care deterioration and recklessness of supervision at the home. Families today joined our Health critic—families dealing with the Beacon Hill, Heritage Lodge, Kildonan place and Holiday Haven Home have joined with us in calling on the provincial government to have a public inquiry.

Would the Premier (Mr. Filmon) please answer in a positive way to the families of the four homes I just mentioned and call a public inquiry dealing with our personal care homes here in the province of Manitoba?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, the member for Concordia brings this particular case to Question Period. This family has made allegations. They have chosen the route of civil litigation in which to pursue that. During the course of that litigation, the facts will come out. They have powers within that to garner the information which they want, and like all Manitobans, I think we have to wait for the facts to come forward.

Let us not forget that the Chief Medical Examiner for the province investigates all deaths in personal care homes or reviews all files related to deaths in personal care homes. That safeguard is always there in place. This family feels differently. They are pursuing it, as is their right through the civil courts, and we will see what happens with it.

**Mr. Doer:** Families have waited in Manitoba since this Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised in 1990 to deal with the

personal care homes. Families have waited since 1992, since the Rusen inquest of the Anne Sands death. Families have waited since 1994 from the policy alternative report that the government has had. Families have waited since 1995 when the Premier promised to implement 39 recommendations on personal care homes. Families cannot wait any longer, Madam Speaker. Now the Morrisette family has taken the government to the Human Rights Commission alleging that vulnerable adults in the personal care home system in Manitoba receive less rights and less protection from the provincial government than vulnerable children, vulnerable children in any setting including a child care centre.

I would like to know, Madam Speaker, will the Premier override the stonewalling from the Minister of Health and deal with all of the issues since 1990, on personal care homes, and have a full public inquiry on behalf of the families of the vulnerable people in our personal care homes here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, what I am interested in as Minister of Health as is in this side of the facts. The Leader of the Opposition continues to take innuendo and allegation and try to spin them into facts. Even the Free Press editorial writers identified that very clearly last week.

\* (1340)

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, last year, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said that the opposition was fearmongering when we were raising questions on the Holiday Haven Nursing Home.

I would like to ask the Premier if he had taken action on the Speech from the Throne, the Anne Sands inquest, the policy report that he had, the 1995 report that this government received and the 39 recommendations, if he had taken action on the questions raised by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the families, would Julius Molnar be alive today?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, that question from the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely the kind of contribution to this debate that is absolutely unwarranted. The Chief Medical Officer of our

province has ordered an inquest, I believe, into the death of which he is talking and that inquest will reveal the facts.

The Leader of the Opposition is so impatient, so impatient to make a political issue whether there is one or not, that he ignores that process. I cannot be that irresponsible. This side of the House, we would like to see the facts. We have always said let us see what the facts are. The member opposite has already been the judge, the jury, has made the decision. I wish all of us could have his wisdom.

### **Personal Care Homes Public Inquiry**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, this morning, families from four different nursing homes came together to say that staffing levels are inadequate, that no one listens to their complaints when they raise their complaints and that there is need for a public inquiry into the way personal care homes are operated. There has already been an inquest and one of the people from the inquest said those conclusions were not followed.

My question to the Minister of Health is why are you stalling? Why are you doing less for senior citizens? Why do you not do the right thing and today order a public inquiry so those people can have their voices heard?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, why will the member for Kildonan not wait to determine the facts? Why is his Leader, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), making the decision to come to this House and say here are the facts on that particular case when the Chief Medical Officer is conducting an investigation? That is not a responsible way to deal with these issues.

Last week in the House we heard his colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talk about huge numbers of telephone calls and then admitted he was talking about a dozen or so. The members of the New Democratic Party should wait to see what facts come out, and we will then act accordingly based on fact, not on innuendo.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Speaker, how does this minister reconcile his statements this afternoon? How can he reconcile those statements when we raised the issues about Holiday Haven in the fall, when we sent 19 complaints to the Minister of Health, when I sent three letters directly to the Minister of Health calling for a change in management at Holiday Haven and it took finally a death at Holiday Haven for the minister to step in? How can the minister now refuse to follow up on complaints raised, not just by people at Holiday Haven but at other nursing homes? They are covering up.

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, no one is covering up. If there are legitimate complaints, they will be investigated. But what we have are members opposite taking bits of information, stretching the facts over and over again to make an argument for a case today that those facts have not yet demonstrated to prove. We have an inquest by the Chief Medical Officer; we will await those results. [interjection] Well, the member says one case. It is on that one case that they base their argument.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has come to this House with the conclusions of that inquest, and it has not even been completed. Please let the system do its work.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Chomiak:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I think the minister overlooked the fact that we raised examples of 19 separate situations at Holiday Haven, three separate letters, and we are not basing our case on one death but on many instances that the minister is refusing to acknowledge.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Kildonan does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Kildonan, with a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Speaker, I am appealing to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), as did the families this morning

when they appeared. Will the Premier, who was prepared to order a public inquiry with Justice Hughes into the jail system, give the people of Manitoba the assurance, the senior citizens who have no voice, that he will call a public inquiry into personal care homes? If you did it for the jails, surely you can do it for the people in the personal care homes.

**Mr. Praznik:** The member for Kildonan, with great dramatic effect, says the senior citizens in our facilities have no voice. Does he imply that in their jail they are not visited by their friends, relatives and families on a regular basis? Is he implying that members of this Legislature do not as MLAs—

**An Honourable Member:** . . . implied. You do not care.

\* (1345)

**Mr. Praznik:** The member said people do not care. Madam Speaker, this side cares. What we do not do are the kinds of sleazy tactics that the members opposite do and the Free Press clearly identified.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beauséjour Citation 492 lists the terms that the minister was talking about as being unparliamentary.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you would not only call the minister to order but ask him to at least once respond to some very real concerns that are being expressed on behalf of many Manitobans and today four separate nursing homes that are in question. Will you please ask him to not only be in order but to answer our very serious questions that are being asked on behalf of the people who are in our personal care homes, something that he should be concerned about rather than the kind of tactics we are seeing from this minister in this House?

**Madam Speaker:** I believe the honourable member for Thompson was raising a point of order on unparliamentary language. I would ask that the honourable Minister of Health withdraw the word. It was directed to a member or a group of members, and

remind him that all members are to be referred to as "honourable members."

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I believe I was quoting an editorial, but if I have offended the rules of parliamentary language, I certainly withdraw it, and I will table the editorial as well just for the purposes of the record.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable Minister of Health.

### Home Oxygen Supply Service Rimer Alco Contract

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, when we asked the Minister of Health why the Pharmacare program was being radically changed, it was clear that the real decisions were being made over here in the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Stefanson) office.

Will the Minister of Finance explain to this House why a little failing Grow Bond company, Rimer Alco, whose liabilities exceeded its assets at its last annual statement on March 31, 1996, who owes its shareholders, its bondholders, the government of Manitoba, banks and others money, why would this company be awarded by Treasury Board, which the Minister of Finance chairs, a contract when they are in deep financial distress, have no demonstrated capacity in the field and yet they are being given a contract by the Treasury Board, chaired by the Minister of Finance? Will the Minister of Finance explain why his Treasury Board awarded this contract to this company?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I believe in the bidding competition for that particular contract that this company, I am advised, was the lowest bidder and met the bond requirements that were part of that bid.

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, what does the Minister of Finance have to say—the minister who is responsible for Treasury Board, not the Minister of Health—to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business who wrote to him, to the government on February 20 and said, "While this company may be an excellent manufacturer, it has not demonstrated any experience in . . . a home care service business"? He further said,

"I am concerned that the decision to choose Rimer-Alco may have been influenced by the potential embarrassment of another failure."

How does the Minister of Finance explain Treasury Board's action in awarding a contract in spite of the fact that there are deep concerns about this company's ability to even survive, let alone to service this new contract? I will table this letter, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I will certainly be responding to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but as the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has indicated, there was a process that this proposal went through. Rimer Alco was the lowest successful bidder meeting all qualifications. It is that simple.

The member for Crescentwood comes continuously with innuendos about companies throughout Manitoba trying to paint doom and gloom of various entities throughout our province, but the reality is this went through a process and Rimer Alco was the lowest tender, Madam Speaker.

\* (1350)

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance confirm that the recommendation, the unanimous recommendation from the bid selection committee was that the contract be awarded to another company, that in fact the other company to which the contract was recommended was in fact the low bidder for the contract for a three-year period, low by some \$75,000? That was the recommendation of the committee that reviewed the bids, including an external accountant, an accountant who said: I have grave concerns about the ability of this company to deliver the services.

Will he in fact confirm that fact?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the numbers put on the record by the member for Crescentwood, I have already indicated, as has the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), that this tender went through a process and Rimer Alco was deemed to be the lowest bid meeting the necessary qualifications. It is that simple.

### Home Oxygen Supply Service Rimer Alco Contract

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, we have been imploring this government to stop the privatization of health care and admit there is no place for profit when lives are at stake. Now, in privatizing the home oxygen supply service, this government is more concerned about propping up the failing businesses of their friends than ensuring the health and safety of Manitoba patients.

I want to ask the Minister of Health: how does he respond to the CFIB letter that was sent to him on February 20 that states that Rimer Alco clearly does not have the demonstrated expertise, knowledge of the program or experience in dealing with this smaller group of the community?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I am somewhat amazed by the question from the member, because the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) in the last question implied we should have awarded the contract to another company. Now she is telling us from the same party that we should not have awarded it to anyone, so I am not quite sure where the New Democrats are coming from on this.

**Ms. Cerilli:** I want to ask the Minister of Health: why is this government putting the health and safety of more than 800 home care patients, 30 of whom are children, at risk with a company that clearly lacks the capacity to provide this kind of home care service of oxygen supply?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I would like to know when the member became an expert in the supply of oxygen, first of all. Secondly, why would I put them at any less risk if I was awarding it to the contract that the member for Crescentwood is now promoting?

### Point of Order

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, a point of order.

Madam Speaker, my words were that the recommendation of the bid committee was that the

contract should be awarded to another company. I did not recommend it; my party did not recommend it. We oppose privatization of home care. I want the minister to correctly quote me and not to twist words as he is so wont to do.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Crescentwood does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Ms. Cerilli:** Can the minister table any documents to confirm that any other company had a higher bid than Rimer Alco when his own committee consisting of a Department of Health official, an official from the Victoria Hospital and an official from Government Services recommended against this company and other companies had a \$75,000 lower bid over three years?

Can he produce any information that would contradict that?

**Mr. Praznik:** What I find most interesting about this whole issue, if one knows the history of the company Rimer Alco and their role in bringing oxygen concentrators to the province, if there is one thing that they have managed to do in their history in Manitoba is result in a significant lowering in the price of oxygen. They have created a competitive market in oxygen that has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in our health care system.

What I am noticing now is we have the New Democratic Party saying we should not have reduced the price of oxygen thereby freeing up more money for health care. What they are in fact doing, Madam Speaker, is supporting an industry that has overcharged us in Manitoba for oxygen for years.

I wonder how many campaign donations they got from oxygen suppliers.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (1355)



### Home Oxygen Supply Service Rimer Alco Contract

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is also for the Minister of Health. Perception is important on this whole issue of the oxygen generators and the contract that has been let out. I have had opportunity to talk to two or three individuals with respect to this particular contract, and there is a great deal of concern that it appears that the government might be trying to bail out a particular company.

I would like to table a shareholders' report that gives some sort of indication of the company that was, I understand, awarded this particular contract.

My question specific to the Minister of Health: was there any special treatment given to Rimer Alco in the awarding of this particular contract?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** If one looks back at the history of this particular company coming to Manitoba and beginning in the oxygen business with the oxygen concentrator, they have been the first competitive force in the supply of oxygen in many, many years. The result of this company has been they have forced significant decreases in the price of oxygen supplied throughout our system. They have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars, and as a consequence there has been a fierce competitive war with the traditional suppliers of that product.

What I hear today are members of the opposition, quite frankly, continuing wanting to see that protection continue. Rimer Alco, as a company, have saved the taxpayers of this province hundreds of thousands of dollars in oxygen costs, if not millions, over the last number of years.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster, with a supplementary question.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** My question is fairly simple in terms of the preferential treatment. This is a company that has received thousands of dollars of assistance through Grow Bonds, and others.

My question specific to the Minister of Health: was any preferential treatment given to this company in the awarding of this contract?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I understand from the department officials that I spoke to on this matter that in terms of the costs—and I believe Treasury Board has reviewed this—that they were the lowest bidder and met the performance bond. Quite frankly, I know that those who were not and those who have concerns about the continued existence of Rimer Alco—because they are a tremendously competitive force in the marketplace—have brought these matters to members opposite, and I think very much that is what this is about.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I would seek assurances from the Minister of Health and the Premier that in fact there was no ministerial interference in the dealing out of this particular contract.

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, what I can say as the current Minister of Health is I am assured by those who have worked on the numbers on this contract that they were the lowest bidder. Let us also put in perspective, because I see a great deal of attack about Rimer Alco, that Rimer Alco as a company has done more to reduce the cost of oxygen and save money in health care in our system than any other supplier in decades. Let us keep that in mind as well before we start attacking the company.

### Home Oxygen Supply Service Rimer Alco Contract

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I think we have established that the bid was awarded to Rimer Alco even though they are not the lowest bidder and that it was against the recommendation of a government committee that another company be awarded the contract. This was not the best bidder by any stretch of the imagination.

Will the Minister of Finance confirm that Rimer Alco was unable to come up with the required bid bond of \$1.75 million to ensure that they could perform the requirements of the contract, in other words, that no bonding source would take a chance on this failed company? Why did Treasury Board agree to go with

this company when they could not secure the bonding necessary?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, there is a familiar ring to this kind of question from the opposition. They come with half facts, incorrect information. The facts are that Rimer Alco was the lowest overall cost proposal submitted for the services. One of the conditions when we award these types of contracts is that they have to be bonded. That will certainly be a condition of awarding the contract to Rimer Alco. Let us be clear on that. My understanding is, yes, they can and will be able to obtain the bonding that is—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Finance, to complete his response.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, these members opposite are unbelievable. To finalize the contract, bonding has to be in place. I am told that, yes, the bonding is and will be in place for Rimer Alco, but no contract will be finalized with Rimer Alco unless the bonding is in place. That is easy to understand. They seem to have difficulty across the way understanding. In typical fashion they come with incorrect information, half-truths, and put absolutely wrong information on the record as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) did just last week on the whole issue of gaming in Manitoba, a common pattern.

\* (1400)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Burrows, with a supplementary question.

**Mr. Martindale:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance if he could clarify whether or not, as he has said—well, he said two different things. Is the bond in place or will it be in place? It cannot be both; it has to be one or the other. And why was the bond not in place before the contract was awarded?

**Mr. Stefanson:** As I indicated, upon review of all of these contracts, one of the requirements is that bonding be in place to ultimately award the contract. I am told that, yes, bonding is in place, and it will have to be in

place to award a contract to Rimer Alco or any other company that is successful. Simple to understand. I think everybody else can understand this other than 23 people across the way.

**Mr. Martindale:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health why he awarded this contract to a company with very little experience, without trained staff, and why is he putting 800 clients at risk, 30 of them children, vulnerable children, high-risk clients of home care? The home care people who are experts in that field tell me that if people are untrained and inexperienced, then someone could die as a result of their inexperience. Why are you giving this inexperienced company this contract?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, first of all, just a few minutes ago in this House we heard the member's colleague say that even if the company was experienced and met all these qualifications, we should not award it to them anyway because it should be kept in-house. So is this an ideological debate, or is it one that really is concerned about the consumers in the province?

Madam Speaker, company bids have to meet the requirements of the contract, and that is to provide appropriate and safe service to the people that they are serving.

### Historical Documents Sale

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, last year this government brought Louis Riel's letters home to Manitoba and so reclaimed these documents for our history. Now this same government is selling 35 historical documents, including Riel's power of attorney and letters of administration, the 1873 patent of the Hudson's Bay Company and the 1907 land sale of the St. Peters Band to the Rural Municipality of St. Andrew's, viewed by many historians as the most disgraceful land swindle in Canadian history.

To the minister responsible for Land Titles: does the fact that the recent budget turns the Land Titles Office into a special operating agency more interested in profit than in heritage explain why what should be protected,

Manitoba historical artifacts, are now being privatized and sold for profit on an exclusive basis to legal firms?

**Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Madam Speaker, I do not accept any of the inflammatory and salacious remarks that were raised by the honourable member for Osborne with regard to the preliminary remarks on this; however, I will take her inquiry as well founded, and I will take that as notice and bring back the specific information to this Chamber.

However, with regard to special operating agencies, I would assure my colleagues here that special operating agencies—

**An Honourable Member:** Are you selling them or not?

**Mr. Radcliffe:** —do create—and I heard response from the front benches which I believe I have addressed.

Special operating agencies have reformed the way that government provides effective and efficient service to the people of Manitoba, and I would commend the earnest attention of the member to that issue.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, my understanding was that the minister had taken the question as notice. I just want to assure the minister we do not get paid by the word in this House, something I would probably benefit from, but if he has taken it as notice, he should probably come back at another time and explain it.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** Madam Speaker, I would like to be responsive to my honourable colleague across the way and to assure him that old habits do die hard, but I would assure him that I want to be as complete and as open with the administration of our departments, so therefore I want to give every opportunity to my

colleagues in this department to give them all the information that I have at hand.

**Madam Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed the honourable member for Thompson does have a point of order. I would remind all honourable ministers that if they take a question as notice, that is all that is required and no further comment is required.

\* \* \*

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the minister that whatever my words were—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne was identified to pose a supplementary question in which there is to be no preamble or postamble.

**Ms. McGifford:** Well, I will try not to be salacious.

My question is for the Minister of Culture. While selling the record of the St. Peters Band land sale to a legal firm fits with the continual betrayal of aboriginal people in this province, by what authority did this government decide to offer historical artifacts and records as promos for legal firms?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship):** Madam Speaker, I was just visiting our Heritage services branch this morning. The one thing that I was so very impressed about is how well they work with all departments of government to assist all departments of government and citizens of Manitoba where decisions are being made. So I just wanted to, first of all, say to the member that the services of the Heritage services branch are available and they are very willing to assist.

The details of the authority, Madam Speaker, I will take as notice and get back to the member on that.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Osborne, with a final supplementary question.

**Ms. McGifford:** Again, to the Minister of Culture: since this sale was planned while the Minister of Culture was the Minister of Justice, could she please

tell the House who recommended the privatization of historical records and exactly why?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** I have noticed the member's questions often are not totally accurate in terms of the information that she brings forward. Sometimes there appears to be a kind of a slant or an edge to them, so I think the most important thing would be to bring back to the House and bring back to the member information on any of what she has put on the record to determine in fact if she is accurate and then to give her the information she requires.

\* (1410)

### **The Pas Personal Care Home Capital Projects**

**Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas):** Madam Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister of Health.

On March 16, 1995, just days before the provincial election was called, the then Minister of Health announced over \$600-million worth of capital in health care spending which he termed to be commitments and nonpromises. As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I remember the then Minister of Health stopping me in the hallway and asking me to congratulate him because he had made this commitment for capital and The Pas personal care home was included.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health today to tell the House when that commitment will be acted on, because the people in The Pas are anxiously waiting as to when that project might become a reality.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, in the budget that was announced at the end of last week, in the new capital program we have additional dollars. We are going to be entering into a process with the regional health authorities to identify their priorities within that. I am certainly aware of the facility in his community which is old and in need of major work—we are talking about the personal care home—and I am sure that that will come out of that planning process with the Norman Regional Health Authority. In fact, we have already had some discussions about it.

### **Mental Health Care Capital Projects**

**Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas):** Could I then ask the Minister of Health to tell the House as to when the beds for mental health—again, the former Minister of Health promised for a long time—will be finally opened?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** I very much appreciate that question. I know the dollars for the capital conversions for those mental health beds—I believe there are 10 or so planned for The Pas. That is included within our already—our capital projections. I know that we want to be into that construction or conversion fairly quickly because they affect our plans with respect to the future of the building in Brandon. They are also very critical, I believe, to the future of The Pas Hospital and making better use of existing space within that facility.

### **Provincial Parks Entrance Fees General Revenue**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Drastic increases in park entry fees, camping fees and the eliminating of seniors' passes have contributed to this government's cash cow of \$1.6 million. This government's tax grab extends to fishing licence fees, as well, for seniors, and that money will be swallowed by general revenue at a time when fish habitat should be a concern of this government.

Can the minister table what percent of the \$1.6 million has been raised through increases in park entry fees, camping fees and the elimination of seniors' passes?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, the member yesterday and again today is implying that there are copious amounts of money that are not going back to maintain the parks for which we are responsible. Let me just remind him, there have been hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on Hecla and washrooms and showers in Otter Falls, Falcon Lake, Birds Hill Park, Birds Hill Park electrification, Falcon Lake, New Nutimik Lake, and St. Malo campgrounds have been electrified. The

sewage lagoon was done in south Nopoming and Duck Mountain, prairie restoration in Beaudry Park, the parking and area redevelopment at St. Norbert, just a few of the things that the department has spent very wisely in using those dollars on behalf of the people who use the parks.

**Mr. Struthers:** That is not the money that has been raised through the fees though.

### **Fishing Licence Fees General Revenue**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Will the minister confirm that money raised by his government through increases to fishing licence fees will not be targeted to fish habitat as they claimed at the beginning but will simply be dumped into general revenue? This includes the fees that he now charges to seniors to fish in this province.

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, again, the member is wrong.

### **Reh-Fit Centre Postcardiac Treatment Program**

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Health about the pilot project to transfer the postcardiac surgery rehab program from the St. Boniface Hospital to Reh-Fit.

I want to follow that up with a question to the minister to see if the pilot project is going to include a study to see if the participation rates lower because of this transfer and if particularly it affects the participation rates of people who live in the northeast end of the city of Winnipeg, especially if there are any other additional user fees that are charged.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, the member for Radisson may be very surprised at my answer, because the kind of concern that she would have over such a move is exactly what I would share as well. In this pilot project, I would expect if it is not in there now that it has to be to ensure that we are not diminishing the opportunity for people

to use the program. I share that with her as well, being an MLA who comes from the northeastern area.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Madam Speaker, will the minister further assure the House that, after this pilot study, the finances for this postcardiac treatment program will travel with the program to ensure that there are no user fees for the services of this program?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, obviously we always want to ensure that the program is effective in being able to assist people who are in that particular situation. Obviously the cost of the program is a factor that has to fit into that, but certainly program dollars associated with a program have to travel with it when it moves.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Can the minister explain why his committee on postcardiac rehab which was set up to study the need for planning and expansion in this area has not had a meeting since last fall?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, I certainly cannot answer that question. If there is a need for that committee to meet, then it should be meeting, and it is not a committee that I have had an opportunity yet to meet with.

### **Woodstone Technologies Ltd. Wage Payment**

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, in early February of this year officials of the Grow Bond department and this government met with officials of Labour Canada, at which time Labour Canada shared with the department the amount of wages owing to Woodstone employees, both at the end of the previous bankruptcy and at the final end of the company in its final stages. Officials of Labour Canada made very clear to the government the scale of the wages well before the Grow Bond refunds were sent out to the directors of the company. The government could have made sure that employees got their wages.

My question to the minister: why did the minister not hold back the Grow Bond payments to the directors of Woodstone so that employees would have something to claim against, so they would have some justice out of this process instead of giving money back to their friends?

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** Madam Speaker, I am not surprised to see the member for Crescentwood wrong again. As a matter of fact, he brings half-truths to this House and continually bases his question on that kind of information.

Madam Speaker, I indicated earlier to him, when he came up with this question before, that indeed we would follow the law and ensure that the law was enforced when we paid out the Grow Bonds, and that is exactly what has happened with Woodstone. We have had officials from my department check with legal services to ensure that indeed we were following the act in the law, and that is exactly how we will proceed.

\* (1420)

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, there is nothing in The Grow Bond Act that specifies the period of time before which the payments have to be sent out.

Madam Speaker, why did the government not act to ensure that the Grow Bond payments went out to the directors subsequent to the ordering of payment of wages and payment of benefits to those workers under the labour Canada act? Why would they not act for justice for workers instead of doing favours simply for their friends? They had the opportunity; they did not use it.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Derkach:** Madam Speaker, he is the last person in the world who would stand up for workers in rural Manitoba, because he was the member of this House who stood up and indicated that the jobs in Portage should cease and that Woodstone products should be moved to Winnipeg and the plant should be set up in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, that is not standing up for families in rural Manitoba. That is not standing up for workers in Manitoba. We will stand up for the people of Manitoba and for the people who work in the various enterprises in this province.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Crescentwood, with a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Sale:** Madam Speaker, the question is very simple. Will the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), will the Minister of Rural Development, will they stand up for workers who are owed hundreds of thousands of dollars, whose mortgages are at risk, whose families do not have employment, or will they simply stand up for their friends, former bagmen of the Tory party, rich people who have always had benefits? Who are they going to stand for? That is the question.

**Mr. Derkach:** Madam Speaker, this government and I as minister will always stand up for workers in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, during the difficulties at Woodstone products we ensured that we did everything possible to ensure that the families of the people who worked at Woodstone would be protected in every way and that those jobs could be protected as long as possible. We worked and the staff of my department worked day in, day out to try and preserve those jobs when that member, the member for Crescentwood, tried to close down that plant at the earliest convenience.

Madam Speaker, today, just in the House earlier today, we have another attack by this member on a rural company where families and workers are working at Rimer Alco in Morden. Why is he attacking the rural workers and the rural families of this province?

**Madam Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

## NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

### Pembina Valley Business Awards

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

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

**Mr. Dyck:** It is my pleasure to rise in the Chamber today and tell members about the event I attended last Friday, March 14. The Pembina Valley Development Corporation held their annual general meeting, which was followed by the Pembina Valley Business

Achievement Awards Banquet at the Morden Recreation Centre.

The awards dinner recognized businesses and industries in the region for their contribution to the economy, their job creation and their success in export sales. In particular, the awards recognized local businesses that have been serving our community for many years. I believe that it is important to acknowledge the stable businesses within our communities for their contributions to the local economies.

The awards dinner was sponsored by Sill Streuber Fiske & Company, a local accounting firm. I would like to acknowledge some of the businesses in my constituency who were honoured with awards and nominations.

In the category of sales less than \$1 million, Paperwork of Morden and Winkler and Creative Communications of Winkler were both nominated for a business achievement award for their sales growth and job creation.

In the category of sales between \$1 million and \$5 million, Kroeker Machinery Sales Ltd. of Winkler won two business achievement awards for sales growth and for export sales growth and was nominated for job creation.

Other nominees in this category were all from the Winkler area: Elias Woodwork and manufacturing limited, H.W.H. Holdings and Grandeur Housing were all nominated for their success in job creation, sales growth and export sales.

In the category of sales greater than \$5 million, Monsanto Canada was nominated for sales growth and export sales growth. Delmar Commodities and Keystone Grain, both of Winkler, were both nominated for their sales. Decor Cabinets and Load Line Manufacturing were honoured for their growth in export sales. Decor Cabinets of Morden won a business achievement award for their contribution toward job creation in the community. The Winkler Co-op was also nominated for this award. Finally, Myjendie Charlton Securities of Winkler was

nominated for a business achievement award in the category of new business.

Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate all these nominees and business award winners for their contribution to the economy and job creation. I wish them all continued success and hope that they continue to serve the people of our community for many years to come. Thank you.

### **Provincial Bantam Hockey Championship**

**Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake):** Madam Speaker, leave for a nonpolitical statement?

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

**Mr. Clif Evans:** Madam Speaker, last weekend I had the pleasure of participating in the Provincial D Bantam Championships held in Wawanesa, Manitoba, along with the Riverton Eagles hockey team. Teams involved from throughout the province that were in attendance in Wawanesa this past weekend were of course from Riverton, from La Broquerie, from Hartney, from St. Eustache and Brandon and of course the host team, Wawanesa. Sworn to acknowledge and recognize the three winning medal teams in this weekend's tournament, the Gold was won by La Broquerie, Manitoba; the silver was won by Hartney, Manitoba, and the bronze was won by the Riverton Eagles from Riverton, Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, prior to acknowledging the members of the hockey team, I would like to also acknowledge the fact that the committee from Wawanesa, chaired by Mr. Peter Derkach, did a tremendous job in not only preparing for the tournament but also in providing the utmost hospitality and kindness to our kids and to our boys. I had great pleasure also in sitting down with Mr. Derkach at times and discussing hockey and not anything else.

I know that members of this House would join me in extending congratulations to the following members of the Riverton medal team: Kris Johannesson, Darren Kornelson, Mark Sigurdson, Michael Johnson, Eric Grimolfson, Tyler Evans, Warren Spring, Evan Kornelson, Jamie Mowat, Andre Brandt, Jordan

Johnson, Warren Hiebert, Kelsey Plett, Ken Johnson, Eric Erickson, Tyler Sigurdson, and the coaches of this bronze winning team for the Bantam Provincial D, coaches Bob Johnson, Ken Kornelson and Clif Evans. Congratulations to Riverton.

### 1997 Labatt Brier

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** Madam Speaker, might I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable Minister of Family Services have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to salute the efforts of Vic Peters, Dan Carey, Chris Neufeld and Scott Grant for an exceptional week of curling last week as Manitoba's representatives to the 1997 Brier in Calgary. As we are aware, television ratings for curling are amongst the highest for any sport in our country. Throughout the week we were treated to some fine shot-making as the Peters rink completed play with a perfect 11 and 0 record. Viewers across the country were then treated to more fine play in the playoffs, and although the Peters rink was beaten by Alberta in the final, it was a game that essentially could have gone the other way with a break here or there. That is the nature of the sport.

Understating all of this is the fact that TV viewers from across Canada not only got to once again witness the exceptional curling abilities of Manitobans but another group of excellent ambassadors for the sport and our province. This resulted in Vic Peters being designated the most sportsmanlike player of the competition. In a province such as ours with so many fine curlers, it is a major task just to represent Manitoba. Those curlers that do carry the heavy weight of the buffalo on their backs because we have had more success than any other province at the Brier and our expectations as Manitobans are high.

As the Brier champion, the Peters rink, in 1992 and following Kerry Burtnyk's victory in 1995 and Jeff Stoughton's last year, there may have even been greater pressure and expectation placed on the Peters rink this year. Given their curling abilities and the manner in

which they represented themselves and represented Manitoba, the Peters rink can take pride in their accomplishments this season. I would ask all honourable members to join me in saluting Vic Peters, who is a constituent of River East, Dan Carey, Chris Neufeld and Scott Grant for a tremendous effort in keeping Manitoba in the forefront of curling at this national event. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* (1430)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### House Business

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will sit on Thursday next at ten o'clock in the forenoon to continue deliberation on Manitoba Hydro Annual Reports this Thursday.

**Madam Speaker:** The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet this Thursday, March 20, 10 a.m., to continue to consider the Manitoba Hydro.

## BUDGET DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

**Madam Speaker:** To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has 35 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, yesterday when I began I was talking about Selkirk Avenue and—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I wonder if I might ask for the co-operation of all those members having meetings, if they would do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Burrows.



**Mr. Martindale:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I would like to continue talking about Burrows constituency and in particular Selkirk Avenue. This morning I walked down Selkirk Avenue from Arlington Street to Main Street and counted the number of empty businesses and the number of businesses and storefronts for rent and the number of businesses for sale. It is really quite astonishing and quite sad because, at one time, Selkirk Avenue was like Corydon Avenue is today. In fact, I am told that the sidewalks were full of shoppers and people at one time on Selkirk Avenue, much like Corydon Avenue on a Saturday night on a summer weekend.

It is a very different story today, because there are 19 businesses or storefronts for rent; there are 19 empty storefronts; and there are 15 stores or entire buildings for sale, for a total of 53. That is almost a majority of the businesses on Selkirk Avenue. Regrettably, this commercial street is a shell of its former self.

I stopped in for coffee at the Windmill restaurant. I asked three people who were having coffee, I said, what should I say to the government in my speech today? They said, well, it does not matter what you say because this government does not listen. That is the first thing they said. I think what they meant was they do not listen to us, they do not listen to poor people in the north end.

They certainly do listen to the Chamber of Commerce, they listen to their business friends and they listen to the donors of the Conservative Party. That is who they listen to. In fact, the people having coffee at Windmill Lunch said they just listen to their friends. Certainly, this government has listened to their friends, and the result is \$12 million in tax breaks to their business friends in this budget.

They said we need jobs, not just seasonal jobs but year-round jobs, and we are suffering because the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer.

I am sad to say that they also had a criticism for immigration and thought that there should be fewer immigrants coming to Canada. I was sorry to hear that, but I think I understand why they would say that. Certainly very high rates of unemployment usually result in those kinds of statements, but it is also because

this government is cultivating the politics of resentment whereby one group of people is encouraged to resent another group of people. For example, taxpayers are encouraged to resent anyone who is the recipient of government money, especially if they are on social assistance, and the government has been certainly encouraging that attitude. For example, starting in August before the election of April '95, billboards went up about the welfare fraud line, which was a very popular message for this government to get out, that is, attacking the poor, poor-bashing, as it has been called. I think they should be ashamed of themselves for encouraging the politics of resentment.

In addition to many businesses and houses for sale, we have many empty lots. In fact, when we are campaigning in elections, one of the things that we say in inner city neighbourhoods is that "for sale" is winning because at the beginning of every election campaign there are more "for sale" signs than there are candidate signs, because there is such an incredibly large number of houses for sale at any one time. Many people have given up trying to sell their house, because they know that they are going to be unsuccessful or they are going to lose money.

For example, one of my constituents is a police officer, lives in a very nice house on Machray Avenue near Sinclair Park. He spent a lot of money putting ornamental brick on the outside. He put a recreation room in the basement and put in new drywall in many rooms, redid the kitchen. He listed this bungalow for sale at \$79,000, could not get one person to come and look at it because as soon as they found out it was in the north end they would not come to see it. So I do not envy any homeowner, including myself, who owns a house in the north end, in trying to sell it because our property values are not appreciating, they are depreciating.

This causes terrible problems. For example, at 733 College Avenue there is a vacant 12-room house, a very large house on three lots. It has been boarded up for about 10 years. I have had numerous phone calls from the neighbours because the house, even though it is boarded up, is frequently broken into and there are complaints about children going in there to sniff and about gangs using it. So every time this happens I phone the Health Department and they send out city

crews. It gets boarded up again, and the cost of that is put on the taxes for the owner.

Now the owner, it turns out, is an absentee landlord. He lives in Florida. So I phoned him up one day and told him about the complaints that I have been receiving about his house and encouraged him to sell his house. He told me that he was offered about \$40,000, but it was not enough. He wanted about \$60,000. I said that you are not being very realistic. I do not know if you understand what is happening in the north end but house prices are going down, they are not going up. You should have taken the \$40,000 and run. I said, you know Habitat for Humanity would like your house. They would fix it up. They would have an owner-occupied family living in that house, and you could get a tax credit, a charitable tax credit. I understand you can spread it over five years. He said, well, that is no good to me. I am not a rich man, in spite of the fact that he is retired and living in Florida. It is also very complicated because the house is actually in the estate of his mother.

So the City of Winnipeg is trying to take him to court, and they cannot because he lives in the United States and he does not legally own the house. Consequently, it has been boarded up for 10 years. It is an eyesore. It is detracting from the property values of the neighbours and he will not sell it because he is not realistic about the price. He is about 75 years old, and he has a very sentimental attitude towards this house. It has been owned by the family since 1910. He envisions a different period that is long past in the north end, but it is a concern to everyone when we have not just one or two boarded-up houses but dozens, even hundreds of boarded-up houses and hundreds of empty lots in the north end.

Another example is 651 Burrows Avenue. I have been getting phone calls for the last six years about this house, and I happen to know some of the tenants. The concerns are that some of the tenants sniff, some of the tenants drink and they party and they urinate in public, and when it rains they take a shower outdoors in the nude, all kinds of incredible stories about things that are happening on the part of the tenants in this house, so consequently I am getting phone calls from the parents at Strathcona School, across the street from Splash Day

Care, which is across the street, and they are saying, what can we do about this house?

Well, I phoned the Health department. The Health department goes and inspects it, but we have a problem. It is owned by a slum landlord. The slum landlord owns about 15 slum properties and he is not just any old slum landlord. This slum landlord sells sniff to his tenants, and he sells groceries to his tenants, and he gives credit to his tenants. So they buy groceries in his store. When they run out of money he gives them credit. When their cheque comes, he goes to these addresses and he picks up the cheque and he gets them to sign it over to him, and then he gives them credit at the grocery store.

Now, I phoned Income Security and I said, is this legal? Can he do this? They researched, and they came back and they said, oh, yes, there is nothing we can do about a tenant who is on social assistance signing over his social assistance cheque to the landlord.

**An Honourable Member:** Does he charge them interest?

\* (1440)

**Mr. Martindale:** I am asked if he charged interest. I suspect he is probably charging them exorbitant interest, but I do not know that.

Now, what really amazes me are not the activities going on in the house and not the slum landlord, who is one of the first landlords to go to jail in Manitoba, but the financial institution that loaned him money. It happens to be a credit union, I am sorry to say. They loaned him \$250,000. He had a mortgage for \$250,000 on this one house even though the house, if it were to be sold, would probably sell for less than \$50,000 and only \$50,000 because it has three suites and it has guaranteed rent paid by the government. If it was just sold for somebody wanting to buy the house, it would probably only be worth about \$20,000 if it is not a revenue property. They mortgaged him for \$250,000.

Now, he went bankrupt, so the credit union is stuck holding about 15 properties, and they are going to take a bath. They are going to lose about \$500,000 to \$750,000, I am told. So it is not just the people who

live in some of these houses, it is not just the people who own them, but the financial institutions. Not only do they give exorbitant mortgages for properties that are greatly overvalued, but they also redline our neighbourhoods and they say either you cannot get a mortgage or you are going to pay a higher interest rate if you get a mortgage at all. It is very discriminatory, and this government is unwilling to do anything about it.

I would like to go on and talk a little bit more about the neighbourhood. One of the very serious social problems that we have is poverty. Just a week or so ago I was at the annual meeting of Rossbrook House, and Sister Bernadette, one of the co-directors said the roots of violence are poverty and despair. I think that bears repeating. The roots of violence are poverty and despair.

Certainly the staff at Rossbrook House understand what poverty does to adolescents and to people in their community. We know that if we invest in children at an early age that this can be prevented or ameliorated. For example, the High/Scope Perry Preschool study that some members opposite are quite familiar with has shown that if we invest money in preschool education, that for every dollar that is invested, over \$7 is saved in future costs in social assistance, in the criminal justice system and in many different areas of government spending, and that the individuals who benefited from this program had lower rates of adolescent pregnancy. They had lower rates of social assistance as adults. They had lower rates of marriage breakdown, and they had higher rates of employment and higher incomes.

So we are always encouraging the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) and this government to spend the money where we know it will pay off and that is in preschool education, because we have this longitudinal study that studied the children over a 20-year period and we have the data.

It was very interesting to hear the person who was lecturing about this at R.B. Russell High School say that there is knowledge and there is will. We have the knowledge; what is lacking is the political will. I would encourage this government to do something about that.

We have many good organizations providing services to the community in the north end, for example, the Urban Circle Training Program. They have had several successful classes graduate as tellers from their training program, and currently they are training health care aides and unit clerks. While it is acknowledged that these are good programs, we need 10 of these programs. We need 100 of these programs to train people for entry level positions.

We have the aboriginal alliance which is providing a drop-in recreation facility for aboriginal youth, and I understand is getting no government funding. I hear that they are going to move to Turtle Island. We are glad to hear that they are going to get a better facility.

We have the Friendship Centre on Robinson Street which, unfortunately, lost their funding from this government in 1993. They have been given permission by the city to take over the north Y, and we hope that they can reopen the north Y. We certainly believe that recreation is one way of keeping people off the street.

There really are not that many alternatives. I mentioned yesterday the individual who said that getting in trouble was a pretty easy alternative because it was cheap and it was fun. She pointed out that in the north end there is no Girl Guides group, no Brownies, no Beavers, no Cubs and no Scouts. I think that is probably true for a very large area of the north end.

So we need recreation. But what is happening? We lost the north Y, and this week people are going for a third time to City Hall to fight the closing of Centennial Pool. The result would be that we would have lost two pools in the last three years in the north end, and we do not have the kind of recreational facilities that other communities have.

Well, what is the government doing to address these problems? What are they doing about the vacant lots? What are they doing about the rundown houses? What are they doing about the boarded up houses? Well, is there an infill housing program? No. Is there a rehabilitation housing program? No. Can we get rid of boarded up houses very easily? No. And yet, it is not that many years ago—in fact I was reminded when I saw Mr. Ducharme sitting in the loge the other day that when he was Minister of Housing there actually were

housing programs, there were social housing programs. There were quite a few of them, and now they are all gone.

The federal Conservative government got rid of all the social housing programs. The Liberal opposition at the time protested against it. They have had at least three budgets to bring back social housing programs, have not done a thing, and as soon as the federal government got out of social housing the provincial government got out of social housing.

Now they want to privatize public housing. They cannot wait to give it to their private landlord, private sector friends so they can make more money at the expense of taxpayers, because a lot of the people living there are people on social assistance.

About \$60 million a year of taxpayers' money goes to the inner city for rental housing in the private sector. I do not know what the public sector is. The budget for Manitoba Housing is about \$40 million a year, and the private sector wants to get hold of that. You can be sure that they will run it just like the slum landlords that I have been talking about, and they are going to make a mint because the government is paying the rent.

I do not think that taxpayers are getting very good value for their money. I think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) should talk to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) about that and say, what assurances are there that for this money, this \$60 million, the renters and the taxpayers of Manitoba are getting good value for their money because, in many cases, they are not.

What about job creation? What about combatting poverty? What is this government doing? Well, this government is helping to make it worse. For example, in the city budget they have once again cut allowances for children for food and clothing, children from zero to 18. Why are they doing it? They are doing it because of the provincial policy of standardization from 1993. Eventually the rates will be the same. To their credit, the City of Winnipeg has had higher rates than the province since 1993, but that is going to expire, and the result is that the food allowance for children is being reduced. I think this government should be

ashamed of themselves for taking food away from children.

Now, I would like to read some quotes from Judge Hughes, who investigated the Headingley riot. This is what he says, and I quote: What do matters of that kind have to do with the Headingley riot and my terms of reference, which include a directive to make recommendations to the Minister of Justice on actions that can be taken to prevent or minimize the likelihood of another riot? A considerable amount. Gang membership offers an attractive and often glittering alternative to many who are poverty stricken, have few if any skills to market on their own and are caged within a life without hope. As I have learned in the course of this review, the glitzy trappings of life in the fast lane, albeit usually short-lived, that flow from the fruits of crime are a compelling lure and widespread appeal to those who see no other future open to them. These pleasures of the moment, fancy cars, clothes, partners for sexual pleasure, drugs and alcohol that are out there today on some Winnipeg streets, are available to those who opt in. Sadly, the greatest number recruited into gang membership in Manitoba are aboriginals, who comprise 75 percent of gang membership in the province. They are likely candidates for recruitment, because so many of them have lives full of despair flowing in from the poverty that besets them. However, this section of my report has equal relevance and applicability to nonaboriginals who find themselves locked in a life without hope and rooted in poverty.

You can certainly see the connection between what Judge Hughes said and what I said earlier about when I quoted the staff at Rossbrook House, that the roots of crime are in poverty. Now Judge Hughes goes on, very interestingly, and quotes from the Winnipeg Free Press. He quotes: Help could come from improved recreation, training and employment programs and from improved support for families in trouble. Young people with no marketable skills, no job and no prospects are apt candidates for gang activity.

And then he goes on and talks about Judge Hamilton and Judge Sinclair in their report, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report. He quotes from that report, and here is what he says, and I quote: To change this situation, we require a real commitment to ending social inequality in

Canadian society, something to which no government in Canada has committed itself to date. This will be a far-reaching endeavour and involve much more than the justice system as it is understood currently. It will require governments to commit themselves to economic and social policies that will allow aboriginal citizens to participate fully in Canadian life. In the case of aboriginal people, it will also involve a significant redistribution of political and economic power as governments honour the historic commitments made to aboriginal people through treaties and other formal agreements.

What have we seen from this government? Have they implemented the recommendations of the AJI report? In fact they met with a delegation who was pushing them on the AJI report and said they had implemented 100 recommendations. Well, we are still waiting for the list. I do not believe for a minute that this government has implemented 100 recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report. In fact, I think the budget for implementing the recommendations was about a million dollars a year. I do not think any of that money was spent.

So Judge Hughes goes on, and he says, very interestingly, and I quote: Would the dollars it would cost to implement a program of assistance to those wanting to opt out of the gang syndrome be a justified and worthwhile expenditure of public funds? Would pouring millions of dollars into economic and social programs that would allow poverty-stricken people with no marketable skills, no job and no job prospects to participate as law-abiding citizens in Canadian life be a justified and worthwhile expenditure of public funds? Someday the Canadian public has to accept that the answer to those questions is yes. We all have to realize that we cannot forever afford to turn our backs on the problem as it exists and avoid reaching out to the real solution.

\* (1450)

So the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry justices had it figured out. Judge Hughes has it figured out. The editorialist in the Free Press has it figured out. Certainly I have it figured out. Maybe some members on the government side have an inkling, but it is not in the budget. They do not have it figured out. They do

not know where their priorities are. What they have announced is a mere trickle compared to the flood of changes that are needed in order to bring justice to aboriginal people, in order to take poor people out of poverty, to give them jobs, to give them meaning, to give them hope so that they are not lured into a life of crime because that is what the alternative is on the streets in the north end, being lured into a life of crime.

It is not just the north end. I had a call from a constituent from the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), someone who was into drugs. His income was something like three grand a month, and now he is on social assistance. He is getting room and board, so he gets about \$40 every two weeks. He is saying, I do not even have enough money for bus fare to go look for a job. Now that does not make sense, does it?

If this government really wants people to get jobs, they would at least ensure that everybody who genuinely wants a job gets bus fare and money for photocopying resumes and work clothes if they need it, which the City of Winnipeg will provide if you know about it and if you ask about it in order to get a job.

I think that this budget does a very inadequate job of addressing these problems. In fact, I think it is a dishonest budget because it underestimates growth in the provincial economy and it underestimates revenue. As a result, for several years in a row, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has underestimated the budget surplus. They are sitting on piles of money and now they are starting to draw it out so that it does not look like they have a deficit anymore, and there are options that they could be turning to that they are not.

I think this government and all governments, when they are doing their budgets, have a choice. This government has a choice of either investing money now in health and education and social programs, or they can squirrel away millions, hundreds of millions of dollars in the Tory slush fund, also known as the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and take money out of that in the pre-election period in order to buy the taxpayers of Manitoba in the next election with their own money, with money from cuts, for example, the \$23 million that the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) took out of the Family Services budget for social assistance last year, money from increases in fees of all kinds, and

money from the sale of public assets, like the Manitoba Telephone System.

Which choice did this government exercise? They chose the option of increasing the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, their election slush fund rather than investing in health and education and social programs.

You know it is interesting when you listen to Throne Speech Debates and Budget Debates year after year and it may seem that we are not listening, but sometimes we actually are listening. I can tell you what some of the government arguments are, for example, they say if we ran our household like the government, we would be broke. In other words there should be no debt, and it is rather interesting to read quotes of people who said that. Some of those people got quoted in the Free Press on Saturday and they said, I do not have a debt. Why should the government have a debt? Well, most homeowners do have quite a bit of indebtedness. In fact, banks will let you borrow 35 percent to 40 percent of your income on debt and what is this provincial debt? It is less than 10 cents on the dollar. I think it is 9.6 percent of the operating budget on servicing of debt. I think instead of this government constantly talking about the debt and deficit, they should be bragging about how low their debt servicing costs are because I believe it is the second lowest in Canada, after Alberta, and it is going down. You should take credit for what you are doing instead of fear-mongering. [interjection]

The government changes tactics depending on whatever is convenient to them. I remember a few years ago pointing out in a speech that the Conservative members of the Legislature had this householder going out and had a pie chart and it said that the debt servicing was 45 cents out of every dollar of income tax revenue, so they were exaggerating. Instead of telling people about the whole revenue picture, they just told them about the income tax revenue, and it was true, 45 cents on the dollar, but it looked terrible, when in actual fact it was 12 cents on the dollar of total revenue.

I am sure the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) probably sent that householder out to every one of his constituents too, or maybe he could not because he was Speaker at the time. Now, of course that figure does

not kind of look too good anymore because they want to take credit for getting the deficit down to zero and having a surplus every year so now they just talk about the 9.6 cents on the dollar. But many, many Canadians, many taxpayers with a mortgage or with credit cards for not just gas companies but all kinds of credit cards have way more consumer debt on their households than this government does.

Another argument that the government used and probably still uses if I listen to some of their speeches is if we did not have to spend so much money on interest, we could spend more on health, education and social services. I am sure the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) and other members have used that. Last year they could have said, you know, if we did not have to spend \$575 million servicing the debt, we could spend more money on health, education and social programs, those are the three favourites. Some members, like the Minister for Highways (Mr. Findlay) would use it for building highways. So now that the government is paying \$55 million less in this budget on interest, are they spending more money on health, education and social programs like they said they would if they did not have to spend all this money on debt servicing, now that they are spending \$55 million less a year on debt servicing this year over last year?

Well, I got out the budget book and I compared Estimates over Estimates for Family Services and for Education, but I did not compare Estimates over Estimates with Health because there was a special warrant, I believe, for quite a few million dollars. I think it was \$55 million that was spent in the last quarter of the fiscal year.

So what happens when you add this up? Well, it shows that actually the government is planning to spend in this budget, projecting \$34 million less spending in health, education and social programs. So there is another argument that the government members like to use. But when you examine it, when you see the opportunity that the government has to do what they said they would like to do, you know, not spend so much money on interest and put it into three important areas, health, social programs and education, do they do it? No, they have actually cut spending, especially in health. That was the biggest cut of all.

But this government did have some breaks for their friends here. The good news in this budget was for the business community, and it was no surprise. It was no wonder that when the business people were scrummed in the rotunda after the budget that they were all smiles. In fact, they were all smiles on the news, because they know that they got their reward. They got what they were asking for. The tax breaks to business were \$16.1 million in new tax breaks for business. Compare that with \$3.6 million for individual taxpayers and \$4.5 million in business subsidies, but there were more cuts to hospitals and universities, in fact I believe \$4 million for post-secondary education. I believe that private schools got \$4 million more.

So we described this as a garage sale budget, and not only are they selling public assets like the Manitoba Telephone System that is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, but now we hear that they are selling our heritage, that they are selling documents from the Archives. Maybe it is because it is a special operating agency and now they have to sell things in order to break even as a special operating agency. It is really quite disgraceful when a province starts selling off their history and their heritage. How did the government end up projecting a \$22-million surplus? Well, they took \$100 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to create a \$22-million surplus.

\* (1500)

It looks like health spending shows an increase this year, but this is only because the budget makes no mention of January's \$81-million additional payment for health overspending. I said it was \$55 million. In fact, it was \$81 million. If this amount were added, as it will be in the final audit, health spending would show a decrease of \$66 million. So in spite of the government's rhetoric, every year in the throne speech and every year in the budget we hear that they are protecting vital services in health, education, and family services. We hear that every year over and over again. What do we get in education? We get cuts to post-secondary education. What do we get in health? We get cuts in hospitals and now in rural Manitoba, the cuts will be taking place after April 1.

We also see that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has underestimated his surpluses by factors

of four times and five times in the past two years in order to justify continuing restraint. So the Minister of Finance does not really want the public to know that there is going to be a big surplus, so he only projects a little surplus. In that way he can justify some of the cuts to health and education and social programs.

There is a new initiative called new Partners for Careers program, a \$200,000 budget item. We think that this is going to be financed by a cut to the aboriginal development program of an equal amount of money, \$200,000, and we know that there have been many cuts in programs to aboriginal people over the last few years. For example, the Northern Youth Job Corps used to fund 500 people each summer in 1989, and that has been eliminated. New Careers has been eliminated. Funding to friendship centres in 1993 was eliminated. The grants to MKO and AMC were eliminated in 1993. Access programs were cut by \$2 million in 1994 and a further \$1.4 million in 1995, and they never spent the \$1 million set aside for the aboriginal justice initiative in several years.

Now, the government would like us to believe that there is no money and that that is why we cannot pay for these programs, but we know that there is a lot of wealth in this country. The problem is the inequitable sharing of wealth in our country.

Here is an example that I found from a magazine called Monitor, Reporting on Business, Labour and Government, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It talks about the extremely wealthy people in our country. It says the combined wealth of the richest 50 Canadians, all multimillionaires of course, now exceeds \$39 billion according to the Financial Post Magazine. Assuming that the annual income of the average poor family of four is no more than \$25,000, this means that the 50 Canadians at the top of the income ladder have more money than five million low-income Canadians.

We also know that corporations are paying far less of their share in taxes to the federal government than individuals, that the proportion of corporate taxes is going down as a percentage of federal government revenue and the proportion of individual revenue is constantly going up, but we never hear the provincial

Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) suggesting that this inequity be eliminated.

We know that 81,462 corporations made \$17.11 billion in profits but paid no taxes in 1994. We believe that if even some of this revenue was captured that we could do the kinds of things that we as a society should be doing to eliminate poverty, to create jobs, to improve our health care system, to improve our education system, instead of condemning people to a life of futility and hopelessness and despair which is, for far too many people in the inner city and in my constituency of Burrows, the only way of life that they know.

This government could do a much better job, and we look forward to them doing something more progressive and more enlightened in their next budget, but I am not hopeful. Thank you.

**Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone):** Chers députés du Palais législatif du Manitoba, aujourd'hui j'ai l'honneur et le privilège de me lever dans l'Assemblée législative pour assister au débat sur la question du budget pour l'année 1997. C'est vraiment de la part de mes électeurs que je parle, et je me tiens debout devant vous, fier et prêt à répondre avec certitude et beaucoup de satisfaction aux initiatives de notre gouvernement tant pour l'économie que pour le futur de notre province.

**[Translation]**

Dear members of the Legislature of Manitoba, today I have the honour and the privilege of rising in the Legislative Assembly to participate in the debate on the question of the budget for the year 1997. It is really on behalf of my constituents that I am speaking, and I stand before you proud and prepared to respond with certainty and great satisfaction to the initiatives of our government concerning both the economy and the future of our province.

**[English]**

I would like to take this opportunity in this budget—that this government has placed the highest priority on delivering quality health and education services, on supporting children and on helping families. In such a way, I think it is appropriate to

highlight one very special family who reside in my constituency. They are Ed and Heather Lavich, who live on a farm outside of Carberry and who were blessed with the birth of quadruplets on August 17, 1996. I am pleased to say that the four little bundles of joy, Myles, Greg, Janelle and Maryn, celebrated their seventh-month birthday yesterday.

Ed and Heather have been doing an admirable job of looking after their four babies and an older daughter, with the help of a home helper from Child and Family Services, two hired helpers and a network of neighbours, family and volunteers. I am honoured to have them residing in my constituency, and I admire the relentless effort they have put forth in raising their extraordinary new family.

Now back to the task at hand. The 1997 budget represents the culmination of nine years of careful and consistent management and direction of Manitoba's financial and economic policies.

I would like to firstly express my admiration for Premier Filmon and for the stewardship that he has provided in his role as Premier of this great province. He has demonstrated careful and consistent leadership, and I admire him as a Leader, colleague and a friend.

I would also like to express my personal admiration to former Finance minister Clayton Manness and our present Minister of Finance, the Honourable Eric Stefanson, for their diligence in getting us to this point. This Conservative government set out on the course to financial rectitude nine years ago and, throughout the years, I have had the great pleasure of working with both ministers and seeing them wisely and astutely managing the fiscal affairs of this province. I would also like to extend a special thank you to former Deputy Minister of Finance, Charlie Curtis, for his role as a senior bureaucrat in helping orchestrate these successful reforms.

I stand here today with a great sense of pride, knowing that Manitobans throughout this great province are already reaping the benefits of a recharged economy through an abundance of new jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and secured vital services. This budget signals the beginning of an era of



unprecedented opportunity and achievement for the economy and for the people of Manitoba.

It is a symbol of a more prosperous and positive future and a better tomorrow for all Manitobans. This budget is truly historic as it represents the first time in a generation that we have a budget that projects a surplus for the third consecutive year along with the first payment being made on the provincial debt.

\* (1510)

With the provision for the first \$75 million repayment of our accumulated debt, we have effectively lifted the burden of debt from our children's shoulders. I can stand here proudly, knowing that our fiscal house is in order and will continue to be in order to ensure a prosperous environment for the future of our children and our grandchildren.

This Conservative government knows and has demonstrated the importance of spending taxpayers' money wisely and in the best interest of all Manitobans. Our goal has been and continues to be the creation of a competitive and diversified economy which will provide increased investment and job opportunities for all citizens and which will pay for quality health, education and social programs.

These are the areas which we feel merit investment. We believe in investing in the priority areas of health, education and vital services, rather than squandering taxpayers' money on interest payments. This Conservative government has committed itself to careful and consistent stewardship of Manitoba's financial and economic policies, and we have carried through on our promises. This government's dedication to fiscal management is working, and Manitoba is working. Our winning economy is stronger, more confident and more competitive than ever before.

Being a particularly extensive document, I would like to concentrate on several highlights of the 1997 budget which I feel are of significant importance to my constituents residing in the constituency of Gladstone. There is no service that Manitobans value more than health care. We have access to one of the finest health care systems anywhere. Given this fact, we must also recognize the considerable challenges facing our health

care system, the most significant perhaps being federal transfer cuts. With changing demographics, more and more strain is being placed on our health care system to provide for our aging population. At the same time, the federal government has increasingly withdrawn funding for health care and has left the provinces to creatively pick up the difference.

This Conservative government has a plan with a clear focus for quality health care for all Manitobans. Manitoba Health will receive \$1.826 billion in 1997-98, up \$14 million from last year and a 37 percent increase over 1987-88 spending. As a percent of total spending, our government has dedicated 34 cents out of every dollar to health care. This is a very significant figure, and it is the highest share in all of Canada. We are committed to meeting Manitobans' health care needs now and in the future. We have taken steps to modernize health care by ensuring that separate facilities and programs work together as a co-ordinated system. This budget provides \$103 million for the Home Care program in 1997-98, which is about two and one-half times the 1988 level. This shift in funding moved caregiving from the high-cost institutions into the comfort of people's own homes.

In addition, we are using \$150 million of the proceeds of the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System to help reduce the debt owed by hospitals and personal care homes. This easing of the debt burden frees up funds which will consequently be used for facility improvements and the delivery of better services to all Manitobans.

With the establishment of regional health authorities across the province, this Conservative government has taken the initiative to co-ordinate decision making province-wide. Manitoba Health will be discussing the capital needs and priorities of communities with all health authorities. The authorities will assess the capital needs of their regions for the next five years and provide a response by the end of September. Manitoba Health will consequently consider and evaluate these recommendations.

The government has also created a special fund to help rural health authorities access capital money to convert space in their facilities to provide more appropriate services needed by their communities.

In terms of education, this budget dedicates \$1.03 billion towards education, a figure that is \$12 million more than was budgeted last year. This Conservative government knows and is committed to a strong and modern education system that is best able to prepare the children of Manitoba for the rapid changes of tomorrow.

The children of today are embarking on a journey into a technological world that most of us cannot even imagine. In order to make a successful journey into the future, they need strong reading, writing, computing and high-level problem-solving abilities. The knowledge that our children possess and the means and ways by which they apply this knowledge will map the path for the future success of our province.

This government's path to education renewal puts increased emphasis on language arts, mathematics and science, emphasizes world-class standards and testing and more parental involvement. We have placed high priority on improving access to computers, advanced technology and distance education throughout the province.

Being somewhat of a computer buff myself, I am pleased that \$1 million will be provided to a new program, Technology Learning Resources for Schools, that will put more computers in classrooms across Manitoba.

Operational funding for school divisions will remain stable through 1998-99. The Manitoba learning tax credit will provide \$17.3 million in direct support to students and their families. Another \$1 million of new funding will go toward scholarships and bursaries for students at community colleges and universities.

The purpose of education has always been to prepare our children for the challenges of life. These challenges are so very different from those we have experienced in our own generation. I am confident that the steps and initiatives that this government continues to implement will best prepare our children for the unforeseen challenges and opportunities of the world of tomorrow.

This budget contains no new taxes and no tax increases and extends Manitoba's freeze of major tax

rates to a full decade. In terms of taxation adjustments, this budget extends the sales tax rebate for first-time homebuyers. The payroll tax exemption level has increased to \$1 million, meaning that over 90 percent of employers are now free of this tax.

This Conservative government has introduced a wide range of measures to improve the investment climate in Manitoba, to enhance job creation and to generate new income and wealth. Our fiscal and structural reforms encourage firms to expand and locate in our province.

This budget also maintains funding available for economic development initiatives. One such initiative that we continue to support is that of the Community Works Loan Program, which was introduced by this government in 1995. This program helps communities assist local entrepreneurs to create jobs and provide services in accordance with local priorities. Another notable program which has been extended for another two years is Business Start. This program, which was initiated in 1990, helps new small businesses commence operations by providing a loan guarantee of up to \$10,000. This program has been especially successful in helping women and rural entrepreneurs start businesses.

In terms of capital maintenance and spending, this budget commits an additional \$1.3 million of provincial funds to maintain and improve our roads, highways and bridges. Also, \$66 million will be made available, together with our federal, municipal and other partners, for infrastructure projects across Manitoba.

Finally, in the area of agriculture, which is of particular interest to my constituents, we have introduced enhancements in the coverage provided by the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. In such a way farmers will be better able to deal with the unpredictability of nature with enhanced crop insurance protection.

Another exciting agricultural venture which we support is a new Agri-food Research and Development Initiative. With diversification in agriculture production and investment in new technology, Manitoba farmers are laying the groundwork for new industries and revitalized communities and economies in rural Manitoba. With an injection of \$3.4 million

from the province, and additional funds from the federal government, the new agri-food initiative will make a substantial contribution to the long-run future of agriculture in Manitoba.

\* (1520)

In conclusion, the budget is a document that many people probably do not take the time to sift through with great interest. It is, however, an extremely important document which essentially lays out the future of the province. This budget with its historic significance sends a strong message to all Manitobans and especially to our youth. Upon achieving a third consecutive surplus and upon making the first payment on the provincial debt, Manitoba's future has just become that much more positive.

Manitoba's strong economy, roused by balanced budgets and stable tax structure, gives Manitobans the opportunity to live, work and prosper right here at home. We have recorded record investment, record exports and record job creation. With a balanced budget and the ability to pay down our debt, we will have more funds to meet the needs of Manitobans. In order to generate the jobs and resources necessary to deliver quality health care, education and services to children and families now and for generations to come, it is essential that we have a vibrant and competitive economy. We must ensure that the needs of Manitobans are met now and into the 21st Century.

With the 1997 budget we have shown Manitobans that we are committed to making that happen. Therefore, I would ask all honourable members to join with me on Tuesday, the 25th day of March, at 5:30 p.m., to vote in favour of this budget. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be able to add my remarks, both my personal remarks and party's position in the vast majority of the cases, with respect to yet another budget.

I want to start off by commenting on something that has always been important to me. I have always maintained, Madam Speaker, that the best resource that an MLA has, or any elected official has, is the

constituents which they represent. If in fact you are successful at communicating with them and building up those links, you will find that you are better able to address the many different issues that face us on a day-in, day-out basis at the Manitoba Legislature.

In the last six weeks, what I did is I kind of just went through some of my files, and I pulled a few of them to give somewhat of an idea of the types of concerns that constituents of mine have brought up that I feel warrant discussions as, after the budget, we go into the line-by-line Estimates and hopefully, Madam Speaker, I will get the opportunity to address these particular issues in a little bit more detail. I had an individual, who lives on Troy Avenue, that brought up the issue of midwifery and talked about the importance of the province trying to get midwifery brought more into the province, to become more popular, to provide better training. Here is an individual that sees a need and is trying to convey, through me to the government, that in fact this in an area in which the government does need to move more quicker. In fact I can recall, I believe it was the 1990 election, when I was over at the Seven Oaks Hospital with our then leader, Sharon Carstairs, when we talked about having a midwifery school or educational program going through the Seven Oaks Hospital.

Here I have an individual that lives on Elm Grove Drive. She is a small-business woman, who is very familiar with loopholes that are created or that are used by deadbeat parents in terms of making payments for maintenance, and talks how one can claim to be a small-business person and under that sort of a category you can use all sorts of different write-offs. Well, again, this is an excellent issue in which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) should be doing what he can to address it.

I have a constituent who meets with me on a regular basis, pops by at least, it seems, once every six weeks anyway at a local restaurant, and he brings up the elk farm. The elk farm is a very important issue to him. When I made reference, Madam Speaker, to it in my throne speech on this particular issue I just happened to have spoken to that individual so I brought it up then. I will not bring it up again in any detail, but suffice to say the elk farming is in fact an issue in the Chamber and here is something in which as an MLA, by tapping into constituents, we are better able to become more

acquainted with the grassroots and what they have to say about what the government is doing.

There are other issues, the more broader issues that are out there. I am working currently on a case where there is a retail store. A constituent gives me a call and says that her son was accused of shoplifting, and a concern was raised in terms of the way in which that individual was treated, Madam Speaker. Was there some sort of racial motivation in what actually occurred? I think this particular constituent has a lot of merit in terms of the way in which it was done, so we are trying to engage the company and try to get some sort of an action by the company to address this particular issue.

The issue of racism is there today in many, many different ways, and it is something in which the government—you know I reflect back to the Manitoba intercultural combatting racism report a number of years ago where it talked about cross-cultural training or courses being made available, and one of the suggestions was that it be made available to the MLAs. That has never really occurred. So when I listen to constituents such as this, these are the type of things which I think of.

I had a letter from a fairly upset businessman, Madam Speaker, who talks about the whole way in which the reassessment has occurred in terms of property tax. I have spoken on many occasions on how the city does its assessments and the appeal process, and we do need to see some major changes in that whole area. In fact with this particular case, if I do not remember to do it right after I am done speaking, I would give a copy of the letter that this particular constituent sent to me to the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) because I would be interested in that particular minister maybe responding to the concerns of this particular constituent. I do not know if he is actually a constituent; his business is located in my area.

Madam Speaker, I bring up those because as I indicated at the opening of the remarks that indeed there is a wonderful resource that each and every one of us have and that is the constituents that we represent. I get great pleasure in trying to establish that communication connection that allows me to be better

informed at addressing the many different issues facing us.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I was wanting to get a little bit more political and start talking about the budget. When I look at this particular budget, I have absolutely no problem in saying, I cannot support this budget. It is a budget which I will vote against, and me and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) are the only two members in this Chamber that can actually say that we have consistently voted against this government and the presentations of their budget after budget. Ever since their very first budget of '88-89, there are only two members in this Chamber who can honestly say that they have voted against this government. That is the member for St. Boniface and me, with all modesty and humility.

Madam Speaker, there is a good reason why I have consistently voted against this government and its budgets, and the simple answer is that I believe that it can be better because, yes, in certain ways you can portray this budget to be a very nice, positive budget, and I can see the spin doctors in the future, as we get closer to an election, where the government will be saying to Manitobans that we froze your personal income tax over the last 10 years, we have not increased your sales tax, we have a balanced budget, we have a surplus.

\* (1530)

Then they are going to be throwing money into education. They are going to be throwing money into health care, and rumour has it it might be after the Pan Am Games or just prior to the Pan Am Games. You can start to see the groundwork already today that is being set to try to put that spin on.

Well, Madam Speaker, my intentions are to let the constituents whom I represent and, through the vehicle of the Liberal Party, as many Manitobans know that this government is being very, very selective, that there are many things that this government can, in fact, be doing today that would improve the quality of life for all Manitobans throughout the entire province. We have not seen a government in the past eight and a half, nine years that has been successful at managing positive

change. Instead, this has been a government that does not want to take responsibility for its own actions.

Madam Speaker, all one needs to do is to read the candidate for Portage in the next federal election, the current member for Portage la Prairie's (Mr. Pallister) speech—[interjection] And the member for The Maples asks, which is he? Both currently.

If you read that, the government goes at whatever cost to blame the federal counterparts for every problem that is occurring in the province. I heard the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) trumpet from his seat how wonderful things are happening in the province of Manitoba. He talks about all these thousands of jobs that are being created. He does not give any credit whatsoever—he talks about the infrastructure program—to the federal government, Madam Speaker. The federal government serves one purpose and one purpose only, and what this government is doing is now following the advice from the dean of the Chamber.

Madam Speaker, I remember the dean a number of years ago talking about in the budgets that new governments have this tradition, and the first thing you do is, you have these envelopes. You open up the one envelope that says, you blame the previous administration, and after a while that envelope starts to get a little bit too used. Then what you do is, you start blaming the people in Ottawa, and then after that envelope gets a little bit too used, I believe the member, and I am sure he will correct me if I am wrong, started to say, maybe then you can start hybridizing and start blaming everyone but the government of the day.

That is in fact the stage that they are at currently, Madam Speaker. They have not made it to the fine art, as the New Democrats did when they were in government in terms of what I classify as fed bashing, but they are pretty darn close, I must admit, in terms of taking their shots at the federal government.

### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Agriculture, on a point of order?

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** I have too much respect for my colleague the member for

Inkster to know that he would want to put some wilful disinformation on the record. The fact of the matter is, when you open the third envelope, there is a very simple message: Call an election.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Agriculture did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the dean's advice, and I think maybe the Premier (Mr. Filmon) should follow that advice. It seems that he has gone through the first two envelopes, and give consideration to call an election.

Madam Speaker, you know, it is interesting that, when we go through Question Period, the government and even the New Democrats will look our way whenever something happens federally, assuming that we support every aspect, every decision that the federal government is doing. We are not necessarily supportive if the federal government brings in something that we believe is not in the best interest. I was saddened to see that the transfer payments are not, in fact, increasing. In fact, they have been decreasing. Sure that saddens me, but what is important is that we got to ensure that we get our share first and foremost, and what is most important is the Chretien government, for example, is making a long-term commitment to financing health care well into the next century. That is something that was not there during the Brian Mulroney years. That is something which gives me assurances that the federal Liberals are, in fact, overall doing a better job at ensuring that we are going to have quality health care into the future. In fact, when we take a look at the block funding formula, yes, we are experiencing some decreases, but what is happening is that by the year 2002 we will have exceeded the block funding that we are giving today.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker, what I did this morning is I went to the Legislative Library, and I went back to the '88-89 budget, and in the '88-89 budget the federal government gave us \$1.398 billion in terms of our revenues, using their document of the Estimates of Expenditures. This year, for the '97-98 year, it is \$1.555 billion. Manitoba is, in fact, receiving a considerable amount of our budget from Ottawa, and if

you listen to the government of the day, and sometimes the New Democratic Party, you would be given the impression that Ottawa has completely abandoned the province of Manitoba, especially if you listen to the member for Portage la Prairie, or the new candidate, the federal candidate out in Portage la Prairie, talk about the federal Liberals. I could barely contain myself in my seat when he was levelling criticism after criticism about what was happening in Ottawa. How soon he has forgotten the absolute disgrace of the former administration in Ottawa.

Madam Speaker, I would ultimately argue that many of the things that are happening today in the budget in which this government is so proud of are only happening because of some of the actions from Ottawa, such as their interest rate policy, which has saved this government millions and millions of dollars, in excess of \$45 million. What this government should be doing is acknowledging that not everything that is positive that they talked about in this budget is only because of them. Talk about the infrastructure program. Those are jobs. This government tried to get it back in '88-89. The Mulroney government ignored them. Remember the Premier popped the deputy or the Prime Minister in the nose. He did not literally pop him in the nose, but there was the suggestion. It goes back a number of years, but the bottom line is that this government could not accomplish an agreement on an infrastructure program with the Mulroney government. It took the Chretien government to come in with a program of this nature.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about other initiatives, the government talks highly of the Team Canada, as well they should, because we will all benefit from Team Canada. When we talk about immigration policy, the New Democrats go out of their way because they see a political opportunity here to try to portray the federal Liberals as a racist government by talking about the head tax. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, it would nice if we did not have to have that landing fee. Provincially the party did not support it, because we recognized the benefits of it, but it is not a head tax. It is being portrayed as a head tax because there are racial connotations to it.

What, in reality, has the government done, the government of Ottawa? For the first time we have a

bilateral immigration agreement which Manitobans can be very proud of. Manitoba has benefited tremendously. Look over the last year at how many more immigrants have come to the province as a result of a positive relationship that has been developed from this provincial government and the government in Ottawa.

But, having said that, I understand and I appreciate that there are political points that need to be scored, and those political points at times will be at the cost of the federal government maybe not being portrayed in a positive light and, quite frankly, I am prepared to accept it, but at times the government does go overboard. I would suggest to you the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) did go overboard, way overboard.

But seeing as I am talking about intergovernmental relations, what is also important is the relationship between the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba.

The Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) is here currently and right offhand the compliment I would throw, a personal compliment that I would throw to the minister is that I was quite pleased in what took place with the St. Germaine and Vermette and what the minister had done. Hopefully not too many liberals will criticize me for saying that but, generally speaking, I think that the minister did a fairly decent job at attempting to resolve that particular issue.

\* (1540)

But having said that, we need to start addressing the needs of the city of Winnipeg. When we talk about intergovernmental relations, it goes more than just the rural municipalities. It also—we talk about the city of Winnipeg. We have got to start talking about the Capital Region, putting more emphasis in the importance of the Capital Region, because equally rural Manitoba needs Winnipeg, Winnipeg needs rural Manitoba. We all need to be working together, and we are not doing the city of Winnipeg any favours if we do not address the needs of the Capital Region.

So when the government talks about offloading, Madam Speaker, offloading from Ottawa to Manitoba,

keep in mind the allegations that are quite often levelled at the province for offloading. So it works both ways.

I know unfortunately I have a limit, but I am not done yet. I want to talk about debt and deficit, because this government is using this as one of its biggest propaganda pieces ever, and when I think of the government and its debt and the way in which this government has handled its financial affairs over the years, the first thing that comes across my mind is, and I believe I have used it in the past, the Manness illusion.

The Manness illusion was in essence the creation of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund was a creation because the government actually had a surplus. So what they did—the member for Selkirk from the New Democrats says, hear, hear. His party supported the slush fund. You voted for it. There was only two members today that are inside this Chamber that also voted against the slush fund and, again, it was the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) and me. But the creation of that slush fund created also a debt for that year of in excess of \$150 million. That is what was used to create a slush fund. What we have seen is the government manipulate that fund in order to try to make the government look better to the public.

When they talk about the sale of MTS and the cash that was received from that sale, I question in terms of what it is that the government is doing. I do not have the faith in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I would have rather seen, look, if you are going to spend on maybe maintaining some of your capital commitments on health care expenditures, and I am going to comment on that because they are doing some of that, look at what you are doing in public education in terms of the financing, that growing reliance in property tax.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

There are many different ways in which you can finance, different programs that are out there to further enhance them with the sale of the proceeds, but there is a valid argument in terms of the debt. You cannot just squander the money away. Well, then why not put more money on that accumulated debt that we have? If it makes sense to have a huge slush fund, then why does the government not borrow more money and make

a larger slush fund? Because the government is not there to necessarily be in a wide variety of businesses. There is a need in some areas such as the Hydro and MPIC to have a very strong government role, but not necessarily in every area. So when I think of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the surplus budgets, that is the sort of thing that I think about is one of deception. The reason why I think deception is because of that Fiscal Stabilization Fund because it is being manipulated in order to try to fool the public of Manitoba.

I want to talk about the taxation reform and some of the changes that we would have liked to have seen from the government, Mr. Acting Speaker. There is kind of an onus. You know the government has been in office now for almost nine years, one would think that they might try and do something courageous, maybe bold, something really positive for Manitobans when it comes to taxation reform. I would suggest to you one of the most positive things that they could do is to take a look at the way in which education in itself is funded. It has always been a pet issue for me. What we have done over the years is we have relied more and more on the funding of public education through property tax, and I think that is wrong. I really believe that what we need is to see a government that is going to be more committed to financing public education through general revenues.

Mr. Acting Speaker, a nice, wonderful program that I think this government is overlooking in terms of a tax write-off or a tax deduction that the government should be looking at is those seniors that might be able to go in the homes of their children or loved ones, that might be prepared to, through some sort of an incentive, because of financial constraints that maybe they are experiencing in their residence, where you are providing a tax deduction for those that are prepared to assist in keeping their elderly parents or grandparents. Now, of course, government does not have to do everything. Right?

We are not saying that every senior now has to be taxed because I noticed the dean kind of bent over and maybe made a little note of what I said and might attempt to address it and say, well, government does not have to give an incentive, there should be a moral obligation. If in fact the dean did say that, I would support that. Yes, there has to be a moral obligation,

but in some cases if we provided more of an incentive, and that is all it would be, much like we have different tax write-offs or tax deductions for children that live in the houses and others, that it does enhance opportunities for people that might not necessarily have that opportunity to have one of their loved ones. At least give it some consideration and let us talk about it, but we do not hear that sort of reform that is taking place. I think that is unfortunate.

In my address with respect to the throne speech, I really did not get too much of an opportunity to talk about health. I wanted to comment on some of the more positive things in which I believe the government should be doing to manage that change, because I do not believe the answer is necessarily you have to throw more money into health care, nor am I suggesting that you can cut out of health care, Mr. Acting Speaker, but I do believe there are a number of things that the government can be doing to better manage change, which will ultimately save the taxpayers dollars and provide a better quality of service.

Recently I had occasion to have a trip to Montreal, and I had a good opportunity to have a good walk-through and a meeting with one of the community health clinics out there. One of the things that I learned was that the province of Quebec, one of the things that they do well is the delivery or the movement towards the delivery of health care through these clinics. I was thoroughly impressed with the west end Montreal community health clinic because of the types of services that it was providing.

They, for example, provided home care services for that community, and home care services was a fairly hot issue, if you will recall, inside the Chamber last year. You know, we currently have community health clinics. Why are we not suggesting or making it more convenient for our community health clinics to take responsibility of the delivery of home care services?

That is something which the community clinics are doing in the province of Quebec, ultimately, I believe, delivering a far better, or have the potential to deliver a far better, service because they are more in tune with the community, and they do not necessarily have the same focus of priorities, profit versus nonprofit, as an example. They have more social service programs that

are offered through the community health clinics. They have more medical services. Nurses will do triage over at the clinics in many cases. The doctors that are at the clinics are all on salary.

Well, why this is important is because there have been many reports, government reports. Even the former Minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, in the Action Plan, talked about the importance of the deinstitutionalization of health care and how important it was to get our community health clinics. Well, if we look at what is happening in, for example, the Montreal West community health clinic, you will clearly see that, yes, if we are going to get a better quality health care service being delivered to our constituents, then we have to be much more aggressive at trying to deliver through the clinics that we have.

\* (1550)

You know, the whole debate on health care and the number of ideas that are out there are just phenomenal. There are so many ways in which we could be changing health care to make it that much better. What we do need to do is we do need to have a government that is going to recognize and be bold in many cases. [interjection] Some would suggest it is an understatement, but sometimes you have to be bold if you are in the government and you have to be able to say, look, we are prepared to follow the Action Plan that was proposed by the former Minister of Health, Mr. Don Orchard. In many ways, that Action Plan would make a big difference, a big positive different in the province of Manitoba.

The government came up with the capital budget, and we were pleased that they incorporated the Boundary Trails, the Health Sciences Centre, and I believe there was a third one—it does not come to mind right offhand. We are pleased to see that because this government promised that in the 1995 election, and it appeared as if they were going to hold off at least until we got a little bit closer to the election.

So, using some of those proceeds from MTS, we were pleased to see that they are going to be going ahead with these developments, because when you move ahead with, for example, Boundary Trails, what you are doing, Mr. Acting Speaker, is you are going to



have a first-class health facility that is going to be able to retain doctors because money is not the only issue for doctors in rural Manitoba. What they are talking about also is to be able to have the facilities that also do challenge at times their abilities, that allows them to practise what they are being taught in medical school. Doctors in rural Manitoba do not take any pride in having to send patients to the city of Winnipeg necessarily.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

So when we start looking at some of those capital needs, it was encouraging that the government has, in fact, decided to materialize on some, and we are going to be monitoring others to which they should also be making that commitment, Madam Speaker.

I am told that I am quickly running out of time. I did want to make reference to some future—

**An Honourable Member:** Seven minutes.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Seven minutes? Madam Speaker, I did want to make reference again, because I believe so strongly in it, to the Health Links line over at the Misericordia Hospital. You know, at the health clinic in Montreal, they actually circulate stickers which they promote, that you put these stickers on your fridge, and I am going to have one of the pages bring this to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) for me.

This is something which I believe that what the Minister of Health should be doing is whenever someone is sent a Manitoba Health card, for example, they should be sent something of that very same format for the Health Links at—they should be sent the very same sticker with our phone number, that is the difference, for Health Links out of the Misericordia Hospital, because this is a wonderful program that has the potential to save thousands and thousands of dollars for Manitobans. I really encourage the Minister of Health, who has already looked at the sticker, to give that some consideration, and, hopefully, we will see it coming out.

The Internet, what a wonderful opportunity we have here in terms of health care in answering questions, generic, general questions potential, Madam

Speaker, by having access on health, and I know the Ministry of Health is moving in that direction. Let us see how fast they can get something on-line and moving in wide circulation.

I wanted to talk very briefly on education. Again, Madam Speaker, as I said on the throne speech, I equate education to the challenging of a student's ability no matter what their ability might be. I am disappointed, really disappointed that the government has not recognized that there are some children within our society who are, in fact, challenged greatly, and we do not see the resources being allocated to address that particular issue.

A great example of that is the wonderful facility that we have of Marymount. Here is a facility that rises to the challenges that students present and does what it can to ensure that these students are being given opportunities. I have had opportunity to participate in one of their graduation ceremonies. The government needs to give guaranteed funding for institutions such as this. It needs to expand in this area. If you do not do that today, the social consequences and costs are going to be horrendous for tomorrow. It is going to be a lot more costly for tomorrow than one can imagine. So the government has got to be more aggressive in dealing with that particular issue.

Madam Speaker, being cognizant of the time and knowing I am going to move a motion, I am going to take this opportunity to move a motion. I would move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry),

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And this House further regrets:

THAT this government's 1997 budget document is a clear indication that this government cares more about its fiscal health, than it cares about the well being and health of average Manitobans, since after two years, it is only now, with its announcement in the 1997 budget for capital construction in the area of health care, getting around to fulfilling its 1995 election promises;

THAT this government's 1997 budget document does nothing to reverse the cuts to public education that are

destroying Manitoba's public schools, yet in 1997 this government froze funding for public education in Manitoba;

THAT this government's 1997 budget document will result in a 8 million dollar funding shortfall to Manitoba's largest post secondary educational institution causing student tuition to rise yet again.

**Motion presented.**

**An Honourable Member:** As far as I am concerned, that is just the way our motion—

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Well, we are limited to the scope of your amendment, that is why it is not as extensive as we would like.

**Madam Speaker:** The subamendment is in order.

**Mr. Enns:** Madam Speaker, it will be my most sincere effort to try to convince the mover of the amendment just placed before the Assembly by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to seek your permission and that of the House to withdraw that amendment to the amendment. Then I will address my comments to the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) to ask him to withdraw his amendment to this budget and, in the hope that we can do what so many Manitobans would like us to do occasionally, show a degree of unity, show a degree of common purpose in this Chamber when it is deserving and when it might even surprise the general public if we should act that way in this Chamber.

Why do I say that this is not just a pipe dream on the part of this aging member of Lakeside? My 30 years do not forego the hope that by persuasion of argument that what would appear to be the impossible nonetheless is possible in this Chamber. We demonstrate many impossible things in this Chamber. From time to time when it suits our purpose, we look at the clock and say it is not six o' clock, and we carry on. We can virtually hold up time. We can change our rules and abuse our rules from time to time.

So just because it is tradition that all members opposite in the opposition oppose in a kind of a set knee-jerk reaction to major initiatives like a budget or

a throne speech does not mean that it has to be that way. This budget is deserving of support because from what I have heard in this Chamber from all sides and what is certainly supported by the general public is that they expect this government, any government, to dedicate a major portion of our resources to the health concerns of all our people. We hear that every day in Question Period from the official opposition, from members of the Liberal Party and of course you hear it from our own ministers of Health and First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

\* (1600)

This budget contains that dedication. Well, does it not? I mean we are not fudging the facts. Does this budget not contain the highest percentage terms of a provincial fiscal capacity dedicated to Health? Higher than any other jurisdiction in the country, Liberal, New Democratic administrations, other Conservative administrations. Well, then, certainly it meets the first test. That should not make it difficult for honourable members opposite to consider supporting it.

Certainly the other priorities, like Education and Family Services, broader social services, including the Department of Justice, have their priorities stated in dollars and cents in the budget that is before us for consideration.

Madam Speaker, I speak from the experience of departments that have had to discipline themselves to enable us to exercise this priority. Let me hasten to add, there is a total support for this budget because my farmers in agriculture are just as concerned about health issues, just as concerned about education issues, just as concerned about justice, just as concerned about family service issues, as anybody else in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, when I was first privileged to bring my Estimates into this Chamber in 1966, they contained the attention, the concern, more importantly, the resource of 7 percent of the total tax revenue of the province of Manitoba. To enable us to respond to your constant and daily demands of the priorities of health, to enable us to respond to your constant daily demands for greater attention to education, that has had to drop to less than 2 percent in today's budget, although the

demands for agriculture are every bit as serious as they were 30 years ago.

Madam Speaker, I will not speak for the Ministry of Highways and Transportation, but he can tell you much the same story. In terms of the total amount of dollars that were used in Highways and Transportation back in the late sixties, even the early seventies, it was considerable higher than it is today as we adjust to the pressing priorities of the day.

The department that I also had the privilege to preside over from time to time, Natural Resources, which has a tremendous responsibility, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) was concerned about the operation of that department today in Question Period. This is the department that has the responsibility of so many wonderful things in our province, the maintenance of our parks, the maintenance of our wildlife, the maintenance of our fisheries, both commercial and sports, the preservation of our conservation districts in different parks.

In 1966 or '67, it commanded 6 percent, 7 percent of the total provincial revenues. It is today getting 1.5 percent. Governments have responded to the priorities that opposition members have expressed in this Chamber, that we understand that the general public wants us to put into practice when we decide how, as stewards of their tax money, the collective dollars that we collect in taxation, \$5 billion-plus, should be spent.

Now why would that be difficult for the honourable members not to support? All of us individual members of the Treasury bench would like to find some additional elbow room to provide some additional service, provide additional benefit to our people in the many different services that government provide. The Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) would like to do a little better than just catching up to the constant demands of the highway infrastructure.

I know that the minister of parks would like to do more in some of the development of our beautiful park system in the province. I would like to do a bit more in agriculture, and, again, I appeal to honourable members opposite, there is a way. There is \$500 million available without imposing any taxes, not a single tax, and this budget points and shows the way. It is the

\$500 million-plus that we still pay to the money lenders of this world in interest. The \$500 million does not employ a single teacher, does not pay for a single hospital bed, does not pay to pave a single mile of road or help an agricultural program. That is leaving our jurisdiction very often and being sent out.

This budget points out to all of us how we can access that \$500 million. Madam Speaker, that is more than the whole Department of Agriculture spends; that is more than the Department of Highways spends; that is more than the Department of Natural Resources spends. These are dollars, these are resources that we could in reasoned debate, in reasonable planning, apply to the kinds of services that governments of all description are asked to provide by their citizens. Is that so hard for thinking members in the opposition to support? Is it really that difficult?

I will tell you something and it will surprise you. There is one group of people that are not particularly pleased with this budget. The other day the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I think, chastised this government about the fact that in the sale of MTS certain brokers made a bit of commission money. Madam Speaker, the international and national moneylenders are the people who are not particularly happy. You see, unlike my own little farm or people in businesses, when we loan money we are actually expected to pay it back, and if we do not, somebody knocks on the door and we are foreclosed on.

But governments are in a little different category, particularly if they are reasonably politically stable. The monies that we have borrowed from moneylenders over the years, they do not really ever want them to be paid back. They simply want the interest paid. They simply want the interest paid, and it concerns them that if—and even this very reasonable schedule that has been laid out under the deficit act that we passed, stretching it over a period of 30 years, it means that in 30 years time, times that we can afford it without too much discomfort, these five hundred millions of dollars will not be earned by these moneylending houses any more.

That does not make them very happy. It does not make them very happy that beginning the last year already, beginning this year again and this is for the third year, we are not in the bond market floating big

\$400-million or \$500-million loans, as was the habit of just a little while ago and the commissions payable to brokers on those kinds of transactions. They are not that happy with it, when we get chastised for the normal business practice when you are selling a multi, multi-hundred-million mine, \$800-million, \$900-million facility and that the normal commission should be paid on it.

If there is a genuine concern about paying people commissions, why do you not support the direction this budget is taking us in, which means no more borrowing, no more commissions to brokers, and the real gem of it all is—and it is something that we can all take some pride of ownership, and, in fact, we should be planning how we can allocate some of those resources that we can achieve without imposition of unpopular or adding to what some would describe an already onerous taxation load.

Madam Speaker, I would like honourable members really to consider whether or not they ought not to support this budget. It would not be precedent-setting. I sat in opposition and supported a Schreyer government, as did my whole party, on one occasion because we thought it was a supportable budget of some years ago under the then leadership of Mr. Sidney Spivak. So it is not precedent-setting if that should happen.

\* (1610)

I am going to give the honourable members opposite a bit more advice. They surely must be feeling that they are kind of thrashing around in the dustbins of ancient history with their dogmatic ideological approach, particularly members in the opposition. I will deal with the Liberals later on.

They need somehow to extricate themselves from this. Madam Speaker, let them cast their eyes to the dear old mother country, over to England, and look at what is happening there. Prime Minister Major has called for an election, and if you understand—I do not pretend or present myself to be an expert on United Kingdom politics, but one would think that it is very likely that Tony Blair and the Labour Party, after 18 years in the political wilderness, may well form the government in the United Kingdom. But Tony Blair

and the Labour Party of today are not what Harold Wilson and the rest of the gang were that brought that country to its knees, economically speaking.

They have kind words to say about Dame Margaret Thatcher. They recognize themselves that Mr. Blair—and the English electorate recognize that the Labour Party has undergone a very fundamental transition from within. They have cleansed themselves of the extreme left positions that the Tony Benns of yesteryear had in that party. They cleansed themselves of the strangling hold of organized labour that was exercised on the British Labour Party. The members know that that is all right. That is how they may well succeed, although I stand corrected because I would not count Prime Minister Major out. I think his strategy of holding kind of unique.

Very often governments of the day generally favour a shortened election period in the hopes that they can get re-elected and not face too much additional long-term pressure and scrutiny that a longer election provides for. But Mr. Major is stepping out of tradition and calling for a considerably extended election period by announcing the election today, although the writ has not been dropped. The election is not till May 1. He is hoping and gambling, quite frankly, that truth will win out and that, although the leopard may have changed his spots, he truly cannot wash them out and that it will still be of sufficient concern to members of the voting public that will vote, unprecedented, for another term, the Conservative Party in England.

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

But it is advice that honourable members ought to consider because they are on a treadmill that is going nowhere right now. They are going nowhere right now, and one way of alerting the people of Manitoba that this New Democratic Party is not just an old, tired opposition would be to stand up and vote for this budget.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Enns:** I tell you that would attract a great deal of attention. Now I said I would deal with my friends in the Liberal Party a little bit as well. It seems to be of

some constant amazement to some members in the general public that the Liberal Party continues, and that the Prime Minister, the Honourable Jean Chretien, continues to enjoy the favour of so many Canadians—somewhat dropping a little bit in the last little while, but I am prepared to acknowledge it is there. It certainly does not surprise anybody in this House.

The Liberal Party, like Tony Blair in England, has adopted the sound policies put forward by the Conservatives in the previous government. They have not torn up the free trading agreements that have spelled so much prosperity for this country. They have not even dislodged the hated GST tax, which was certainly instrumental in defeating the last government. And more importantly—and I say this very sincerely—I know that it troubles many in the Liberal ranks, and I am prepared to acknowledge leadership when I see it. The Minister of Finance federally has determinedly set a course—quite frankly, not as determinedly as some who tend to be more fiscally responsible or conservative would like him to see, but nonetheless determinedly on a course that would bring fiscal responsibility to the federal government.

That is being recognized by the Canadian electorate; that is what we are doing in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So again I appeal specific to my Liberal friends. If you applaud what the honourable Finance Minister in Ottawa is doing in the direction he is taking the federal government, the direction he is taking Canada, which I believe genuinely is a big reason for the continuing broad support that the federal government continues to have and what will undoubtedly re-elect them for a second term.

Now, you really have to examine your conscience as to why you cannot support this budget that is essentially doing the same thing, only we are two or three years ahead of them. We have already logged two budgets with a surplus. This is providing a third budget with a surplus. We are beginning to pay down the debt, which makes it possible for us to start to access that \$500 million.

I know that from time to time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have managed and I applaud you for maintaining lines of communication with individual members opposite. I seek your assistance that between now and

Monday evening I believe when we vote that you earnestly and sincerely take advantage of the rapport and the friendship that you have with the different members on both sides of the House and quietly counsel them that it would be in their best interests, it would be in their best political interests to support this budget, because it does in essence—all right, nobody is perfect in this world. This government is not perfect. None of its ministers are perfect. We do not say that. But certainly we can all say that the budget embraces the direction, the tenor that you daily ask us to take.

Priorities of health, priorities of education, priorities of family services, priorities of aboriginal matters, priorities of justice, those are all in this budget. Well, we can argue, we can have differences of opinion as to individual details of a program, whether one program should have 5 percent more or less, whether some 't's need to be crossed or some 'i's need to be dotted, but we are dealing here on a matter of principle, that we support this approach, this direction.

I submit that it is an occasion, one that may not come all that often, one that came to me when I was in opposition on a specific Schreyer budget that was introduced into this House and that I and the Conservative Party supported. So it is not precedent setting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opposition to consider this action seriously.

They can carry on and go on criticizing this government as they will and in fact as is their responsibility to do so, one hopes constructively, but it would be an affirmation of faith, I think, it would go a long way to a restoration of respect that I genuinely believe that the citizens of this province ought to be able to have in their elected members, and I include all members. It serves none of us any well to have that respect denigrated, either by our personal actions, by our behaviours.

\* (1620)

I suggest, although I raise it with some caution, but certainly the actions that have taken place in this Chamber at the close of the last session, the beginning of this session, have not added to that level of esteem that I believe is necessary for the general public to have for their elected members. This would be a marvellous

way, a marvellous demonstration that we can upon reasoned and cool and sober second thought look at a major document and look at the major direction that the government is taking and do what would catch a great deal of people by surprise and draw a lot of attention to what goes on in this Chamber.

Well, I wanted to make that particular appeal to honourable members opposite because, although it may well fall on deaf ears, it is always worthwhile to make the attempt. If we do not aspire to doing things differently then of course we never will do things differently. I suggest to you that there are sound and good reasons for the honourable members opposite to give this some thought. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway):** At the outset, I would like to acknowledge my great respect and admiration for the dean of this House, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). I wish I knew the secret of his political longevity.

**An Honourable Member:** Honesty, what is it?

**Mr. Santos:** I do not know. Someday he will tell me.

I was campaigning in the last 1995 election and knocking on doors, and then there was a haughty homeowner who came out and opened the door in my face and said, I am not voting. Being interested, I asked him, why are you not voting? Do you know what he told me? He said that it is a relief for me not to feel responsible for what this provincial government is doing or going to do. What has this Tory government been doing lately?

In trying to answer this question, I shall first refute some of the claims of the Filmon government that, first of all, they have extended Manitoba's freeze of major taxes to a full decade. What is really happening here? The Filmon government does not want to do it directly and honestly to raise the taxes, which they can legally do because they are in power.

What it has done, it has done indirectly and silently, surreptitiously and with stealth. What are the specific examples of such secretive, silent, surreptitious moves, trying to avoid public notice, and yet have the effect of

raising and increasing the taxes? This cannot be understood except in the context of what has happened in the past.

For example, in the 1992 and 1993 budget, this Filmon government cut the property tax credit by \$75; it also broadened the sales tax base that included the previously untaxed items like personal hygiene products, baby expenses, school supplies, even ice cream cones. Indeed, one Finance department briefing acknowledged this fact. Although technically there is no tax hike, the raising of \$114 million was equivalent to an 11 percent increase in the personal income tax and a 20 percent increase in the provincial sales tax. So indirectly the government had increased the taxes of the individual and yet at the same time decreased the taxes of businesses.

Dramatic jumps in personal care home fees, charges, increases in Pharmacare deductibles, tuition fee increases because of cuts in funding to higher educational systems, delisting of medical services—these are practically tax hikes, though done without notice, quietly and silently in a most indirect way in a Machiavellian style.

Lately what has this government done? The provincial government decided to end the free eye examination of Manitobans from the ages of 18 to 64. What is the effect of this on the health prospects of Manitoba's citizens? According to the president of the association of Manitoba optometrists, Dr. Jane Thrall, many people will balk at paying roughly \$49 for eye examinations. These are important in maintaining good vision and in detecting, at the earliest stage, health problems. Routine eye examinations will disclose such potential diseases like glaucoma, cataracts, hypertension. I even found some kind of brain tumour through eye examinations.

These are all essential for the preventive health care of individual human beings and, yet, this government had decided in the interest of saving a few dollars to end that kind of preventive health measure.

There is the \$12 property tax increase to offset last year's 2 percent education cuts. The cost of prescription drugs was shifted from the publicly funded funds to the sick and the elderly themselves. They now

have to pay for their own prescription drugs, which, the Free Press estimated, amounted to some \$324 for a family of four.

Last year the University of Manitoba increased the tuition fees in the Faculty of Arts by \$125. Of course, it is now offset by what is now called the new tuition tax credit, but the university is still cut as before, 2 percent the fiscal year 1995-1996.

The basic insurance fees for driver's licences have been increased by \$10. Senior citizens now have to pay for their fishing licences, as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) had asked in Question Period. Of course, there will be an expectation and realization of perpetually increasing home care and nursing home charges. These are inevitable increases because of the mere fact of the operation of inflation alone in our economic system.

So what is the reaction of the typical voter in this kind of environment in the province? This appeared in the Letters to the Editor in the Free Press written by one person from Thompson. He said this government was elected on the promise of jobs, and yet voters thought that meant the creation of jobs, not the destruction and elimination of the same. This government was elected on the promise of no new taxes, but I ask Manitobans, what is the increase in Pharmacare premiums, the provincial camping fees, the cuts to education, the health care budgets? These tax all the people as end users. I see this as blatantly dishonest, as do many Manitobans. That is the perception of the public, the voter.

This Filmon government takes credit for paying off \$75 million of the provincial debt and also for projecting a surplus of \$27 million. If you add those two together, you have a saving of \$102 million. True arithmetically. But let us look closely at what should happen here. From the sale of Manitoba Telephone System, with the proceeds of \$410 million, which were temporarily deposited in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, this government drew out \$100 million there. Therefore, the real difference, \$102 million minus \$100 million, is merely \$2 million. This is what they call a milestone, an historical milestone in this budget.

\* (1630)

This Filmon government takes credit for investing in people. They said we have this new Children First program. We are putting half a million dollars there. More so we have the Child Maintenance and External Agencies funding, we are putting \$2.5 million. Let us add these two together. You have \$3 million, but have we forgotten the \$4 million cut in the daycare program last year, which has not been restored? Simple arithmetic shows that \$0.5 million plus \$2.5 million equals \$3 million, which is still less than the \$4 million cut in the daycare program. Are we going to forget the devastated and discontinued Children's Dental Program that was worth \$11 million—cut? This is where the money was coming from.

What can we then infer from this factual play on words and the reworking of dollar numbers and still coming short of real improvement in the lives of the afflicted, of children, of the elderly? Based on this factual information, we can say that despite claims that the Filmon government has not raised taxes directly, it has done so indirectly, making it all the more reprehensible that the savings in public money are being achieved on the backs of children, on the backs of the afflicted and the sick, on the backs of the elderly and the marginalized segments of our people.

What is the effect of poverty in the case of children in our province? This is a typical 15-year-old boy who is doing time at the Manitoba Youth Centre. He admitted to being a kid from hell. He had been shoplifting, breaking into cars and houses to get money or drugs. He smoked at the age of 10 his first LSD. He was downing, snorting cocaine, on a daily basis, became a member of a gang. But what does he think about himself and the rest of us? He said, if I die, who cares? I even stole my parents' wedding ring, but nobody cares. This is the attitude of the hopeless and disillusioned youth in our province because the money that should have gone to their welfare and a prospect of the future has gone to subsidize businesses.

In Ecclesiastes, it is written and I quote: If thou seest the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in the province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

In other words, if you see poor persons being oppressed by the rich, with miscarriage of justice everywhere throughout the land, do not be surprised, for every official is under orders from higher up, and the higher officials look up to their superiors, and so the matter is lost in red tape and bureaucracy. That is how it is to be under the provincial and city welfare programs.

In fairness to the provincial government, there is some good news in the budget, but it is good news only for a selected number of people, the business people, the owners of enterprises in the form of tax breaks. What else could anyone reasonably expect from this political party of the rich and the wealthy? Of course, when asked to make a choice between promoting the interests of businesses owned and controlled by the few wealthy Manitobans and the general public needs of the people of Manitoba, like the needs of children, the sick and the elderly, obviously this government without fail would choose the interests of the wealthy class.

But let me place this kind of behaviour of government of almost all jurisdictions of Canada in a broader theoretical explanatory framework. According to Neil Brooks who teaches tax law and policy at the Osgood Law School in Toronto in a lecture delivered at Mount Allison University, he said: In all modern societies, including our own, through social organizations and institutions including governments, the scarce resources of society are utilized to achieve individual economic objectives by interrelated decisions of an economic nature such as what combination of goods have to be produced, goods being defined as anything that satisfies human needs and goals, how to utilize resources efficiently and how much of these goods to distribute to its members of society.

These are economic decisions. This production, utilization and distribution of economic goods can take place in only one or two ways.

It can take place in the sector of what we call the private sector under the mechanism of the market forces, or it can take place in the public sector with intervention of government. If the market mechanism of the private sector is resorted to, the private ordering processes consistent of the setting of prices in the

private market to allocate these goods and services by individual bargains between and among buyers and sellers, and they behave according to the forces of supply and demand which largely define the price mechanisms and their profit motives of individuals as well as artificial persons like corporate persons when dealing and making business transactions and the choices of individuals as consumers. People agree in the private sector, most goods of a material kind, like videos, televisions, should be distributed according to the private mechanism of the market which means that the public will pay according to their ability to pay to enjoy these material goods.

However, the other way of distributing economic goods is through the public sector. We do it where the essential goods and services are generally considered to be essential for the growth and development of individual human beings, essential for the achievement of their dignity and happiness. They are provided free to those who qualify on the basis of need. But it is not really free because all of us taxpayers pay for this. The goods and services are paid for by everyone through the collection of taxes to pay for such goods and services. In other words, we act as a community to help the unfortunate so that they may have a decent and dignified kind of life.

In Canada, including Manitoba, we have over the last half a century agreed through the basis of humanitarian common sense. We can say there is a social contract among all peoples of all sectors that these types of goods and services that are essential to human integrity and human dignity like health care, education, retirement income for people who are in the twilight of life are to be provided for in the public sector, that all of us will contribute so that our sense of humanity and social equality and social justice and equity will be satisfied.

We have also morally recognized—in case these people are ravaged by the dynamic operations of the economy which go up and down as you see according to depression and progression—we as members of the same society have agreed that we shall provide for them, and we do so in the form of Workers Compensation in case they get accidents in the workplace, in the form of Unemployment Insurance if



they get laid off because of other forces in the economy. We want to help them.

\* (1640)

So the provision of goods and services are ultimately managed by the private sector which are run by the elected representatives of the people themselves since the people as a whole are themselves paying for all these services. But in the last two decades, what happened? There are these few economic and financial elites in the community who are not satisfied and happy with this. We call them the neoconservatives. They have persuaded, they have launched an intense and sustained attack against these public provisions of essential and needed human services for the unfortunate in our society. Why? Why do the social and financial elites like the private-sector ordering processes and dislike the public egalitarian ordering processes in the manufacturer, distribution of goods and services? Take the case of the distribution of profits in the banking industry. To be specific, let us take the Royal Bank of Canada. How much did the Royal Bank make as profit in 1996?

**An Honourable Member:** Half a billion.

**Mr. Santos:** Six billion. That is the total banking industry, but the Royal's record here is \$1.3 billion. How do they distribute that profit? Do they raise the salary of their lowest tellers and workers in the banking industry who make only \$21,000 a year? Oh, no, the chairman, the chief executive officer, John Cleghorn, was rewarded with a salary of \$2.3 million—\$2.3 million. Not even the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province makes that kind of salary. Then he was asked during the annual general meeting how he explained this inequitable distribution of profits among all the workers in the bank. He said, oh, that is simply market forces at work. He said he would even be paid more if he worked in the United States. In the banking system in the United States he would be paid more. So it is a sacrifice for him to work in Canada getting \$2.5 million in salary. Yet, the lowly tellers in the bank who work there day and night helping their clients—

**An Honourable Member:** Twenty-four hours a day.

**Mr. Santos:** Twenty-four hours—I do not know how long they work, but they do not get not even a one-dollar increase in their salary. That is the way the private sector works.

When we pursue this collectively as a people, the public ordering processes, they begin to cite the deficits and government debts, the compounding of interest which is their own making. They are the bankers who are lending. They cited economic globalization, global competition, and the media—who owns the media? The same group. The same group of economic and financial circles—the bankers, business executives, bondholders, shareholders, money lenders, brokers, they say we are paying too much in the social services. Let us cut this. How can we do it legitimately and persuade the people? In fact, Canada is not doing as much as the European western industrialized nations in terms of social services. We are only No. 17—

**An Honourable Member:** Seventeen.

**Mr. Santos:** —17th place in terms of social programs in helping our own citizens. Those people in parliament in Ottawa, what did they do to facilitate this transition? They passed the Canada Health and Social Transfer Act. What did this act do? They changed the formula. Instead of contributing to provinces and the federal government contributing to sustaining this social program and safety net, they said to the provinces, all right, we will cut \$7 billion in transfer payments over the next three years, but we will hand the money to you as a block. It is up to you. You are no longer bound to abide by our standards in terms of social and economic assistance to the poor. You do what you do with the money, but we will cut the transfer payments.

That is what happened. So what is happening now is that this powerful group, economically powerful, they really resented this public order in processing of essential goods and services to promote human development. They began to attack social insurance. They began to attack social welfare and social assistance, blaming the victim. They do not like the redistribution of income as a result of a collective bargaining process. They begin to attack the unions, the organized worker who protect their respective interests.

They do not like regulations anymore. They promoted the regulations. The regulations are there to protect the public health, the public wealth and the natural environment. Why? There is no satisfaction when you are greedy for corporate and financial resources. They are like octopuses, they reach in every nook and corner.

**An Honourable Member:** Octopus's garden.

**An Honourable Member:** Is that a parliamentary word?

**Mr. Santos:** Well, you know what an octopus is? It is a cephalopod mollusk, which suckles on and suck-like bodies, and they can climb up and stick to anything. They can even unscrew a jar to get the contents of the jar.

**An Honourable Member:** Well, that is the Tories.

**Mr. Santos:** That is the octopus.

**An Honourable Member:** They have their tentacles everywhere.

**Mr. Santos:** They have tentacles everywhere. So they extend their tentacles of power. In their wealth, they control electoral outcomes. They contribute left and right to political parties. [interjection] Yes, to the center too. They reach out, taxation policies, they want the taxation laws to be written in such a manner to their liking, all that power in the world can command. They manipulate the rhetorics of political language. They use terms like balanced budgets, global competition, financial crisis, inevitability of collapse. They use all these scare words when they mean inevitability of financial crisis. There is the double talk, let us reform the welfare system. To reform the welfare system means to dismantle the social set tenets.

They invoke the regulation, privatization, contracting out, all because they want to reduce and destroy the public sector. Why? They do not like the public sector because they cannot have their influence there. Some politicians will not accede to their wishes, but many will.

What happened, take the case of our home province. When you privatize the home care system, what will happen? Can the government still regulate? They can no more dictate to the private home companies. They say how they will deploy their staff. They say this is our operation, this is a private company, this is not a public agency. That is what they will say and if there is neglect and inefficiency and problems, that is the outcome of the private care system, we suffer or we do not bother you. Leave us alone. That is what the private operator will say. Employees will be paid almost half of what they are being used to pay now, and they will of course be at the poverty line.

\*(1650)

So this is the outcome. There is no doubt that government intervention, because these are elected people who run the government machinery, results in making the working people's lives more secure. They will have mental and economic stability, healthier. They will be better educated, but they now would like to cut the funding on public schools and raise the funding on private schools. Because the private schools fall in the private sector, the sky is the limit, so they will be able to win their share of their income, the distribution of income.

Thus, we see that government intervention and government expenditures will change the way the income is distributed among all the sectors in society and be given that it will tilt the balance of social and economic power between the workers and the owners of industry and the owners of businesses. To a certain extent, the power of the business managers and the business owners will be reduced because there will be collective bargaining processes to the benefit of safety in the workplace and other necessary expenditures to protect the health and life of the workers. They do not like that. They want absolute and full control in the lives and fortunes of the working class.

**An Honourable Member:** Who wants that?

**Mr. Santos:** The owners of industry because traditionally they would say that this is management's prerogative; that we can decide whatever we want to do in our own establishment, in our own facilities. That is what they will claim.

So what is the real stake in this debate about the role of government in society? What is really the issue? What is really the fundamental issue? The question is this: Shall the important decisions in society be in the hands of a small number of people acting through the private markets where there is no limit, no scruples and no moral bar, or shall the important decisions be in the decisions of the majority of Canadians acting through their democratically elected representatives in the institutions of the public sector? That is the real issue.

Who are these social, economic and financial elites that I have been talking about? Let us identify them. The Financial Post Magazine compiled the lineup of the 10 richest Canadians. Who is No. 1? Ken Thomson, publishing, newspapers, retailing. His estimated net worth is \$8.2 billion—billion, not million. If you are just a millionaire nowadays, you are nothing. You have to be a billionaire. [interjection] Bill Gates.

The Irving brothers, Saint John, who have oil, timber, transportation interests, second place, \$7.5 billion.

**An Honourable Member:** Who was that?

**Mr. Santos:** Irving brothers, New Brunswick.

Third: the Bronfmans, Seagrams. Number three: \$2.9 billion. It is sad to say, the Eaton family, whose empire is now crumbling, is worth \$1.7 billion. Then there is Ted Rogers, communications giant, \$1.4 billion. Galen Weston, \$1.3 billion.

McCain brothers, New Brunswick again, \$1.2 billion. Demarais, Paul Desmarais, \$1.2 billion, Jim Pattison, the Swiss-born New Brunswick network, they are only millionaires. They are nothing.

But the question is, why are the politicians both in Ottawa and in the province very sensitive to the wishes of this group? Why do they respond positively when they have an electoral base to which they are accountable? Why? That is the question. To understand what is going on, according to Thomas Friedman, over the past decade there is an integration of the individual national economies. We call it the globalization of the economy.

So there is now a global financial market, and yet this global market is very, very powerful, more powerful than the power of industrialized governments. They can transfer funds at lightening speed, faster than anything. They can force political leaders to look at the stock pattern, the bond markets, constantly worrying whether those bond markets are going up or going down. Why? Because politicians know that when those are going down, it means money is flowing out, interest rates are going up, prices are falling, and what does this mean in terms of an election held in such an economic environment? They lose the election. But if everything is prosperous, everything is nice and cosy, they know they will win the election, so they will bid. The elite will dictate and they will accede, and they will do their wishes. That is the reason.

Those who argue that we must cut taxes, that we must reduce public services, that we must weaken and destroy the organization of workers, why are they doing this? Are they doing it because they are misguided? Of course not. They know exactly what they are trying to do. This elite—economic, financial and social—wants to maximize its own wealth and power so that it can dictate and exercise that power in our society. The facts are clear.

The so-called funding crisis of governments, the so-called government debts and deficits, these are not caused by social programs. What causes them then, this kind of indebtedness that we are experiencing nationally and provincially? There is a 1991 Statistics Canada study which says that these are not due to the expenditure in social programs. In those days, 1991, 50 percent of the deficit was caused by high interest rates. These are actual findings. Forty-four percent of the deficit is due to, listen to this, tax breaks for the upper-income earners and corporations; 44 percent of the deficit is due to subsidies to those who already own an enormous amount of wealth in our society, giving money to those who already have it and taking money from those who have none.

This is the policy in national and provincial governments. Only 2 percent of that deficit is due to social programs. Two percent, that is the contribution of the very social safety net that they are trying to destroy.

We say, well, this is the free market. If we live in the free market, this is good because they make profits, huge amounts of profits, but what do they do? Take General Motors. They made a profit of \$1.4 billion in 1995, but they fired employees and workers. The banks, they made profits; they fired 2,080 jobs in that year. Petro Canada, they make profits and they fire people. The bottom line is the justification.

\* (1700)

High unemployment rates is the outcome, but high unemployment has both financial and social costs—lost wages, lost profits, lost government tax revenue. In addition, they also have human costs in terms of higher rates of crimes, delinquency and other social problems in our society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of time limitations, all I have to say is this: When people become materialistic, they become covetous. Covetousness becomes the cradle, greed becomes their banner. This is what is happening. They already are a millionaire and billionaire and, yet, they are cutting the social programs of the poor, the elderly and the afflicted and imposing all these extra fees and saying, at the same time, no tax increases. Thank you.

**Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation):** It is indeed a pleasure to stand and support very strongly the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Stefanson) budget for 1997. Yes, I am very proud of this budget. I am very proud of what this government has done, and I listen with great interest to what comes across the House here, and I will tell you, nothing has changed. Where we stand and where the NDP particularly stand is like light years apart. I used to think you were back in the '70s, but I think you are even before that at this stage.

I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) gave both parties a good chance to reconsider what they have done, what they have proposed as amendments in terms of the context of where the Liberals are governing in Ottawa, and what I can say to the members opposite, what NDP governments are doing in other locations in Canada.

It was with great interest we looked that over the course of the last five, six, seven, eight years, anybody who goes for election better be fiscally responsible in dealing with their electorate. They had better talk about balancing the budget. They had better talk about keeping taxes under control because, if you do not, you are not going to get elected. Maybe the example to the contrary to that is B.C., but remember what they promised in the election? Balanced budget, balanced budget, balanced budget. But as soon as it was over, oh, maybe we made a mistake—\$500 million out. But I will give them credit for this: They knew what the electorate wanted to hear. The electorate is very, very smart and intelligent today and, to the members opposite, I would remind them—[interjection] Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that member has not spoken already I think his chance will come, and we will listen to him when he gets on his feet and his pulpit and he starts telling the world how it should be run. But—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Highways has the floor at this time. Any members wanting to put their views forward will have plenty of opportunity between now and the time the debate has concluded. Anyone wanting to carry on a conversation, I ask you to do so in the loge or out in the halls. At this time the honourable minister to continue.

**Mr. Findlay:** The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) talked about his 30 years here. I had to remind him yesterday, another 30 years to see the debt paid off but, anyway, that is how long a period of time it is.

Governments are instruments of the people, and the democracy that we have the opportunity to practice here in Manitoba and Canada is the best in the world, in my mind. There is no question about it. The freedom to express, the freedoms of opinion, the ability to elect the people you want is a freedom not every country in this world has the opportunity to exercise. But if you look at what makes the world run, we are a global community. The previous member did identify the global economy. I think those are strange words for him to say, but in fact it is an absolute reality that no political party, no matter how they try to do it, can escape that reality.

I will remind members opposite, I use this example quite often because I think it is very important to remember, the one country, the one part of the world that tried the hardest to go the other way for 73 years was the former U.S.S.R.—no question about it, a false economy. You know, in the final years they knew that they were going the wrong way and had a hard time finding their way out of it. To their credit, they are trying to come on stream with the rest of the world.

But you know, the funniest comment and the most strange comment I ever encountered in my life was when I was over there on a trade mission in Moscow talking to senior people there, and the fellow said to me, he said, you know, we really envy you from Canada and all our relatives that went there. I said, well, you know, life has a funny way of turning, and I am very glad I am from Canada, not saying anything negative about him, and he says, you know, there is only one government in the world. I looked at him, and I could not—what was it, the U.S.? Britain? What is it? He said it is the international marketplace; that is the only government of the world.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

The member opposite kind of referred to that, saying the marketplace runs everything, and that is a fundamental fact of life. That is what runs the world. It causes the decisions to happen. It creates the opportunity to buy and sell. It creates jobs. I will tell you, in this economy in Manitoba, if we are not producing something and selling it to somebody, whether the consumer is in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Wisconsin, or Taiwan, unless there is a consumer to buy what we are producing, what economy do we have? We do not have an economy. We have the luxury today in Manitoba of 127 years as a province where we have developed our economy, broadly based, well-diversified. Yes, we are a long way away from some of our markets and that is a disadvantage, but how we have developed our province we can be very proud of.

The one element of growth or development that I am not too proud of is the accumulated debt. Now if I am running a business or I am running a household, if you have too much debt, you have a problem. [interjection] Well, the members opposite—I have heard two or three

of them say this afternoon, we should be proud we only have a small amount of debt. Well, what is the advantage of any debt? As the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) identified, members opposite—the member who is talking from the back row over there talks about—terrible thing that we paid people commissions. Well, I say it is terrible we pay interest rates to bankers—the member recently talked about how much the Royal Bank profited. Well, the Royal Bank has profits because they charge interest, and if you do not borrow money from them, you do not have to worry about interest, and it comes down to the fundamental thing. We are still paying.

Although when we came into government it was over \$600 million in interest, in this budget down to \$520 million of interest per year, still \$520 million too much, but we have turned the corner. [interjection] Mr. Acting Speaker, the member obviously never listens to what comes from this side of the House. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) identified very clearly to the members opposite when we came into government the total accumulated debt was just a little over a billion dollars. I am sorry, when they came into government, over a billion dollars. When they left, it was over \$5 billion, increased the debt by \$4 billion, and that is debt that did not go away.

**An Honourable Member:** Is it lower now?

**Mr. Findlay:** Well, which way do you want it? The member here recently said we should have more deficit. Deficit is good. I heard two or three of them say it, and you should practise that, but the interest we are paying on the \$4 billion alone is \$400 million a year. Now I ask the members opposite, would you not like to have it for all the requests you make for health, for education, for social services, for roads, for justice? Why do you not ask why do we not use that \$400 million that you ran up in interest payments on an annual basis forever—would that not be more readily available here today? [interjection] The members opposite, I have not heard a question in a long time that is not spend more.

\* (1710)

I hear the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in his speech on the Speech from the Throne—tax, spend, nationalize, tax, spend, nationalize, increase taxes,

increase expenditure, and if he cannot do it that way, then nationalize. That is your platform, pure and simple, and I welcome you to go out and tell that to the public on a continuous basis because we have all the rhetoric from you that that is your agenda. But I look across the country, as I said earlier—[interjection] Because of you. Well, every year \$500 million of interest, take that off.

I have heard other provinces say they have a balanced budget but they exclude the interest payments. Yes, well, that is cute, but when you run a household or business you cannot do that. We have included it all. We have included it all. [interjection] The member opposite is so far out of touch with reality, it almost makes me feel some sympathy towards him because he is talking in an artificial world that does not exist. It does not create a job. Running up interest does not create a job. Year over year we have had an increase of 20,000 jobs in this province, not a single improvement in terms of government jobs, nor should there be. It is all in the private sector. It is motivated by the tax policies, the policies of this government.

**An Honourable Member:** Could you just be quiet. You are annoying.

**Mr. Findlay:** With a capital A, but that is his mission in life. I mean, the last thing he ever wants to do is get on this side of the House where you have to make a decision and live with it. I mean, in opposition, it is a perfect life, a nice little—[interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is with great interest that I look at what makes this economy strong. It is job creation in the private sector. It is exporting to markets all over the world. I think it is fair to say Manitoba companies export to 120 countries in the world. Certainly, the agricultural economy goes to many of them all over the world. It is success in what we do because we are competitive, we put a high-quality product on the table, whatever that consumer wants to buy. Whether it is food or whether it is a manufactured item or whether it is a service, we have a tremendously successful private sector in Manitoba.

One of the things that motivated that private sector was a fundamental principle that I know the members opposite would love to endorse but cannot figure out

how to do it, and that is called free trade. It is called global free trade. Now, the Liberals, I remember when they were in the House here, I remember when they were in opposition in Ottawa—tear up the Free Trade Agreement; tear it up. They were just against it completely, but when the Liberals got elected in Ottawa, suddenly they endorsed it as a gift from heaven, the Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

Then we had to sign NAFTA, and to their credit, they saw the light. When you get into government, you suddenly see the world through different glasses, and the successes we have had in Manitoba in a freer trade economy is phenomenal. It is absolutely phenomenal, whether it is with the U.S. or other countries in the world. In the last six years, our exports to the U.S. have gone up 150 percent, to the world 125 percent. Now, where would we be in terms of the job market if we did not have those successes? It is fundamentally due to our ability to compete.

I remember Liberals, particularly, but members opposite there, too, when they were on this side of the House flailing against free trade because it was going to be the be-all and the end-all to destroy jobs. They were all going to go to the U.S. Palliser was one of the examples used, and guess what Palliser has done? They are just expanding and expanding. Where is their marketplace? The U.S. They even tried putting a plant in the U.S. and found it was not economical. Come back to Canada, that is success. There are so many of those success stories in manufacturing, in food, in agricultural products, going to a market where we can compete. That is how our jobs are created.

The other thing that is exceptionally interesting, and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) did identify it. The federal government which has the worse debt problem of anybody in this country has decided that maybe the agenda of provinces like Manitoba and Alberta and Ontario and Saskatchewan and the Maritime provinces is the right agenda. That is cost control, keep your taxes under control, stimulate the economy to create the jobs, to create the economic activity that we all need. It has been a successful formula. The Liberals got elected with the red book, but they governed with the blue book, and it will be interesting to watch as the next election comes, whether

they run out with another red book, but I will tell you, look behind page whatever and find the blue tinge because everybody knows that the blue book is the book that works.

I think the successful pattern that has been used by the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the previous Minister of Finance, every member on this side, is very definitely a successful pattern that other provinces are following right across this country, and I am very proud to have been part of that process. Again, I will say I am a wee bit sorry that the members opposite try to live in this never-never land, that they can socialize everything and tear everything up and somehow you will have an economy that will run. It just fundamentally will not work. They know it themselves, and that is why they get the sort of headlines that they got from the paper back, oh I know the member from Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants to talk about MTS, but do you remember that headline, Mr. Doer is wrong, Mr. Doer is wrong, Mr. Doer is wrong? The concluding statement in that was, and he knows he is wrong. And he knows he is wrong, and he knows it.

The other day the members opposite tried to make an allegation or somehow because somebody made political donations that the government leaned their way, and then they drew this kind of a headline, Sleazy tactics, and then the next day, what is the Leader of the Opposition's first question in Question Period? How could we co-operate? I mean it is just so hypocritical. How incredibly hypocritical. I can see the back rooms they said, whoops, that did not work. We did not snow them with that one because this is not a good headline if you are a government-in-waiting, and boy your wait is a long time, to the member from Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), a long time, because the public is so much smarter than this kind of sleazy approach to try to be an opposition party. If you want to bring up fundamentally new ways of doing things, do it, but do not run in after this and say, now we want to co-operate. You have not got a credible bit of evidence that you can co-operate with anybody because you are out of touch, completely out of touch with reality.

Now, when it comes down to the word "co-operating," that is so important today. Whether it is in my ministry, previously in Agriculture, today in Transportation, you have to co-operate with the other

players, whether it is the private sector, whether it is other provinces, whether it is the federal government. If you do not co-operate, you do not get as much done as you could otherwise. I have had the occasion in the last couple of years to have a lot of meetings with municipal levels of government, other business leaders, people that are out there in the scene of the action.

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

We constantly try to be efficient in how we do things, particularly in the standpoint of transportation and building roads, because if we are not efficient we are not going to get as much done as we should. The demand out there is exceptionally high, and the demand is driven by this economy that has really heated up, that we get the headlines that Manitoba is growing, Manitoba is strong, Manitoba is doing well, and that means a lot more activity on our roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is fair to say that in rural Manitoba in particular, and quite obviously the city of Winnipeg is benefiting from this too, you see a tremendous expansion in trucking-related jobs. Trucking-related jobs, because we have a more diversified economy out there, we have more value-added industry and we have product moving every which way, north, south, east, west, from place of production or harvesting, whether it is lumber, timber, mineral, moving to a processing and moving to a consumer. The trucking industry is responding big time and doing a good job, but it is pressure on our roads. There is no question, it is pressure on our roads, on municipal roads; it is pressure on provincial roads.

I wish I could say it is pressure on federal roads, but the federal government never acknowledges that they really have any responsibility in roads. That is unfortunate because we have worked since 1988, the previous Minister of Transportation and myself, with the other provinces right across this country, to get some federal support and help in dealing with our road impact because for the members opposite this is kind of an interesting statistic that 5 percent of our road network in Manitoba is Highways 1, 16, 75, Perimeter; our major north, south, east, west, you know, it carries an awful lot of the truck traffic. Five percent of our network carries 29 percent of our provincial traffic.

That is the network that we want some federal support on. We have been at it for eight, going on nine years. To this point, the answer is still no. If the members look in our budget, you will see approximately \$3.4 million less in our capital budget. It is simply the federal money that was there last year is down to zero this year.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

\* (1720)

The federal government is not contributing anything towards highways in Manitoba, very little in any other province of the country. It is a shame because they collect taxes out of the system, but are not supporting the rebuilding of the system. We worked long and hard on that. Clearly to say I am disappointed is an understatement, but the impact on the system is still out there and as a province we respond as best we can.

I have talked consistently with municipalities over the last couple of years about how we can work together, and I can report that a lot of municipalities are starting to appreciate that their problem and our problem is the same problem. We have economic activity related particularly to commercial truck activity. We have the impacts on our roads and how we respond to, and what kind of system will we want to have 10 or 20 years down the road, clearly a system that is at least equal to today and maybe better from the standpoint of safety and in terms of efficiency of travel.

This is a long discussion. I met in Winkler about two months ago, a meeting that was called by KAP to talk about this issue of rural roads, particularly, and the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) can appreciate this. The municipalities were there, I was there, farmers were there, and members of my caucus were there. It was a good, open discussion, no finger pointing, just the reality of what we face. None of those problems will go away unless we start to address them in a fashion that levers a little more money.

The municipalities, to their credit, are prepared to come on board and participate in a more active way of helping us on our network, and many are doing that. The member opposite may like to criticize us because we try to do contracts in municipalities for

maintenance, and there are hundreds of them across the province, some of them recently initiated, some having been there for sometime, and as I met with a particular municipality this morning, they had a contract over the last winter for snow clearance in their towns and were very happy with it. They admit they are spending more money than we used to spend, but they are happy because they have a level that they are comfortable with.

It is a win-win-win. We save some money. They get the job done, and our staff can concentrate on the major network, that network between towns, and let the municipalities concentrate, the towns and villages, on that network in town, where they are prepared to do it, and it is always a willing agreement. Most of these contracts, to the member for Interlake, are motivated because they come forward and they say it makes sense; let us do it. [interjection] Well, the member talks about shutting yards down. Well, we are not shutting down one inch of road. We are not reducing the amount of grading or snow clearing by one iota. Everything in terms of work on the network stays the same.

Now, does the member opposite want the network to work better, or does he just want yards and jobs?

**An Honourable Member:** What is important?

**Mr. Findlay:** The important thing is that the network functions for the good of the users, and therein creates the employment of the people who maintain it and the employment of the people who use it.

Our mission is to be sure that we have a good road network properly maintained in the summer, properly maintained in the winter. That is what Highways and Transportation is about, and the person opposite is worried just about yards. I think he is missing the message.

**An Honourable Member:** I am worried about roads, too.

**Mr. Findlay:** Oh, now he is worried about roads, too. Now, which is it, yards or roads?

**An Honourable Member:** Both.



**Mr. Findlay:** Okay, and we have both. We have both right across the province. The network that we need to maintain is going to stay the same. If there are more efficient ways to do it to save money, so you can save some money on maintenance to put more gravel on or save money in maintenance to do another 10 miles of paving. That is success in addressing the major need of the network.

I want to say to the member, think that one through carefully because you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have jobs, jobs, jobs and that pay salaries. You have to have jobs that do the work, that maintain the network, to improve it to the point of the users feeling that you have maximized their safety.

**An Honourable Member:** You are saying that people who are doing the jobs right now cannot do the jobs.

**Mr. Findlay:** No. The member opposite may want to say that, but it is from his mouth, and from this side we are saying everybody who is out there now has done an excellent job.

I want to tell the member that over the last three years that I have been in this department, I am hearing more and more positive comments, particularly in the municipalities who meet—we have 80 to 100 meetings a year of the municipalities—saying very positive things about the motivation of the staff in the Department of Highways, our response to their needs and our ability to get the job done. They are saying that consistently. [interjection]

Well, the member opposite loses me in his logic, because first he wants to go here, then he wants to go there. By the way, while other provinces across this country, in terms of their process of budgeting, feel sometimes the easiest thing to reduce expenditures is reduce capital allocated in their budget, this government has not done that. It has not done that on roads. It has not done that in the overall capital investment which is over \$300 million a year. I think this budget has \$370 million devoted to capital whether it is roads, schools, hospitals, that sort of thing. We are spending around \$100 million. It sounds like a lot of money to most people, but when it costs you in the vicinity of \$200,000 to \$300,000, maybe in some cases

\$400,000 per kilometre—grade, gravel, pavement—it does not go very far.

So, all I am saying to the members opposite, we work as hard as we can, our staff particularly, whether it is working with the private sector or whether it is working with the municipalities to come up with the most efficient model that serves the basic need, and that is to maximize our ability to maintain the system and to invest in the capital replacement. A bridge, I will give you an example of a bridge. The members opposite may not like my choice, but the Letellier bridge across the Red River. It is maybe going to be challenged by flood this year. It certainly was challenged last year. It is an older bridge, it requires replacement. It is a \$10-million job, \$10 million. That is 10 percent of my capital budget; that is how significant it is. It is probably a half, well, probably a third of a kilometre long, and I have 18,000 kilometres to look after in total. Those are major challenges.

The members opposite, Thompson particularly, talk about the North. We have had a lot of meetings with people in the North to try to address their needs. In response to that, particularly on 391, a very effective committee process has come into place, and we have elevated the level of funding to those roads in the North where we have 11 percent of the network, we have 11 percent of the capital investment. Now I know, they will say never enough, never enough, but everybody in the south says the same thing. When you have \$11-million requests and \$100 million to serve it with, it is a challenge to serve everybody. But we try consistently—[interjection] Pardon me? [interjection]

It was 11 percent last budget, 11 percent this budget, of the total capital was spent in the North. When we talk to people in the North, they are very understanding and appreciative of that. But I want to stress that I know I do not serve everybody's needs all the time, but we try to spread it all over the province all the time so any particular region can always identify we are doing this project here and that project there. It is a consensus of a lot of discussion. [interjection] Well, weather has a tendency to get in the way of—you know, we get criticism, but the funniest criticism I got on a particular highway, we got criticized because we are not building out, we are not building on it, and then when we are out there building on it we get criticized

because, hey, you are interfering with the tourist traffic. When are you going to build the road if it is not in the summertime? I mean, it is just—[interjection] Well, I do not get criticized anywhere for building too many roads.

\* (1730)

Madam Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes talking about some of the broader global activities that are happening in the transportation area. Particularly, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has addressed certainly an issue that is of significant concern, and that is the aviation fuel tax which he has lowered by approximately 25 percent, from 4.2 percent to 3.2 percent. It will be a significant stimulus to the activity at the airport here. The airport which is now run by local people has been divested from the federal government to local control. I look forward to great potential activities at that airport as that becomes more the node of economic activity in the overall transportation context. In addition to just the general activity at the airport, clearly the principle of Winnport has been very well accepted that it is a way of having the new economy unfold for the betterment of Winnipeg and Manitobans.

Clearly it is a global picture. It is moving product, cargo from Asia through North America to Europe and back. That concept has taken a lot of work to develop. Lynn Bishop and Hubert Kleysen and all those people have done an excellent job. There are still many hurdles to overcome to have that come into fruition but, having just met with them very recently, I have tremendous confidence that they are able and willing to handle and deal with the hurdles.

It will certainly take a significant amount of effort on behalf of the federal government to see this happen, because one of the things that they really need is air bilateral agreements, in other words, gate access in various countries outside of Canada and within Canada. Clearly in terms of what you see going on more recently in terms of Greyhound as a supplier of passenger service, very positive for the consumer, the price is right and the service is there. Certainly Air Canada and Canadian did not like that competitor and fought against them. I hope that as Winnport goes for air bilaterals that the big airlines do not try to get in the

way or prevent those air bilaterals from being developed for Winnport, because it is so critical to creating a whole new economy of several thousand jobs in Manitoba but, more particularly, in Winnipeg.

This is a new vision, a vision that initiated in the private sector and is strongly supported by the City of Winnipeg, municipal councils around Winnipeg, the province and the federal government. So I want to stress that whatever I talk about, fundamentally we are talking partnerships to do things differently. If the members opposite cannot see the world in 1997 as different from the world in the 1970s, I beg you to reconsider how you view the world, because it has changed, fundamentally changed. It is not about me versus you, it is how we work together in partnerships, government and the private sector to move the economy of this province and this country forward in this global community. That is not going to go away. It is giving our young people opportunity to be employed here. It is giving them a necessary education.

The world is about continuous learning. The technology we have in the telecom area is phenomenal in terms of being able to be in contact. I mean, I was at a meeting here last week. There would be about 60, 70 people in the room. I said, how many people in this room are on the Internet? Just took a shot, and I would say 10 percent of the hands went up. I was quite impressed. I asked them, do you get good things off it? Some of them said, well, it is questionable what we get off it, but the fact that you are using the technology is the critical, important thing. No matter whether you are getting good things off it today, there are good things that can come in the way of broader knowledge in the world, contact across the world and the ability to do business and to have a better life because of it.

May I ask how much time I have left? Seven minutes.

One other thing I would like to say that I am pleased that has developed in Manitoba and, again, it is a partnership gain, and that is the development of 911 for rural Manitoba. Previously Winnipeg and Brandon had it, run by those two municipalities. Madam Speaker, 911 is known around the world as an emergency response number, easy to dial, and it works very well in

Winnipeg and Brandon. The City of Brandon, to their credit, saw an opportunity to develop what one might call for lack of a better term a call centre to call 911. They have worked with municipalities right across this province to sign them up to be the service provider. A large percentage have already signed up, more are signing up and, ultimately, you will see 911 across this province. It is just good for safety. It is good for safety response, and I think you have to give Brandon credit for having taken the leadership.

Now, through the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) and REDI grants, we advanced to them a significant amount of money as a start-up to get them going. Once it is going, it will be a user-pay process, the municipalities will pay so much per capita, and the individuals of the signed-up municipalities pay so much per month, approved by CRTC, on their phone bill. Nonetheless, the process is there, it will be paid for by the users. There is not a government subsidy, and it is there to serve the customers in those different municipalities.

Well, Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to be part of a government that has been able to—

**Mr. Enns:** Do the right thing.

**Mr. Findlay:** —do the right thing, as the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) said, who has been around some 30 years. He has seen the comings and goings of government, but I would have to ask the member for Lakeside if the last 10 have been the toughest 10 years of his—

**Mr. Enns:** Yes.

**Mr. Findlay:** And he answers yes, and that I appreciate. But, no matter what the opposition has said about how we have governed, the public has responded with bigger and bigger mandates. As we talk to people at meetings in this building and across the province, there is a growing understanding that the path we have laid is the only path that will make this a strong economy for their children and their own children. We are only here for a short time, but our mission is to be sure, as our grandparents did to us, pass us a better standard of living.

The current generation that is in school today may not have quite as good a standard of living as their parents, mainly based on the debt of this country. It comes right back to that time and again, because if you are paying money in interest, you are not spending the money on services, as I would like to spend it on roads, as the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) would like to spend it, as the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) would like to spend it, as the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) would like to spend it.

So it comes right down to that. You have to manage your affairs. I do not accept any of the comments opposite that say, well, we just have a small debt. We should be proud we only have a small debt. I only think we can be proud when we have no debt, and through this government we are on that path, the first payment since 1950 against the debt, some \$75 million, which I am very proud of. The fact that we have lowered the hospital capital debt by \$150 million from the sale of MTS, I am very proud that that has happened. We are starting to turn the corner of freeing up money for spending on the essential services that we must spend.

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to support this budget, and I know we will be back for many more budget speeches in this House from this side of the House. Thank you.

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** It is a pleasure to stand in the House today and put a few words on the record in terms of this government's most recent budget, and I speak on behalf of the people of Dauphin.

I also want to begin by congratulating the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) on actually putting a hand forward in talking in a co-operative way to us folks across the Legislature. My parents and my grandparents taught me that anyone who has some experience at a particular job, who has a lot of experience at the things at which they do well, deserves to be listened to, and that is how I consider the comments put forward by the Minister of Agriculture.

I want to point out, though, that to every coin there are two sides and that both sides of the House, if they take the member for Lakeside's theory and apply it in an objective way, have to see that any one of the 57 MLAs

can approach this budget in an open-minded, fair, objective way. Any member in the House can vote how they like when it comes budget time, when it comes next week, and we can think very—[interjection] Everything was going well until the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) started talking. The Minister of Agriculture had set it out so well, in such a very co-operative manner, and now the Minister of Education maybe cannot handle all the co-operative talk that her colleague the member for Lakeside has come up with, and she feels this need to chirp from her seat and try to knock off this co-operative spirit that the Minister of Agriculture has set.

Next week, when we go to vote on this budget, it will be my hope that the member for Lakeside and others across the way will take a good, hard look at what is in this budget, and maybe my objective for today would be to at least get some of the members across the way to take the blinkers off, look at some other alternatives other than the same old gruel that they have been feeding the people of Manitoba.

Now, I am perfectly willing to consider the comments of the Minister of Agriculture in a very serious way, consider the co-operative manner in which they were put forth. I am hoping that the other side of the House will do the same.

What I have gotten used to in the almost two years that I have been here is simply clichés coming from the other side, myths being portrayed by the other side, demonization and personalization instead of the good, rational, logical discussion of all the alternatives that are out there that the people of Manitoba should be considering when it comes time for the budget.

Now I am going to be straightforward in saying that the Speech from the Throne, which I understand is to run in tandem with the budget, was a heartless, cynical, arrogant Speech from the Throne. It does not mean that the budget has to be that way, so I am absolutely willing to take the budget, think about the budget all by itself, not in tandem with that Speech from the Throne that put forth the cynical views and hopelessness of this government. I am willing to take a look at that budget, and I am willing to dissect it and see what it really stands for, and we will make our decision from there.

\* (1740)

The first thing that I think members across the way should take a good look at is the way in which, yet again, the business community, and not small business but larger businesses in this province have benefited through yet another tax break from this government. This is not something that the Tories' spin doctors should be talking in terms of good for small business. Small business already was exempt from the payroll tax. That is already there. We are talking larger businesses, businesses with a payroll of three-quarters of a million to a million. The exemption is already there for small business.

So, again, what we are doing with this budget, if I decide to vote for it—like the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) thinks that I should—I would be voting for a budget that has taken money out of health care and out of education and out of job creation like the member for Lakeside wants to talk about, and I would be saying it is okay to take that money and put it into the hands of larger businesses in this province.

I want to point out that the member for Lakeside is asking me to do something which is not within the principles of what I believe in. My principles that I believe in suggest that we do not need to be putting money into the hands of those who are already wealthy. We should be looking at helping the students in our schools get textbooks. We should be looking at making sure that the classroom sizes are at a decent level. We should be looking to provide decent health care services for people in our towns and in our cities.

So the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is really asking me to do something that I just do not believe in, and I do not think that members across the way, if they really looked at this in an objective fashion, would see it any other way either. I think most of the members across the way would agree with me. So I think that is a good reason for the Minister of Agriculture to vote with us, to vote with us against the budget.

Sixteen million dollars in business breaks are included in this budget, \$3.6 million to individual taxpayers, \$4.5 million in business subsidies. At the same time, this government cuts hospitals, cuts schools and cuts universities. I realize it is a very tough choice

for members across the way to have to make, a very tough choice between funding health care, schools and universities or providing a tax break to the business community that funds them election after election after election.

But this government says it prides itself in making those tough choices. What is so tough about it, I want to know. When it comes down to choosing where you are going to put the priorities of a government, for my money, I am going to put it into health care and into education, and I am going to put it into universities. If the Minister of Agriculture took a good, hard, serious look at this budget, he would see that on this point I am right, and that if he was serious about being co-operative and serious about me considering the facts and voting in favour of his budget, then what he would do, instead of relying on old worn-out Tory cliches, unless the whip is on over there from the boss, would also vote with us against this budget.

Let us see what else this budget did. Last year in the fall, last session, they take a Crown corporation known as Manitoba Telephone System and they sell it. A whole bunch of stockbrokers make a lot of money. Jaguar sales go up in Winnipeg. They sell this Crown corporation, a Crown corporation that served Manitoba well for a lot of years, and what did they do with the money that they got from this Crown corporation? They used the money that they raised to make their budget look good this year. They made their budget look so good that they were able to take \$100 million out of that money that they raised through the shares of MTS and they used this money as a form of tax break again for the business community. They also used it to make it look like they could manage money. They used the simple sale of the Manitoba Telephone System to make their own figures look good. Madam Speaker, that is deceitful.

**An Honourable Member:** What would you have done with the money?

**Mr. Struthers:** I would not have sold it in the first place.

The government in the budget is taking credit for paying down \$75 million of the debt. Madam Speaker,

I have a mortgage on my house, and I do not like that mortgage any more than anybody likes the amount of debt that the province has—[interjection]

**An Honourable Member:** Are you paying it off?

**Mr. Struthers:** The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is asking me if I am paying off that mortgage. You bet I am paying off that mortgage, but I am eating at the same time, I am not selling my furniture, I am not selling a part of the lawn, I am not selling the garage. I am doing it in a very planned, very methodical, very deliberate way. I am not going to live all winter in my camper-trailer in Vermilion Park just to pay off my mortgage, which is what this government is doing. Fortunately, Vermilion Park is not subject to the cruel and drastic increases in fees that this government has hit the other parks with.

After thinking about this, while the government has sold MTS and then taken \$100 million of that money and applied it to their fiscal position, they claim that they are going to have a surplus of \$27 million. You take the \$75 million that they are using to pay down their debt, add on the \$27 million that they claim is going to be their surplus, that is a total of \$102 million. The member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) can check that on his calculator just to make sure my figures are correct, but I think they are right. You have drawn down \$100 million and you have \$102 million on the other side. What is the difference? Why are you bragging about something that is only \$2 million? You are asking me earlier today, you are asking me to support something that is minuscule.

Here is something else that the members across the way have asked me to endorse. They have asked me to endorse their cuts to health care because that is contained within this budget too. There are cuts to health spending in this budget, and that is bad enough as it is, but what really irks people is the way the government plays these little shell games. They cut the health spending in the budget, and they try to make out like they have actually increased health spending.

\* (1750)

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, now you see it, now you don't.

**Mr. Struthers:** Exactly. What they do not tell you is the \$81 million that they had to spend in additional funding last January. What it produces is a \$66-million cut to health care. Now, members opposite, I am positive members opposite do not want to be cutting health care. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is asking me to support a budget that cuts health by \$66 million. How could any of us support a budget that cuts health to the tune of \$66 million? I have seniors in Dauphin who depend on me to speak against this government and in favour of decent health care. I am speaking on behalf of the people in Ste. Rose as well because somebody has to tell them, somebody has to tell them that the cuts of \$66 million just are not acceptable. I will speak on behalf of seniors, young families that are being attracted to Dauphin because of a lot of the things that we in Dauphin are doing. Young families are in need of a decent health care system, and you want me to vote in favour of a \$66-million cut to health?

Now, the one thing that I want to point out is that I have done the figuring on this. A lot of people have done the figuring on this. The one though that is going to figure this out and straighten this all away, as per usual, is the Provincial Auditor. When there are audits done—and I know that maybe some members across the way get a little nervous when we talk about audits at the same time as we talk about their budgets, because then all the shell games can maybe be exposed. But those figures will be audited and we will see, as we have seen in past years, that the Provincial Auditor has a lot more trust, has a lot more credibility than the government who is working on a political cycle with a political document, who really wants to get re-elected next time and knows what the polls are saying because they do a lot of polling themselves. They know that they have got to start coming across as a kinder and gentler kind of a party as opposed to an extremist, hard-line, heartless government that they have been painted as.

The other thing that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is asking me do, he so eloquently asked us to do earlier this afternoon, was support a budget that underestimates surpluses. He wants us to support a budget that underestimates growth. Why would I want to do that? Why would I want to support something that just is not true? The other thing that they have

done is that they have estimated revenues to be at 2 percent and they have projected them to be 2.8 percent. Now why would a government do this? I think all the members across the way know; they understand what is going on here. I think they understand, they know that these revenues are underestimated. We have made the point from this side of the House over the last couple of days between the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), absolutely made the point that these revenues are not accurate, and everybody knows why the government is doing this. They are doing this to show a surplus—to minimize the surplus that they are showing and then turn around and say we are in such tough times we have to cut health care, we have to cut education, we have to cut university, we have to offload.

I mean, earlier on we listened to how the federal government was being criticized for offloading its responsibilities on to the province. The best example that you can come across in this whole offloading debate that seems to go back and forth between Ottawa and Winnipeg these days is to look at what is happening in transportation. Now, I think members across the way make some good points when they criticize the federal Liberal government for the offloading of rail lines that they are doing, abandoning one rail line after the next.

So that lands here in Winnipeg because now we are going to be moving our grain and our logs and our cattle and all the hogs that are going to be produced under the Agriculture minister's plan. We are going to be moving them on our highways. That is going to be an increased cost to this government.

So what does this government do? I mean, it has already complained about the federal Liberals offloading. So this governments turns and takes the highways and dumps them onto the R.M.s. Is that not offloading? It certainly is. They have taken provincial roads, dumped it onto the R.M.s. The R.M.s now have to decide what they are going to do with these roads. Are we going to continue to maintain these roads or are we going to up our local taxes to cover it? Same choice as the federal government left you.

So the R.M.s now are faced with the prospect of having to raise taxes, because this is the other deceitful

part of the budget. Taxes are being raised in this budget. Taxes have been raised last year and the year before by this government, but they do not have the nerve to stand up and say that they are doing it, because in the next provincial election they want big signs outside of my town in Dauphin saying what a wonderful provincial government. I do not know whether they will say the Filmon team this year, because last election he was a plus and next time he will be a negative, but they want this sign saying, welcome to Dauphin, vote Progressive Conservative. We have held the line on taxes for 11 years.

Well, 11 years, last time it was seven years and you offloaded everything. You have cut universities, so that they have to make up the difference through tuition fees. You have dumped more costs down onto school divisions; \$43.5 million in the last four or five years has been cut out of Education. It is exactly true and you are counting on local school boards to step in and raise the taxes that you do not have the guts to raise, and you want me to vote in favour of that.

Another example of what you want me to support in this budget was something that over the last couple of days the Natural Resources minister and myself have been talking back and forth on during Question Period and that involves park fees. That involves fishing licences and the fees.

Well, let us look at what this government has done. The government, in its frenzy not to raise taxes on its friends and business, its frenzy to try to put forth the myth that they have not raised taxes, have turned to putting camping fees up drastically. They have increased the seasonal camping rates to drastic levels. They have done away with seniors' passes. They have eliminated the pass for seniors to go into our parks, and now they have increased the fishing licence fees and now include seniors. Seniors, the people who built this province in the first place, they are now including seniors in the fee schedule for fishing licences. What was the reason we were given way back last spring for this increase in rates?

Well, we were told, I was told in Question Period almost a year ago, that this money would go back into developing and maintaining and operating our parks.

**An Honourable Member:** Did you believe that, Stan?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, some people may have believed it and I was willing to believe it, but after looking in the budget and the line in the budget from last Friday, I can see that it did not work that way. That money did not go back into parks and buildings and making improvement to our parks like we were told it was going to do. It is not projected to go there next year. Where is that money going? Out of \$1.6 million, \$300,000 is going back into Parks, and I will give that much credit to the government across the way. There is \$1.3 million sitting there now. Where is that money going? It is not going back into camp tables or picnic tables or docks or facilities or whatever Parks need.

**An Honourable Member:** Where is it going?

**Mr. Struthers:** It is going back into general revenue so that this government can say that it has not raised taxes. [interjection] A recreation tax. It is a tax grab. That is what the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) wants me to vote for next week. I do not know if I can do that.

**Mr. Enns:** It was an outside chance, but I tried it.

**Mr. Struthers:** And it was an honourable try.

The cynicism of this budget is really what strikes me. The other day when I was speaking on the Speech from the Throne, I paid particular attention to the programs announced in this budget that have to do with the aboriginal people in Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin will have 17 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

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