



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

DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

40 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 14, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I expect to establish a *prima facie* case of privilege based on an attempt by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to prevent me from exercising my responsibilities as a member of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, there are two conditions that we need to take into consideration, the first being the timeliness of the raising of this matter, and I can inform you, Sir, that the incident that I am about to describe took place at eleven o'clock this morning. This is my first opportunity to raise this matter before the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, every member of this Legislature carries with them the responsibility of acting in the best interests of the people of this province. As members we often come into possession of information which the government of the day may not wish us to have, information which all too often points out certain failings on the part of the government.

Mr. Speaker, some time ago I came into possession of certain information which detailed a very serious situation in the Department of Finance. The information proved conclusively that the Department of Finance was aware that certain businesses in this province are collecting more money from customers under the pretense of collecting provincial sales tax than they are required to collect. The companies are remitting to the government the amount which they owe the government, and they are keeping the rest. Unsuspecting consumers are paying what they believe to be taxes due the province, which are then going to enhance the profit of the companies involved. This is not a simple allegation. It has been admitted to by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in Public Accounts Committee last month.

Despite admitting knowledge of this practice, the minister has refused to take action to compel the companies to rebate the excess taxes to their customers. Instead, he has begun a campaign of intimidation, attempting to prevent myself, among others, from continuing to expose the incompetence of his management of the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance will attempt to make the case that the information disclosed was confidential and therefore should not have been shared, that the staff of the department should avail themselves of internal mechanisms to redress these issues. That is precisely what occurred. The individuals involved attempted to address their concerns, and there are many concerns within this department. They were rebuffed by senior management within the department and they were left with the dilemma, how do they weigh the rights of an individual against the rights of all of their customers. Finally, they approached myself among others with this information.

* (1335)

At no time was any identifying information revealed. At no time was the identity of the corporations involved in this particular allegation revealed. Despite that, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has seen fit to instruct the police to enter my office this morning and interview me on this matter.

The matter of privilege is defined and discussed in some detail in most of the books on parliamentary rules and forms. Beauchesne defines it, as I know you are aware, as: The sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each member of the House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by members of each House individually, without which—and this is the point, Mr. Speaker—they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies and individuals.

Privilege is the right of a member to discharge his duties in the House as a member of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the opposition. One of my duties is to represent the people of this province when I find the government acting in a way

that contravenes the best interests of the people of this province. I have the right to have free access to people who wish to bring forward information like that. To have the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) intimidating myself and the people who may wish to bring information to me is simply a breach of the privileges that I enjoy as a member of this House.

Mr. Speaker, given that the actions of the Minister of Finance may deter members from exercising their rights and privileges as members of the Legislature—and I want to reference a number of cases. There was a case decided in this Legislature some time ago on an issue as simple as a member's right to his constituents physically within this building, and it was decided in the favour of the member. There was an issue raised by the current Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), when he was in opposition, where he came into possession of documents as a result of a break and enter, and the police were not sent in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Alcock: —to investigate in that case. Another time the members opposite, when in opposition, used tax information to condemn a former minister of the former government.

Mr. Speaker, at no time were the tactics undertaken that this government has undertaken.

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek your direction.

I hesitate to interrupt the honourable member in raising what he believes to be an extremely serious matter. In doing so, though, the honourable member makes allegations about intimidation and other allegations, on his feet, in the course of speaking to his question of privilege, which in the ordinary course I suggest would be unparliamentary and contrary to the order of our House.

I would certainly want to raise that as a point of order. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if the honourable member is talking about a police investigation, which might or might not, but it might very well have potential for court proceedings in the future, then the raising of this matter would, I suggest, come under the sub judice rules of debate. I also suggest that we ought to be very cautious and

careful in public discussions of matters that are under police investigation and possible court proceedings for fear of jeopardizing those proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable acting government House leader, and I would remind the honourable member for Osborne that our rules do apply even though a matter of privilege is a very serious matter. I would ask the honourable member for Osborne to be careful of the words that he has chosen in order to address the Chair on this remark.

Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to know at what earliest opportunity I can obtain the Hansard of the words just spoken by my honourable friend, because in those words he misled the House grievously.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Health, the Chair will undertake to have those remarks made available as soon as we possibly can.

* * *

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, let me respond to the allegations raised by the Minister of Health by quoting from Tuesday, 11th of April, 1985, Hansard, unchallenged by the Minister of Health at that time.

* (1340)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have recognized the honourable member for Osborne to deal with a matter of privilege. The honourable member is given an opportunity to state the facts that are necessary to prove to the Chair that a *prima facie* case does exist. I would ask the honourable member for Osborne to keep his remarks relevant to said question.

Mr. Alcock: I will reference that remark to this extent, that if one looks in the Hansard from that day, one will notice that a very serious allegation—similar to the allegations that the Minister of Finance has made—was made, not proven, not confirmed, but no police. So I withdraw any suggestion that the Minister of Health took the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Alcock: I withdraw any suggestion that the Minister of Health took the report himself. There was a suggestion made in here, a statement by a minister of the Crown, that the office was broken into and a report was taken. Despite that, no police investigation was undertaken. The police were not sent in to investigate the member who had possession of the report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. This is a very serious matter.

Mr. Alcock: In conclusion, I would simply say that the actions of the Minister of Finance may deter members from exercising their rights and privileges as members of this Legislature.

I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr), that this Legislature censure the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) for his attempted intimidation of a member of this Legislature.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am going to attempt to cast some light on this situation, bearing in mind the very wise words just provided by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that no way do I want to say something that somehow may harm the investigation or in any way interfere with the due process of law.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand in part—only in part—some of the outrage of the member, but let me say, tough decisions have to be made at times. On February 1, as a result of a number of press reports that documents, or photostatic documents, had been removed from the Taxation Division within the Department of Finance, I asked my deputy, Charlie Curtis, to approach the Attorney General's office and to determine—so as to determine, I should say—as to how best to handle a situation that could possibly lead to a lack of public confidence in our ability. When I say the word "our," I mean in government's ability to maintain the integrity of personal files. In this case, personal tax files.

Mr. Speaker, we were advised to call in the authorities so as to protect, not only tax files, but all confidential information of government, much of what is allowed to not be made public under The Ombudsman Act and The Freedom of Information Act. We decided and were advised to call in the police. Once an investigation had started,

departmental officials, the deputy minister and indeed myself as minister could not and would not interfere with that process.

I was interviewed yesterday by police as to all pertinent information that I had on the case. I felt I had no choice, nor would I wish to do anything other than to tell the truth, including, as the member has just suggested—as he told the world today—that he had delivered to me a document he believed was stolen. Those are the facts. I have no choice other than to comply with the police investigation once the government in protection of all of its documents, which have to be maintained in an integral fashion, to maintain their safekeeping on behalf of Manitobans.

What I find totally incredible, Mr. Speaker, is that two days ago in this House I was subjected to all the fearmongering associated with the divestiture of Manitoba Data Services to STM and the possible, in the small minds of some, violation of personal health files, to name one sensitive area. Yet today I am criticized, and I would say almost victimized by way of some of the comments in the paper for acting to protect the security around and the integrity of sensitive tax files. Incredible that a person in my place would be expected to close a blind eye in one case of sensitive documentation and yet stop a deal because of the possibility—again, in the small minds of some—of a medical file leak.

* (1345)

Mr. Speaker, all I ask is for the indulgence of the House to understand that when government is dealing with sensitive documents that there is some requirement on all of us who deal with them to treat them in that fashion. I have the highest regard for the member when he walked into my office, and I have not told a soul other than the police yesterday and my deputy. Nobody else in these benches even knows that that member walked into my office on January 30 and laid a document on my desk and said to me, I will not deal in stolen documents. My regard for that member raised significantly, but when the police ask me the truth, and come into my office, I tell them the truth.

I find it intolerable that some member of the House would stand up and say that we are asking the police to do their dirty work. This is the law, a matter of law. This is a matter of a police investigation and when I am interrogated by the police I tell the truth.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, a matter of privilege I think, as all members know, ought rarely come up in the Legislature. In this particular case, I think what we are dealing with is indeed what I would suggest a *prima facie* case of privilege and indeed probably a number of other matters as well which perhaps should not be dealt with in terms of a matter of privilege but are nonetheless serious matters.

I think it is important to separate—the government House leader talked about the integrity of tax files. That indeed is a matter that he should have a great concern of as Minister of Finance; I do not think anybody is questioning that. There is no question the tax files should be kept confidential in the same way as he pointed out. Health records, other records should be kept confidential.

I think the point that is being raised by the member is that his role as a member of the Legislature is being breached by the police investigation and he has raised his concern directly about that matter. I would point, Mr. Speaker, to Beauchesne, and I hope that members will bear with me for just one moment as I read the definition originally from Erskine May, it is Beauchesne's Citation 24, because I think that outlines perhaps most completely what a matter of privilege is, and it "... is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus, privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the ordinary law. The distinctive mark of a privilege is its ancillary character. The privileges of Parliament are rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers.' They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members; and by each House for the protection of its Members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity."

The member has raised the matter of privilege related to the fact that he was interviewed by the police related to an investigation resulting from the leak of tax files. Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne's Citations 72 and 74 deals in the context of the House of Commons directly with investigations, within the precincts of Parliament. I would point to Citations 72

and 74, particularly Citation 72 which says, "It is still not clear whether the House of Commons regards as contempt the presence of Members of federal, provincial or local police forces within the precincts of Parliament without the consent of the Speaker."

So there is some question as indicated by that citation as to whether such investigation should even take place in the precincts of Parliament and I would suggest by extension the precincts of the Manitoban Legislature.

* (1350)

I wish to remind members, who perhaps have forgotten, why we have such protection of the privileges of individual members. It is part of the parliamentary tradition. Need I refer back several hundred years to the time in which sovereigns in the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker, would attempt, if they did not like the performance of Parliament—its views on various issues—to arrest members. I do not wish to go into how so much of parliamentary tradition has developed out of the protection of members, indeed even from the sovereign, and indeed even from the normal process of the law. That is the issue we are dealing with here.

The member had access to certain information. He had concerns about the practices of the Department of Finance and expressed those concerns. If that member can now be subject to police investigation, related in his case to nothing more—there is no suggestion that that member stole the files, but if this type of process can continue the next step is that other members who have access to information, who have concerns about particular issues, will not speak out.

Indeed, what is the most fundamental privilege of individual members of the House but the freedom of speech. That is why the member has raised what I believe is a matter of privilege, both in regard to the actions of the police investigation and in regard to his right as a member to freedom of speech. The process, as members should know, is to determine whether there is indeed a *prima facie* case and I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, there is a clear *prima facie* case. I would suggest to the government House leader, I would urge the government House leader to recognize, and to the Attorney General to distinguish between the two issues. Yes, indeed, integrity of tax files should be maintained, but not at the expense of the privileges of members of the Legislature, whether it be the member for Osborne

(Mr. Alcock) or any other of the 56 members. That is why I believe and I would urge you to consider the fact there is indeed a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable acting government House leader, on the question of privilege.

Mr. McCrae: On the question of privilege raised by the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), Mr. Speaker, I do not want the occasion to pass without my expressing my feeling of surprise and shock that the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would rise in his place in this House and suggest—not somehow suggest, but clearly suggest—that members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are somehow different from any other Manitoban in this province; they are somehow above the law. When quite a legally and properly instituted—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I have indicated—order, please.

Mr. McCrae: From my understanding of what transpired, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member for Osborne played a role in this matter and then when it comes time for the matter to be properly and duly investigated by a properly and duly constituted law enforcement agency, somehow the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is saying that, because the honourable member for Osborne is a member of this Chamber, he ought not to be bothered by the police or interviewed by the police in dealing with an investigation which—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): The member from his seat has stated that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) played a part. I am assuming that the member is not impugning any action or indicating any action by the part of the member for Osborne.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts. The honourable acting government House leader.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Let me hasten to assure the Leader of the Liberal Party that under no circumstance would

I be making such a suggestion. Not at all. My colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has made plain, I believe, the way he felt the honourable member for Osborne conducted himself, and it was above reproach in his estimation. So let that be very clear.

My comments are directed at the comments raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I do not want to be an elected official and be above the law as the honourable member for Thompson suggests members of the Legislative Assembly ought to be. So I make that point and I could not disagree more profoundly with that point of view and I suggest the honourable member for Osborne would agree with that point of view. He seems to be making some allegation against the Minister of Finance, with which, of course, we take issue, but I must say I am offended at any member of this Legislature who thinks he or she is somehow different from any other member of society, or above the law of this land.

* (1355)

It has been held, Mr. Speaker, and it has been brought to my attention, decisions of Speaker Jerome of the House of Commons, and I find this in this publication of Jerome decisions at page 33, under the heading of Privilege, and it says the following: "The Chair has taken the position that 'where no charge has been laid against a member and there does not appear to be the investigation of an actual offence against him, but rather an investigation which may be part of another set of circumstances,' the Speaker has exercised his discretion against the execution of the warrant in these premises in the office of a member."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank all honourable members for their comments on this—order, please. -(interjection)- On a point of order? The honourable member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Not on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the issue.

Mr. Speaker: As the Liberal Party House leader?

Mr. Lamoureux: As the Liberal Party House leader. Mr. Speaker, what we have before us this afternoon is a very serious matter. The member for Osborne at no point in time has stated anything to the effect that he believes he is above the law. He has put it

in such a fashion in which, if we read through Beauchesne's in our rules that have governed parliamentary procedure for hundreds of years, you will find that there is a question that does need to be answered in terms of: Has the Minister of Finance taken a privilege away from the member for Osborne? There is a question mark in terms of: Is the Minister of Finance intimidating members?

It is a very serious allegation that does need to be looked at. I would like to quote from Parliamentary Privilege in Canada from Joseph Maingot. On page 97 it reads: Since every member of the public has an interest in putting an end to abuses, in preventing a waste of public money—in opposing the creation of works in an inefficient manner—in checking improper expenditure, and may express his opinion on any question affecting the public health or convenience, communication on such subjects, made bona fide, and to a person having power to prevent or remedy the wrong, is privileged; that is, if it is made bona fide, and for the purpose only of guarding against a public injury.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition House leader quoted Citation 72, which is very applicable from Beauchesne's to this particular case. I would encourage you to go over the facts and report back to the House in a reasonable amount of time.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I believe I have heard from all three parties concerned. I believe I have enough information before me, but I will use this opportunity to advise the House that I am going to take this matter under advisement as there has been an awful lot of information brought forward. The Chair will return at a later date with a ruling on said matter.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James McCrae (Acting Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 1989-90 of the Department of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

* (1400)

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the 1988-89 Annual Report of Environment, Workplace Safety

and Health, and the 1989-90 Annual Report of Environment.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the report of the Manitoba Boxing and Wrestling Commission, Special Audit.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the first Quarterly Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation ending January 31.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BILL 32—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Ms. Judy Wasylcya-Lels (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), that Bill 32, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la "Mount Carmel Clinic," be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have with us this afternoon from the Crestview School, nineteen Grade 5 students. They are under the direction of Mrs. L. Prokopchuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Handi-Transit Program Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as members well know and as Manitobans well know, the effect of the provincial government funding decisions are trickling down into the education system, into the urban and municipal systems of the province, into the Child and Family Services, into health care. Day after day, we hear the impacts of the provincial government's policies on the people of this province.

My question is to the Minister of Urban Affairs. Given the fact that we have—contrary to our preaching to Ottawa—given the City of Winnipeg 1.8 percent increase when inflation is 6.8 percent, which is a considerable offloading as it is in education, exactly the same thing, my question to the Minister of Urban Affairs deals specifically with our Handi-Transit System in the city of Winnipeg.

I would ask the minister, did he discuss the issue of Handi-Transit with the official delegation when he met with them on March 4? Is he now rolling that money into the regular transit system of the city of Winnipeg? Why is he not keeping the Conservative promise of 1988 to quadruple the funding for Handi-Transit in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the question of funding to the City of Winnipeg was not discussed at the March 4 meeting of the official delegation.

At the same time, with regard to transit funding, the City of Winnipeg spent last year, 50 percent of their deficit of the money spent last year as advised by the City of Winnipeg is approximately \$16.2 million. In addition to that, \$425,000 was committed by the Province of Manitoba last year toward the cost of Handi-Transit System under an earlier agreement. Mr. Speaker, the final payment of that was due this year, and as advised by the former Minister of Urban Affairs, would be included together with the City's transit grant.

If you add 50 percent of the deficit of last year plus the \$425,000 for Handi-Transit, and then increase that by 2 percent, that is the amount of money we committed this year to the City of Winnipeg for transit service.

Community-Based Clinics Closures

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister has lumped these programs together. They were always treated as separate programs, so that we could ensure that standards and services for our handicapped could be not only maintained, but improved, as the former opposition and now government had promised and as the New Democratic Party had promised in terms of a three-year program with the City of Winnipeg, which definitely appears from the minister's comments today as being frozen.

I have a further question, Mr. Speaker. As these cuts get trickled down into the citizens of Winnipeg, we find that the two inner city clinics are proposed to be closed, affecting, definitely, inner city kids and inner city residents and, obviously, the province of Manitoba.

My question to the Premier is: Has he been notified of the closures or proposed closures of those programs? Has he studied the effect on the provincial health care system? Has the Premier communicated with the mayor our objections to closing community-based clinics in terms of its impact on the provincial health care system?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that this issue just came up in the newspaper today, wherein one of the proponents of closure, one of the councillors proposing the closure, is making the allegation that somehow it is a reduction in provincial funding that would cause this and there would be significant savings to the Province of Manitoba.

Before my honourable friend the Leader of the Opposition gets too far into that mentality without having his facts straight, he might want to know that the City of Winnipeg contributes 14 percent of the operating costs of those two clinics. The province already contributes 86 percent of the operating fund, so the savings to the City of Winnipeg would at best be very, very, very minimal. I would suggest to you that this is some of the positioning that takes place from time to time when councils, who are elected to make budget decisions, throw up issues that they hope will garner the kind of questions that opposition leaders might pose to government to justify inadequate ability to come to grips with a budget that may need controlling.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that it is only \$200,000 out of the budget. I am asking the question in terms of the impact on the inner city kids, on the inner city residents. I am asking the impact on the health care system when that small amount of money is transferred over to the provincial government. We are fully aware that our grants were adequate enough so that we did not have the cutbacks of inner city libraries, inner city pools, inner city programs, handicap transit and all the other things that the Tories like to see cut in budgets.

My question to the Premier is—and I fully recognize the numbers the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has given us; they are consistent with our

numbers. Has he communicated with the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg and asked him, in light of the over \$100 million that the city is getting even though it is lower than it should be, we are opposed to the cutback on those inner city health care programs and its impact on the provincial health care budget?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct my honourable friend with misinformation No. 2 in his supplementary question. He indicated that it is only a \$200,000 cost to the city. That is not a factual piece of information. The city's contribution amounts to slightly more than \$64,000 annually.

Health Care Facilities Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government is both cutting at the community end of our health care system through offloading and now is making some very deep cuts in our hospital system. Today, we have learned that urban hospitals have been told to cut \$19 million from their budgets by this government. As well, they have been told to absorb the cost of the GST and the costs of any contracts under negotiation, which may mean cuts more in the line of \$40 million.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House whether he or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) issued these orders to cut \$20 million to \$40 million from urban hospitals at the same time that this government has just said in the Speech from the Throne that health care is a priority and that this is an area that will not be cut.

* (1410)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend, the Health critic for the opposition party, is at least consistent with her Leader in not having her facts straight.

There has been no \$20 million to \$40 million cuts to hospitals that my honourable friend alleges to. Mr. Speaker, let me -(interjection)- if my honourable friend wants the information I am prepared to give it to her.

Mr. Speaker, as happens every single year, hospitals approach the commission and they say, we need X number of dollars next year. The commission, for the entire time that my honourable friends were government, reduced that request.

We did not stand up and say, we have a government that has cut funding to hospitals.

Hospitals will receive more funding. They will not receive the amount of funding they have requested, which is consistent with every single budget planning year since the government funded hospitals through the Manitoba Health Services Commission, including when my honourable friend sat around Treasury Board.

Hospitals would ask for \$40 million of increases a year. Government might provide \$20 million. The difference is \$20 million. It was not a cutback. It was simply an inability and a decision by even NDP governments not to fund the requests of hospitals. Nothing has changed, Mr. Speaker.

Nursing Shortages

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, the directive of this minister and his meeting with chief executive officers on Friday at all the urban hospitals has sent shock waves through the system wondering how they are going to deal with this kind of a cutback.

I want to ask the minister, on a related matter, since we have learned that this minister is bent on reducing the number of nurses available to serve patients by filling nursing positions that come available with support staff—given the shortage of nurses already, I want to ask the minister: How many more nurses is this minister intent on removing from the service of patient care in Manitoba?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, you know there is an old saying that a little bit of knowledge can be very, very dangerous and particularly when my honourable friend, even with her little bit of NDP knowledge, does not have her facts straight, it is even more dangerous.

Already in the preamble to her second question she has inculcated and permanently placed the word "cutback" in health care funding to hospitals. Hospitals will receive an increase in funding, not a cutback, this year.

My honourable friend with the New Democratic Party is going to try and paint the picture to Manitobans that more funding to hospitals is a cutback because we, in our budgeting process—as she did when she sat around a cabinet table in the Treasury Board, did not give them what they want but gave them increased funding. It was not a cutback then. It is not a cutback now. Hospitals will receive more funding this year than last year, Mr. Speaker.

Bed Closures

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lets (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, instead of letting these decisions dribble out, I think he should come clean and tell all Manitobans what the plans of this government are—

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lets: Can the Minister of Health confirm that his government has set a target of permanent bed closures in hospitals to equal one-half the beds closed during the nurses' strike?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I cannot even give any kind of response to such an incredible allegation of just—I mean, we are into the game now where you pick a rumour out of the air and you try to establish it as fact.

What my honourable friend will see when the budget for health care comes down is that, faced with zero percent increase in revenues for the Province of Manitoba, this government will be substantially more generous to health care than the previous government did when revenues grew at 16 percent and they funded health care at a scant six or seven.

Aboriginal Education Government Initiatives

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education.

Regrettably, in the province of Manitoba the young people who are least likely to graduate from high school will be members of our aboriginal community.

Since the last session we have watched a principal resign at the Birch River School because of personal attacks on him as he tried to improve the educational conditions of Native students in his school. Aboriginal parents have removed their children from the Grandview School because of racist slurs and their inability to learn effectively, according to them, in the public school system.

Aboriginal parents in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 have now been informed that their hopes for an alternative program in Native education must be put on hold because of budgetary constraints.

Will this minister tell the House of one single initiative being taken by his department which will ensure that aboriginal students in this province can turn to the public system of education in the hope of

obtaining a fair, culturally relevant education without fear of racism in their classrooms?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my honourable friend that not only have we embarked on one initiative, but on many, with regard to ensuring that not only Native people but all minority groups and all children in this province have access to an equal opportunity of education in this province.

Mr. Speaker, let me give her by example what we came into in 1988. When we came into government, I think in Keewatin Community College there was something like two Native people employed at that time by the former government. That has increased to where we have 11 management position people in Keewatin Community College who are of Native origin.

In addition, in the public school system we have embarked on ensuring that there is material available in all our schools that has Native education elements in it, so that not only Native children but indeed all children can appreciate the contribution that Native people have made to this province, and indeed that there can be some understanding of the cultural differences and understanding that there must be in this province.

My branch, the Native Education Branch, is working tirelessly at ensuring that Native education is an important part of education in this province. In addition, I might say we have recently decentralized the Native Education Branch to Dauphin to ensure that people in that region of the province can avail themselves of the services of this department.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, this government has cut funding to Native education, and this minister writes letters in which he says racism is a local problem.

Mr. Speaker, can this minister tell us what investigation he has conducted province-wide to inform himself, to educate himself and therefore the school divisions of the province, of the degree of racism in our school system directed toward our aboriginal peoples and new programs and initiatives to specifically direct it?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, first of all let us understand that the jurisdiction of schools is under the direction of individual school boards across this province. As a department we have the Native Education Branch within my department that offers in-servicing opportunities to all school divisions in

this province. Indeed we have made available to all school divisions, resources so that those school divisions, the teachers within those divisions, can be more aware of the kinds of issues that they have to deal with when it comes to racism and also when it comes to dealing with Native children across our province.

I can also tell you, I just met with Frontier School Division yesterday, who indicated to me that indeed they are happy with the directions that this government is taking with regard to education in this province. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you also for the first time last year we passed a bill that will allow Frontier School Division—Frontier School Division serves the needs of many Native people across this province and indeed they will have the same autonomy and the same responsibilities that all school boards will have very early in the summer. We are doing all we can to ensure that Native people in this province are treated equally and have access to equal opportunity in education.

* (1420)

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, but he himself has just stated what is painfully obvious to all Manitobans. He says we are doing all we can. Well, racism is alive and well and directed toward our aboriginal community, and I want to know one initiative that is going to come from this government that is going to give those aboriginal children in our public school system some sense of belonging, some sense of cultural relevancy, some sense that they deserve the same level of education as other children in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated before, not only are we working as a department to ensure that we have more resources, more written material, more books for Native education, but indeed we are working with the Native community to ensure that they have input into the development of materials for our schools so that indeed there is a Native element within the school system itself so that we, instead of teaching the kinds of history programs we were teaching before, are teaching programs today that are reflective of the kind of society we have within our province. I think the Native community out there understands that as a province we are doing all we can. Indeed the school divisions have some responsibility for that as well and together, although we have not answered all the

problems, Mr. Speaker, indeed we are working toward them as diligently as we can.

Independent Schools Funding

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from Hansard of March 4, 1988: "... we are finding that across Manitoba, school divisions are having to cut back on programming because they are not receiving sufficient funds. School divisions are having to cut back on some of the programs such as music, industrial arts, perhaps languages, and even some of the more important courses because of the fact that funding has been cut back." That was a quote by the then critic of Education, the honourable member for Roblin-Russell. That was at a time when we were funding—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there a question here now, please?

Mr. Reid: My question for the Minister of Education is: Why has this minister not drawn back the 11 percent increase to the private, elite schools and redirected these funds to the public school system?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, when revenues to this province were 6.7 percent, the NDP government gave 2 percent increases. In the years when there were revenue growths of 19 percent, that NDP government used to give 3 percent and 4 percent to school divisions.

When we have revenue growths of zero percent we are still able to pass along 2 percent increases to school divisions. That is not a cutback, indeed that is an increase in funding to school divisions. -(Interjection)-

Mr. Speaker, I am now surprised that the critic for Education did not ask that question. I am wondering what their position is on independent schools, because he is a proponent of independent schools when he leaves the Chamber, but when he comes in here he criticizes them. Where does he stand?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

Given that I have received literally dozens of phone calls from irate taxpayers in the Transcona-Springfield School Division who are

upset at the offloading that this provincial government has done on to the school boards—many of them have referred to this tax as the GFT or the Gary Filmon tax.

My question is for the same minister, the Minister of Education. The minister has repeatedly stated that a 2 percent increase to the public schools, when in fact the Transcona-Springfield School Division has received only a paltry—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona will kindly put his question now, please.

Mr. Reid: My question is for the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker.

When is this minister going to give the true figures to the tax-paying public of Manitoba?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member for Transcona is not willing to listen to what is being said.

The increase to education this year is 2 percent. Transcona-Springfield in their operating budget has received 1 percent in terms of their increase. Let me indicate also that the Transcona-Springfield School Division board have made some very, very important and difficult decisions, and I acknowledge them for the decisions they have made.

Let me indicate that over a three year period of time the increase to taxpayers in Transcona-Springfield has been \$29. Indeed when Transcona-Springfield received a large increase in 1989, they were able to return money by way of special levy reductions to their taxpayers. They have done the prudent thing.

Mr. Speaker, this year it is a difficult time. They had some very difficult decisions to make. They combined that with not only cuts in some of the programs that they had to look at in terms of setting their priorities, but indeed they had to pass along some tax increases. That is a local decision, one that they have to be accountable for, one that they have to take responsibility for.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the same minister.

There are public documents that have been passed out at the meeting—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona, kindly put his question now, please.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same Minister of Education.

How can this minister justify giving an 11 percent increase to the elite schools like Balmoral Hall who are presently adding a \$3 million addition, when the public school system is being starved to death due to this Filmon government's mismanagement?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the increase that the independent schools are getting this year is \$1.8 million. The increase that the public school system is getting is \$16 million.

Mr. Speaker, to suggest that all of a sudden the independent schools are getting a far greater share than the public school system is ludicrous. I understand the public school system. I worked in the public school system. I was a trustee in the public school system. My children attend the public school system. I will protect the public school system, not unlike the members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Derkach: I know the importance of the public school system, and I will protect it as much as I can.

* (1430)

City of Winnipeg Funding Government Responsibility

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs. The minister knows that Winnipeggers are facing substantial tax increases this year, yet his government continues to evade all responsibility for this. The minister yesterday was clearly aware that a taxpayer is a taxpayer.

Will he today acknowledge that his government is offloading its cuts onto the city taxpayer and making an inept attempt to mislead the people of Winnipeg in this issue?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I might provide a revelation for the member for Wolseley. City Council runs the City of Winnipeg budget. The City Council makes the decisions on how they wish to spend their money.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated previously by the Minister of Finance who took all members of the House aside and explained to them, in some detail, the problem that the province faces fiscally, they should have been able to understand that. If they

have not been able to understand that, they should have at least been able to read in the newspaper day after day after day the fact that we have growth rates of income for the province at zero percent.

Municipal Assessment Act Review

Ms. Jean Frlesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, the city is certainly dealing with the tax debt left by the members opposite. Since municipal tax is primarily a property tax which does not distinguish between those on fixed incomes, those with salaries, or the growing number of unemployed in our city, is this new minister—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Speaker, is this new minister prepared to reconsider the portioning component of the 1990 municipal reassessment act, which unfairly reduced the taxes on business and added to the tax burden of the Winnipeg homeowner?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the member for Wolseley may be aware of the fact that portioning is set on an annual basis. When that is done, we will be giving consideration to all of those matters related to the need to contain income related sources from the City of Winnipeg's property tax assessment to limit it to the same amount that was raised in a similar area in previous years. That was the fairness component that was put into the portioning system.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, in terms of the grants that the City of Winnipeg receives from the Province of Manitoba, they have to recognize that we have a zero percent growth in revenue. They have to understand that they have to accept responsibility and cannot simply say to the Province of Manitoba, give us more money because we want to spend it.

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Funding Policy Impacts

Ms. Jean Frlesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, when this new minister finally brings forward his long-awaited urban aboriginal strategy, will he include in this an evaluation of the impact of the cuts, the cuts in services that are a direct result of this government's policy, the cuts to libraries, literacy, recreational programs, social assistance programs.

What will be the impact of this on the health and survival of the First Nations of Winnipeg?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, those matters fall within the responsibility of the Minister responsible for Native Affairs (Mr. Downey), and I am sure that if the member asked him that question tomorrow, he will be able to answer it.

Health Care System Underspending

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) visits health care organizations, he tells them we do not have money, manage with less. He does not tell them that over the last three years he has underspent almost \$100 million in the health care budget.

Can the Premier tell this House how he can justify to maintain the member for Pembina as the Minister of Health when the minister's action are making the hospital administration, the various health organizations and patients very upset and very dissatisfied? Mr. Speaker, ministers are supposed to tell the truth.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, if the member would investigate his facts he would find that underspending has not occurred in hospitals. The hospital system has consistently spent all its money and possibly more in the budget. The areas of underspending were in areas in which there was lack of demand, for instance, in Pharmacare—\$7 million in Pharmacare. Does he suggest that because the money is budgeted for and there is not demand that we ought to just go and give everybody a bonus on Pharmacare because they did not -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for The Maples that you will have an opportunity to pose a second question.

The honourable First Minister to finish his response.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, that would be absolutely irresponsible. Just because money is budgeted in Pharmacare and claims do not match the budgeted amount, that money should simply be thrown on the floor and thrown away to satisfy the critic of the

Liberal Party? I can understand why people were so upset with their irresponsibility in the last election, that they turfed them out of opposition unceremoniously for that kind of irresponsible suggestion.

Health Care System Underspending

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, the money has been underspent not only in the Pharmacare, but in the home care, and the minister knows full well.

My question is: Can the Minister of Health justify to the patients who are waiting two years for heart surgery, for mothers who are waiting two years for speech pathology, how can he justify not to spend the money where it counts? He should stand up in his place and tell the truth to people of Manitoba.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that is why the hospitals, as the Premier just indicated, every single year have spent their entire budget allocation—to do more open heart surgical procedures for Manitobans, not less as alleged by my honourable friend; to deliver more speech language pathology programs to children in Manitoba, not less as my honourable friend alleges, because both of those services have increased since we have come into government.

But, Mr. Speaker, I refuse to take the advice of the Liberal Party, its critic and I presume its Leader, to simply squander an additional \$66 million, add to the deficit and have a \$6 million interest bill to take away from the services he wants to protect this year, next year and every other year when we run a deficit and have to pay the interest like we inherited from my honourable friends, the NDP.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, this minister has not spent money in any community-based program where the money can be saved more effectively in the long run. Can the minister explain to the people of Manitoba and seniors why they cannot get adequate home care services, when they are underspending in the home care services for the last three years?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, do you know that when we have the opportunity in Estimates, as from time to time we do have, and my honourable friend poses these exact same questions about spending in home care, he receives answers to which he agrees and accepts and understands, but when my

honourable friend has a television camera in front of him, he wants to create an issue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before my honourable friend makes the mistake as visited upon us by the Leader of the official Opposition, the official opposition Health critic, and provides improper facts to the House, in other words, does not tell the truth, I want him to caution him about his spending allegations in home care.

Aboriginal Centre Funding

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): My question is to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has recently stated his commitment to addressing the plight of the urban aboriginal population as a top social and economic priority. In November of 1990 the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg presented a business plan for the renovation of the CP station as an aboriginal centre which would include a wide range of services.

Will the Premier tell this House when the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg can expect to receive some concrete financial commitments for this project so that plans can go ahead for the development of the centre, and so that he can have the opportunity to live up to his commitments?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated in some discussions that have already taken place with the other two levels of government—and I know that there was a meeting as recently as the last week—that this will be one of the items that we consider to be a priority for a new trilevel urban renewal strategy, an initiative that we believe ought to be jointly funded amongst the three levels of government as a successor to the current Core Area Initiative agreement; that we believe it is an appropriate project. We believe it is an appropriate priority, and we have placed it on the table as one of our priorities as part of that discussion.

Tri-Level Discussions

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): My supplementary question is to the Premier. Could the Premier tell us when this meeting will take place with the three levels of government?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

Aboriginal Centre Funding

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): My last supplementary question is: Will the Premier tell this House when this government will take action on the Urban Native Strategy which this government has said they would provide \$220,000 and tie it into the development of the aboriginal centre?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member showing interest. It is about time that the members of the opposition in fact got involved and showed some concern in that important area.

Let me further say to the Premier on the initiatives that have been discussed at the meeting some two weeks ago, that there has been progress made and that will be part of the three levels of government as a new initiative and as a major initiative, to improve the situation in which a lot of the Native people find themselves in the city of Winnipeg.

* (1440)

Veterinary Drug Centre Privatization

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, this government continues on with its privatization ideology whether it is in the public interest or not, whether it costs the taxpayers money or whether, in fact, there is any saving for the taxpayers of this province when decisions are made for privatization.

I ask the minister, what is the rationale for privatizing the veterinarian drug distribution centre which purchases and sells drugs at cost, some \$7 million worth of drugs at cost, veterinarian drugs for farmers throughout the province, and whose primary concern is to keep the cost down for those veterinarian drugs for farmers?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about public interest and being concerned about saving taxpayers money, and that is exactly why we are acting the way we are. We are trying to promote efficiency in terms of the process of saving farmers money, save taxpayers some cost, and continue to deliver the service to the farm community.

The drug centre was set up some 15 or so years ago to bulk-buy drugs. We now are doing a good job of that, and we buy them for the veterinarians who in turn sell them to the farmers. It is believed that the

veterinarians can now run that system as effectively and efficiently, taking us out as a middle man. The same service will be supplied at lower cost to the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba and at no increase to the farmers in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Plohman: Well, Mr. Speaker, how can this minister say that by privatizing this service which costs the taxpayers zero at this time and which involves -(interjection)- effectively zero, and he can increase the cost of the drugs marginally to ensure that it does cost the taxpayers nothing, and which entails a risk to producers as a result of putting it in the hands of the veterinarians who can jack those costs up with no regulation whatsoever?

Mr. Findlay: That is an unbelievable statement from the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who absolutely does not understand the issue at all. It is costing the taxpayers over a million dollars a year to do that, and he says there is no regulation. The proposal that will be dealt with, with the veterinarians, will deal with all those issues. It will be more effective, more efficient, save everybody money, and the service will still be in place, but no thanks to him.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, we will see about that. Is not the real reason why this minister wants to cut this service is simply so that he can show his Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) on paper that he has cut Civil Service positions, so he can say, for political purposes, to the people of Manitoba that they have cut Civil Service positions in this country with no regard in this province—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I did not detect one single element of a question in that tirade.

Manitoba Developmental Centre Staffing

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, this government talks about prioritizing health, education and family services, and we have seen that many times in the past where they have promised great things.

Can the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Developmental Centre tell us why 18 staff in that facility have not received notices that their term is being extended beyond March 31 of this year?

Hon. Harold Gilleshamer (Minister of Family Services): I would like to assure the member that

family services, health and education are priorities of this government, and that he will, I am sure, patiently await the Treasury Board and budget deliberations. When we table the budget in April, we will have a chance to talk about many of the details in Estimates about the budget. The matter of specific employees and their term I will take as notice, and I will provide him with that information.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Osborne has time for one very short question.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure us that the 18 individuals involved, who have not yet received extensions of their term time past March 31, will receive those extensions immediately?

Mr. Gilleshamer: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that I would provide information for the honourable member in due course, and I know that he is aware that decisions are currently being made about many aspects of government in all departments. When the budget deliberations take place, and the Estimates debate takes place, we will have a chance to look, not only at MDC, but all aspects of this department.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Orders of the Day, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right, where we have with us this afternoon, Mr. Arnie Brown, the former member for Rhineland.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to his speech at the opening of the session, and the proposed amendment of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), and the proposed subamendment of the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the support that the members

opposite are showing for the speech which I am about to give and the interest that they are about to show. It is too bad that they did not show that same interest during Question Period and answer the questions that we posed to them in a forthright manner.

I will pick up where I left off from Question Period, talking about the Education department in this province and the lack of funding or the underfunding that this department has done to the different school boards in the province of Manitoba and in particular the one for the Transcona-Springfield School Division. I had the opportunity on Tuesday of this week to attend the school board -(interjection)- meeting-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Chair is having great difficulty in hearing the remarks of the honourable member for Transcona.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To carry on, I had the opportunity to attend a school board meeting in the community of Transcona on Tuesday evening of this week where the school board was bringing down its budget estimates for the coming year. The reason I raised the questions in Question Period today was because there were a great number of areas that the particular school division that I am referring to had to cut back on—programming to the students and the families in the community of Transcona. -(interjection)- I thank the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) for his interest in my comments.

In the school division document that I am referring to—it was the budget and special levy requirements—they talked about the funding to the school division itself and the funding that is provided by the Province of Manitoba to that school division. The funding itself gives a year-over-year comparison, '90-91 versus '91-92, and they talked about operating expenses. The operating expenses for '90-91 were \$39,311,732. For this year, the operating expenses are going to be \$41,794,689. That is a difference of \$2,482,000—a 6.3 percent increase.

When I talked about the funding that was being given to the Transcona-Springfield School Division, Mr. Speaker, and I questioned the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) on it during Question Period just prior to this, we talked about the provincial contributions to that particular school division. In 1990-91, the funding to that school

division was \$30,429,270. This year, the funding from the province to that school division, Transcona-Springfield, is \$30,515,003, a paltry \$85,700 increase. That works out to two-tenths of 1 percent increase in the monies allotted to this particular school division.

* (1450)

Considering that this particular school division is now going to have to eat the cost of the GST in its operation, the 7 percent increase, it is going to cost that school division \$387,000 in GST costs, Mr. Speaker.

Also, this school division is going to have to eat the cost-of-living increase of approximately 6 percent. When you compare that to the two-tenths of 1 percent increase in funding that they are receiving from the province, it is no wonder that this school division was put in the position where it has to cut.

This government has continually offloaded the responsibilities of education onto the school boards and ultimately back onto the taxpayers. If this government had recognized its true responsibility and funded this program the way it should have been, this school division would not have been put into this predicament.

To carry on with the funding for this particular school division, their capital programs have been significantly reduced for the coming year from \$236,000 down to \$122,000, giving the overall funds necessary at \$41,916,000—a 5.9 percent increase.

The school division trustees have indicated during that meeting that if it had not been for the GST that the increase would only had to have been 5 percent. When you convert this into the mill rates and the effect that it is going to have on the residents of Transcona, this translates into a 3.7 mill rate increase per thousand dollar value. When you calculate that out onto a value of a home, the range can be anywhere between a \$100 and \$400 increase, depending upon the value of your home in the community.

This at a time when there have been increasing layoffs in the community of Transcona, particularly with respect to CN Rail, who is the largest employer in the community, we are losing for an extended period of time there nearly 1,500 jobs.

Looking at the state of the economy in this province and for the people who are not employed in CN Rail but still reside in the community of

Transcona, they are seeing increased loss of employment. This is going to put strains on the system, on the social services programs that we have in this province. For an increase at this time, it is going to be very difficult for these families to assume.

As I indicated yesterday in my comments, we talked about the abilities of the families to cope with such increases. In cases like this, the only way that families can assume these type of increases in their costs is to cut back the areas that are directly under their control, and that is in food. Of course that is one area where we do not want to see the families be put at risk.

Some of the other areas that I find very, very important with respect to the community of Transcona, and that is with the school board I am talking here, is the special needs program. This school board has been put in a position where it has had to cut back into funding for the special needs as far as teachers and paraprofessionals are concerned. This I find almost unbelievable, that they would go in this direction to cut the funding for this particular program. These are the people who are least able to defend themselves, Mr. Speaker, and I think that it is one area that should have been maintained. This government should see that the proper funding is put in place so that they can maintain these programs to special-needs families and children.

If you take a look at the disabled children that are in the school system and that are presently in the academic programs of the school division, these children will now be put into a position where they will only be able to gain the life skills instead of the academic programs that are necessary for them to advance into the adult world as they mature, Mr. Speaker. It will probably impede their progress and probably on a permanent basis, and that I am appalled at.

There are other areas that have recently come to pass in the community of Transcona at one particular high school, Murdoch MacKay Collegiate. They recently opened a day care program in the high school there, and I believe it is a pilot program in the city of Winnipeg. This is a very needed service in the community, and I think it was a very progressive move on the part of the school board. This type of program could be put at risk now or into the future, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid for the young adults that are still wishing to continue their

education, that have young children they wish to put into this day care program, that it may not be there for them in the future. I feel for these people because they are not going to be able to advance in their education the way we would like them to do.

Also in the school division, Mr. Speaker, there are safety considerations that the school board is now being put in a position where they are going to have to look seriously at as far as funding is concerned. One of the programs that they have decided to hold in abeyance was the replacement of the fuel tanks where the school division buys fuel in bulk to supply the necessary needs of the school buses that they operate for the transportation of the students in the school division. These fuel tanks are nearing the end of their normal life span, and the school board is in a position where they do not have the necessary funds to support the purchase of new fuel tanks. If we have a leak from those fuel tanks, it could put the community itself at risk by fuel leaking into the ground and contaminating the ground water, which will mean great expense for the school division if they have to remove that contaminated soil and also deal with the contaminated ground water.

There are 25 teaching positions being cut, Mr. Speaker, in that school division. Of course, these teaching positions, that means there is going to have to be decreases in the programming for the different schools. There are going to be changes in the way the industrial arts program, which is part of the school curriculum in the community, receives its supplies, supplies that allow it to continue its operation of instruction for the students. These programs are now going to receive decreased funding of supplies that allow them to continue their operation.

This causes me great concern because Transcona is largely comprised of a large portion of working families, and of course, working families need to have the educational opportunities for their children so that their children are able to move into the work force as they grow and mature. Without the supplies and the funding necessary for these types of programs, these children will not receive the education that they need and require, and of course, they will suffer as a result of the underfunding by this government.

One of the other programs, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to talk a bit about in the education area, and I have received many phone calls on this, and that is the English as a Second Language program.

This particular program has been transferred from the Education department to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

This causes me great concern, Mr. Speaker, because I can see this program moving in the direction of privatization. Once you move in that direction of privatization of this program, you are going to see a reduced level of standards of educational instruction for these people. These are the people who are least able to defend themselves, as are the special needs families. These are the families who have newly come into this country and this province and have established here, and the things, the tools that they will have that will make them able to meet their families' needs by going out to gain employment and to fitting into the community itself will be reduced because of the change in this program.

I am appalled that this government has chosen only to give the Transcona-Springfield School Division a two-tenths of 1 percent increase in the funding. This falls far short of what is required to continue the normal operation without any frills in the system.

This Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) has continually repeated in this House, as has his Premier, that the funding increase is 2 percent. Well, the facts speak for themselves. The documents are clear that have been released by the school divisions. It is not 2 percent funding; it is two-tenths of 1 percent—point two.

I see that the government members seem to be a little bit sensitive about some of the issues that we are raising here today and how it is affecting the families, and I can appreciate their position. I do not think I would want to be in that, but if they had had the necessary drive, they would have impressed upon their cabinet colleagues the need to increase the funding for these special programs and the educational programs that we want to continue in this province.

* (1500)

I would like to switch my focus now to something that is to me important for the progress of this particular province, the province of Manitoba. That is the area of transportation and highways in this province. This is also my area of critic's responsibility, and I know the minister is somewhat aware of my viewpoints on issues with respect to this subject.

An Honourable Member: Especially open skies, eh?

Mr. Reid: We will move into the open-skies discussion in a few moments, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen offloading of the different programs, or downloading from one level of government to the other, from the federal Tory government to the provincial Tory government onto the school boards. Of course, that is ignoring the responsibilities that each level of government has to the citizens that elect it in this country, in this province. Of course, finally the buck stops at the taxpayer once again. We have great concerns for that.

We have a government in this province fully supportive of its federal cousins, who have both stated that free trade and deregulation of the transportation industry would lead to greater competition in the industry, increased service, reduced prices for the consumer, increased employment and, therefore, a healthier industry.

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

These are things they have been saying to us, Mr. Acting Speaker, since the mid-1980s. It has been my experience that free trade and deregulation has contributed significantly to change, but in pragmatic terms, that change has been for the worse. The transportation industry has gone from a relatively healthy structure to one of skeletal remains. Passenger and freight railways, once the lifeblood of this nation, have been slashed, starved and rationalized to near nonexistence. VIA Rail dismantled 50 percent of its operation with no input from this provincial government to stop that type of cutback. VIA Rail also laid off thousands of employees, Mr. Acting Speaker, reduced train service to remote and isolated communities and put those communities at risk.

Freight rail dramatically reduced its employment as well from 1986, from a level in the 50,000 employee range down to a level currently held at approximately 29,000 employees in this country, and has shifted the core network of trackage to a core network of trackage with minimal trunk feeders.

We cannot just sit idly by and watch our national identity be torn apart piece by piece. We need to have a provincial and national transportation policy that will improve the service with reasonable pricing, secure employment, encourage co-operation

between modes and bind the nation and the provinces together. What we have witnessed first-hand is the reduced competition through merger and takeovers, and a reduction of service to all but the central Canada region. Fare hikes due to monopoly situations and business practices, massive employee layoffs, business closures, bankruptcies and the condition of a national flag-carrying industry which may be in its death throes.

The trucking industry, once the giant in this province, is gradually being dismantled piece by piece as one company after another declares bankruptcy or head offices move to the United States. We have witnessed in this province, in the space of the last month, the closures of two trucking firms, the Peters firm and the Esau firm in this city, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it is my information that also the retail truck suppliers in this province are now falling upon difficult times because they are unable to sustain their sales to support their particular industries. That, I believe, is a result of the free trade, deregulation and the policies of this provincial government.

With the VIA Rail job losses and route losses, there are the communities in the north of this particular province that are being put at risk. We have heard the words of Mr. Hanigan, the president of Via Rail, who has stated just as recently as January of this year that he thinks it is no longer necessary to maintain and support the remote and isolated communities of this country, including the routes in this province of Manitoba up to the Port of Churchill. That falls into line with what the president, chief executive officer of CN Rail has stated, that he believes it is no longer necessary to support the east trunk lines up to the Port of Churchill as well.

It is only, I believe, a matter of time until these two people put pressure upon the Minister of Transportation federally and request permission to abandon these lines to the north of this province. That, Mr. Acting Speaker, will put at risk the families who live in these communities in this province. I see no initiatives being put forward by this minister in this province to have programs in place or to have negotiations in place so that we can supplement those programs that are now here and, should they fade away, that we will have alternatives put in place to replace those so the communities can still continue to be served.

One of the other areas, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the transportation industry is the trucking industry. Of course, I talked to a few moments ago the two firms, Peters and Esau, that have recently closed their doors. The province of Saskatchewan as well and the province of Alberta have, as of this week I am told, lost a trucking firm each in those provinces.

The owner-operators in these provinces are in desperate shape. They need to have a policy put in place that will help them to maintain their standard of living and to have some protection in the event that the firms that they are transporting for fall into default or/and go into bankruptcy. I think the owner-operators need to have some policy there to protect them as well.

We will move into the area of open skies now. This has been an issue which just as recently as last evening was on the Journal. There was a major item on there talking about the open skies policy and how it will affect Canada and Canada's two flag carriers.

I had the opportunity, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, earlier in the first session to put forward a presentation to the committee that was travelling across Canada to find out whether or not there were going to be some serious changes that will impact upon the province of Manitoba. We put forward our position, Mr. Acting Speaker, in opposition to open skies policy because we could see the impact it was going to have on this province and the employment and families of this particular province.

We have 3,600 jobs in this province in the airline industry. With those people, of course, are their families that depend upon this income. If we move into the open skies area, as the federal minister and this particular minister have indicated that they would like to see us go, I believe it would not be very long before we would see our two flag carriers disappear to become either subsidiaries of large American airlines or just strictly feeder networks within the different provinces of Canada.

We have heard in the last month that there are some 220 pilots' jobs that are being put at risk and have the possibility that they may be transferred east as these two flag carriers in Canada looked to centralize their operations and streamline the process that they have so that they would be in a position where they would be able to compete with the American airlines.

Our two Canadian flag carriers combined are only equal to or slightly less than the seventh largest U.S. carrier, which is USAir. I find it difficult to understand how our flag carriers being in this position would be in a position where they could compete effectively with such large carriers in the U.S.

What I see and what I have heard, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that the American carriers and the chief executive officer of the largest U.S. carrier, American Airlines, has said that he is not interested in servicing the smaller communities of this country. He is only interested in the major markets like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, where there are large population centres so that they can have a quick turnover of their traffic. This, Mr. Acting Speaker, puts us in a position where we are going to lose our service to the communities because these larger airlines that will gobble up our Canadian carriers will not be willing to deal with the smaller communities in the province of Manitoba or the prairie provinces itself.

I would like to talk now, Mr. Acting Speaker, about the community of Transcona. My Leader talked yesterday about 1,500 jobs being lost at CN Rail in Transcona and of course the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province took offence to that remark and he berated the representative for the community of Transcona, myself, and I thought that was a very bad position for the Premier to take. He should have had some consideration for these families that are being impacted by these job losses in the community of Transcona.

* (1510)

It has come to my attention that as recently as two months ago, in December of 1990, one particular food bank in the community of Transcona was servicing 55 families. In February, just last month, this same food bank is now servicing 91 families, a 65 percent increase. I think we have to take the necessary steps to alleviate these problems, and this government has to take the initiative and give us some direction in this province, and provide the leadership that is necessary for this province to move forward into the future.

Thank you.

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): I would first like to acknowledge the comments of the Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) in her opening remarks. Yes, I did say that I thought she looked 10 years younger, and I had speculated privately

because there is a changed Bob Rose in the Assembly. I am pleased to learn that it is the result of a well-deserved rest, and I hope that all honourable members had a chance to recharge the batteries during the break.

I would also like to acknowledge the advice of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, that I take time to read a book. For those members that may have missed it, that came from a newspaper article expounding the experiences of a new MLA or new MLAs.

I guess my interview was probably not all that good. I used a lot of one-word responses like perhaps, and maybe, and it is possible even though I very badly wanted to help out the reporter do his job, but I could not for the life of me think of anything that was interesting enough in my life that could be of any possible interest to any of his readers.

Finally, in desperation, he asked if I, before the election, had read or curled or belonged to any service clubs. You see that was really three questions and that required some thoughtful and careful deliberation before I answered. I guess he misinterpreted that silence as a need to make the question simpler so he said very slowly and clearly, did you read a book before the election? I said this was easy, I said yes. He found that encouraging, I guess, so he said, can you read a book now? I said no, and he graciously reported to his readers that the member for Turtle Mountain no longer has time to read a book. I thank the honourable member for her guidance and hopefully we can all take time to smell the flowers along the way.

I join other honourable members, Mr. Acting Speaker, in extending congratulations to the member for Kirkfield Park and for Assiniboia upon their cabinet appointments.

I had the pleasure of working with the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) in another life, and I knew that it would not be long before her considerable talents were recognized.

I did not know the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) before but quickly recognized that his quiet and thoughtful approach is enhanced by a great deal of exceptional ability. I believe that all Manitobans will benefit from the service that these two will bring, the contributions that they will make to the province, as I believe have all Manitobans benefited from the contribution that

the member for Portage and the member for Rhineland have brought to this province as well.

I would also like to bring greetings from his former constituents to the Speaker and wish him well in his continuing duties. From my experience last fall it is easy to tell that the confidence in his choice is not misplaced.

It is a pleasure for me to take part in the Throne Speech Debate. The process itself is interesting. It is an opportunity for all MLAs to express their opinions in a specific or a more general way. The throne speech under discussion is most appropriate for the times.

No knowledgeable person can deny, Mr. Acting Speaker, that our past extravagances at all levels of government have placed us in a precarious position. Some people may try to ignore it, but we are jeopardizing the future of our citizens of our country if we continue to borrow ourselves into bankruptcy.

There is little profit, I do not believe, in trying to lay blame for this situation or discoursing on which political philosophy is the cause or the possible solution. It is ironic that many ordinary citizens seem to have so little respect for politicians or governments and yet continue to look in those directions for simple answers and solutions.

Future historians may look back upon this time and say, my, my, they certainly were slow learners, were they not. Future historians may also mark this throne speech as another turning point in Manitoba's history, the time when an honest and far-sighted government raised an awareness in its citizens; an awareness that the strength of a society is its people; an awareness that a society can only be as strong and free and healthy and enterprising as its people are confident that they can be—attitude, Mr. Acting Speaker, attitude.

A comparison of our province—and I am not going to use the comparison that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) used the other day when he tried to convince us that because our debt is not as great as some of the other provinces that we should continue in our merry carefree way. I recognize the logic. It is the same logic our teen-age children used to use when everybody knew that all their friends stayed out all night so why could they not.

I prefer to compare our province to other parts of the world. This comparison quickly reveals a standard of living much higher than the vast majority of our global neighbours. Again our greatest asset

is our people, people that have the ability, but somewhere along the way have lost the awareness that a society is built by its citizens, not by governments. They seem to have lost the confidence prevalent only a generation or two ago when our pioneers first settled this land. The attitude of those people, Mr. Acting Speaker,—and, yes, they did participate in barn raisings and fowl suppers and quilting bees—but their attitude was different.

I apologize to the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who thinks that we should not look for values in the ancient 1950s, because I am going to get really prehistoric here. All of us wring our hands from time to time about the terrible disadvantages befalling young people who do not complete our prescribed high school education as if there were something magical about a high school graduation certificate.

I think of those earlier generations, people like my father who left school in Grade 7—and they evidently did not teach spelling in those days until Grade 8. Seventy years later when he passed away, he had a Golden Boy Award, was a member of the Manitoba Buffalo Hunt, an honourary citizen of various communities around the province, including the urban centres of Brandon, St. Boniface and Winnipeg. Not bad for dropping out of school in Grade 7 and not knowing how to spell.

It was not so much that he was a person of ability—he was—but because his attitude was the same as other men and women of that era. Number 1, it never occurred to them that society was responsible for their well being, even though they would quickly and collectively help out those unable to help themselves. Number 2, it never occurred to them that they should not leave a legacy better than the one that they received and free of crushing government debt.

Obviously, changing times require a much more sophisticated education system. It is imperative, and participation in the system is imperative as well in this technological world. I appreciate the concern of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) at the drop-out rate in his constituency and across the province. Our attitude, though, should not be that these students are automatically doomed to failure, reinforcing in them a low level of self-esteem. Training for jobs is laudable, but let us remember that somebody else besides government has to provide those jobs.

It is not difficult to find people who were not that successful in school, but who are now meeting a payroll. It is impossible to design a primary and a secondary education system that is all things to all people, no matter how much money we throw at it; and high achievement in high school has no correlation, or very little at least, to success in later life as an adult.

* (1520)

A relatively recent change in attitude is the notion that it is a right to never fall below last year's standard of living. Where is that written? Is it in the Constitution? Is it in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Is it in your high school diploma? Is it in your terms of employment? It would be very easy to lay this attitude at the doors of unions, but I am afraid it is not confined to union membership. Businesses have been known to ask for help through tough times, and even politicians at all levels can rationalize the cost of living increase quite easily.

How can you argue with a salary increase that really only maintains last year's position? Well, we can examine some of the reasons for the changes in the CPI index. A truly necessary item like a package of cigarettes is included in the basket of goodies.

Now naturally because smoking is a nasty, disgusting and unhealthy habit, no one objects when the federal government whacks another \$6 on a carton of cigarettes. No one objects, especially when we know it will raise the CPI and we will all have another salary increase to compensate for the extra cost of cigarettes which the vast majority of people do not buy in the first place.

We will have to have an increase greater than the CPI because of its 5 percent. For example, the province and the feds will take about 2 percent in income tax leaving only 3 percent which is less than the cost-of-living increase caused at least in part by the increase in the price of cigarettes which most people do not buy in the first place, but because the government needs the money to pay the 5 percent increase in last year's cost caused in part by last year's increase in tax on cigarettes.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rose: I hope that somebody followed that because I did not. By the way, someone who not only graduated from high school but several universities as well will announce an increase in interest rates to wrestle inflation to the ground,

stifling the economy even further, and opposition benches across the land will thunder that, for example, the 2 percent increase in education is really not an increase at all when inflation is taken into account.

School boards will receive less not more, they will say, ignoring that the provincial debt will become more in order to finance their convoluted arithmetic that says less. Not many school boards buy from the basket of goodies. Not many school boards buy food, housing. It is reasonable I suppose that when the price of housing increases in Toronto that the cost of the Souris Valley School Division, for example, would increase.

Not many school boards buy clothing, not many are involved in health and personal care; and tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, I do not think that school boards ever buy any of those things.

School boards increased costs are naturally in salaries because it is a people industry. Is it reasonable to conclude that those salaries must increase because of higher taxes on cigarettes? Come, come, my honourable colleagues, our electors expect more of us. If you say anything long enough and loud enough, at least some people will start to believe it when the constant reinforcement of the notion that it is our right to be as well or better off than last year does not help in times of badly needed restraint.

The current problems facing school boards could easily be resolved, temporarily at least, giving everyone more time to re-evaluate by the simple expedient of all people in the system agreeing to take no increase this year. No immediate loss of jobs, no immediate closing of schools, no immediate lessening of people contributions to the system.

I know many people in education, and as individuals they would likely agree, Mr. Acting Speaker, were it not for this ingrained collective attitude among us all that we should never suffer a lessening of our standard of living.

People directly or indirectly involved in agriculture—like many of the people in Turtle Mountain—understand that the world does not end with a change in this attitude. They do not understand why some segments of society expect, as a right, an ever-increasing standard of living financed by an ever-increasing debt load or by increased taxes, while they themselves have

experienced an enormous drop in their incomes in the last few years.

I was pleased, yesterday, to hear the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) bring to the attention of this chamber that many people would be happy to have the same levels of dollar income as in the past. Perhaps, she might more fully explain this to her caucus critics in Education, Health and Family Services. This government is fully committed to those three areas but not to the extent of denying reality.

I had the privilege this winter of pinch-hitting for a day on the constitutional hearing committee. I know the dangers of making assumptions on a one-day of several days of hearings, and I look forward to the conclusions of that all-party committee. Two things struck me that day. Number 1, most presenters were very pleased with the opportunity given to them by the Premier to express their views and be part of our affairs, to have someone listen to them and someone listen to their views. Number 2, most presenters had an attitude best described, in my mind at least, as lacking in overall concern. We heard many times of the necessity to protect the rights in the Constitution of a series of segments of our society, well-reasoned presentations with considerable merit, but no one talked about responsibilities.

Our country is in a precarious position when one group wants out altogether and many other groups seem only concerned with rights enshrined in a Constitution of a country which may not even be there. Have we no ideas about what we can give to be a Canadian, particularly when there may not be a Canadian in a few years? Perhaps, there never has been a Canadian. Our census takers still insist on nationality or country of origin. Perhaps, there has only ever been a hyphenated Canadian. When you hyphenate, you separate, and when you separate, you lobby for your own special interest. You cannot preserve a nation, Mr. Acting Speaker, let alone build a nation when "what is in it for me" is our prevalent attitude.

Some people would have us believe, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the preservation of our country is dependent on the cancellation of free trade. Let us remember that we are really only talking about the gradual removal of trading barriers between two countries, when we should be talking about the gradual removal of trading barriers worldwide.

My colleagues and I and the people that I represent from Turtle Mountain can speak with confidence about such ideas because our attitude is one of confidence, confidence in our resources, confidence in our abilities, confidence in our people. Arguments against free trade, as intellectual as they may sound, can only be valid if our attitude is defeatist, if we have no confidence in our abilities.

Let us build walls, the opponents say, walls behind which we can cozily live, venturing into the outside world only long enough to borrow more money to finance our isolation and fantasy.

What do we find when these walls come tumbling down, as did the Berlin Wall? We find a floundering economy with no social justice, widespread environmental pollution and of people rubbing their eyes in wonder at the achievements of a society with confidence in the individual, not the state.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I enjoy the debate on the Speech from the Throne. In my contribution I have tried not to be too political, because I do not believe that any one philosophy has all the answers. I have tried to talk about attitudes, because I think attitudes are more important than political philosophy in dealing with the 1990s.

No one party has a monopoly on concern for the less fortunate in society. No one party has a monopoly on correct economic theory. I believe that our Premier, our cabinet, our caucus and this throne speech are appropriate for Manitoba in 1991 and well beyond 1991.

I believe what the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) said yesterday that all honourable members are genuine in our concern for our citizens and our future.

* (1530)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to close by paraphrasing a well-known poem: Please grant us the courage to identify the things we really want, the serenity to accept the things we really need, and the wisdom to know the difference.

The Premier has rightfully pointed out that all-party discussions should take place in this Chamber. Hopefully, that debate will yield the wisdom that we seek. Thank you.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Acting Speaker, first of all, I would just like to say that I am glad we are back in session and welcome everyone back. I am happy that we are all back and able to do

some positive work and hopefully to benefit all of Manitoba.

I would like to welcome the Speaker back in his role. He is not in his seat right now, but that is okay. The Acting Speaker, I would like to congratulate him—welcome him back. We know that the Speaker has always been very fair to every individual, and I am sure the Acting Speaker will be just so—

An Honourable Member: And he cannot heckle when he is in the Chair.

Mr. Hickes: —and he cannot heckle while he is in the Chair, right. That is true. So I guess I have a break here. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I also would like to welcome the pages back. We know that they work extremely hard, and they have a lot of patience—

An Honourable Member: They will get a few extra days this time.

Mr. Hickes: Yes, I hope so. They do a lot of extra running here and running there for all of us. I am sure that you welcome them all back, as I do. Also, I would like to welcome the table staff who are here. They have been extremely helpful. Where a lot of us new members do not really understand the rules and stuff, they have shown patience, and I welcome them back. Also, I would like to congratulate the new Sergeant-at-Arms. I look forward to seeing you every day in this session and in future years, I hope.

Also, I would like to congratulate the two new ministers. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), I had not known him in the past, but I have had—he seems a very, very good guy. I had time to spend some time with the new minister when we were getting ready for Schmockey Night at which we all had an excellent time. He seems like a fine gentleman and very sincere. He seems very sincere. We had an excellent time.

Maybe I would like to mention that Schmockey Night. When we played, we played the media, and we were fortunate enough to beat them. We had a team made up of all players from the three parties and city councillors. It was, for me, a very good experience. I did not experience any partisan politics or cheap shots in the dressing room and stuff like that. I think we got along very well on the ice and off. I think if we all learnt a little lesson from that experience and carried it into our lives, we would all benefit. I would like to, at this moment, thank the players that I was very fortunate enough to spend

some time with, and I hope in the future I can spend some time with some of the individuals.

Also, I would like to congratulate the new Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh). She has a big role to fill, and I am sure she will do a very adequate job. She seems sincere and dedicated to what she will do, and she has a lot of experience that she is bringing too. I wish her well. The two members who were—

An Honourable Member: This is for you, Ed—bounced.

Mr. Hickes: Well, I would not say bounced or removed, but who were sort of removed from the responsibility, I wish them well. This way—look at the positive side—you will have lots of time to do constituency work. I know in my own experience—and it is not a put-down—that a lot of times we just do not have enough time to do constituency work and to work with the people who elected us.

An Honourable Member: Always look on the bright side.

Mr. Hickes: Yes, I would view that as a positive note. I am not belittling anybody. I am being very sincere in my comments.

I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about my constituency and the people who elected me as their representative in Point Douglas. It is a mixture of many races and many needs. We are all aware that it is one of the highest needs areas in all of Manitoba. The people who live there, they are fine people. They have worked extremely hard, and a lot of them have come over from different countries.

We are fortunate that they chose Winnipeg their home, because they have brought a lot of hard work and dedication from their previous country that they came from. We have all sorts of different nationalities. We have Polish, Ukrainians, East Indians, Filipinos, and quite a few aboriginal people who have come from different reserves across Manitoba. They are no different than anyone else. They would like a fair shot at reasonable employment and opportunities that some of us have been fortunate enough to get. If they get those opportunities they will do well. In order to get to where some of the individuals like to be, they need a little assistance here and there, and that is where our programs and the cutbacks we are seeing now are affecting the residents of Point Douglas directly.

Pritchard Place Drop-In Centre is an excellent centre, and a lot of the youths in that area take advantage of it and spend their idle time there. They are removed from the streets. They play pool there and chitchat and get to know one another. They have a lot of good guidance from the workers and the staff there. That is a program that is in jeopardy of not being funded, and it would be a sad case for Point Douglas if the funding was not there and they had to close that centre down. I know that it has benefitted a lot of aboriginal youths that have come from various reserves and communities where they did not have the access to what the city has to offer.

What happens is a lot of individuals and youths get a little carried away when they come from a remote community. All of a sudden you are into this big city of Winnipeg and all the different attractions and different lifestyles and different, not-so-positive influences that are out there. A lot of it is just through misguidance and not really understanding. That is what the staff of Pritchard Place and Rossbrook House—those sorts of drop-in centres—do. They work with the youth and the individuals, and they do provide them that sort of guidance. Once they have gotten into some of those programs and benefitted from them, you will see some of the individuals go back to schools, some of them will go into adult education programs. They do benefit from those programs.

Also, another program that is in jeopardy—it has been committed in the past verbally—is the Aboriginal Centre, the CP Station. The Aboriginal Centre would have been an excellent opportunity, and I hope it will still be an excellent opportunity for aboriginal people to go to one central location and hopefully get their needs met.

* (1540)

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

As it is right now, they would go to one agency and get a small piece of their needs met there, get sent to another agency somewhere else and get a little piece of their needs met, sent to another agency. What happens is when you are—a lot of the aboriginal people who are from reserves and outside of the city do not know their way around the city. A lot of the individuals, they do not have vehicles and cars to get around, so they try to use our transit system; but sometimes they do not have the funds to buy the bus tickets in order to get from one area to the other. What happens is they get

totally, totally frustrated, and they say, well, I do not have the money or I do not have the transportation to go from Point A to Point B, so I give up. They give up in total frustration.

At the Aboriginal Centre it was, and hope it will be, the central focus point for aboriginal needs. There are a lot of aboriginal organizations and aboriginal leaders who have put a lot of effort and a lot of work into it. It is an excellent location. It is right in the heart of Main Street of Winnipeg, and it is not hard for people who live in that area to go when they need that kind of assistance. I hope in the government's wisdom that it will give it serious consideration, and hopefully the funds will be found through the three levels of government in order to fulfill that aboriginal dream.

We talked about the Core Area Initiative Program which benefitted the inner city in many ways, and it also benefitted historically the core area of Winnipeg. It was an excellent program, and it is being extended for one year. I hope within that one year that the three levels of government will come to an agreement to continue that program. It restored many of the historical buildings, and it funded and started a lot of the help programs for the needy people.

Another cutback that directly affected Point Douglas and the core area of Winnipeg and would have been an excellent opportunity for the government to do something that is very positive for aborigines and visible minorities, and also to save the government a lot of money, was the facility for the Winnipeg Education Centre. There is already half a million dollars that was committed under the Core Area agreement that was sitting there. That is \$500,000 that could have gone to build a new facility, a new training centre and enhance the opportunities for aborigines and visible minorities in urban Winnipeg, but they could not find the \$400,000-and-some that was needed or would not commit the \$400,000 that was needed to fulfill the building of that facility.

It is important that there is an adequate training facility in the core area of Winnipeg because right now the people who live within the centre of Winnipeg, the core area, a lot of them have to go elsewhere for their education. The individuals who come from various parts of northern Manitoba and the visible minorities who come from different parts of the world, they do not have a lot of dollars in their pocket, so when you have to go from the inner city

of Winnipeg to Red River Community College, University of Winnipeg, it costs money to either take a bus or to use your car. A lot of these individuals do not have that.

With the facility that was going to be located on Ellen and Logan, it would have been a central point, and also the families of the individuals who would have had the opportunity to take their training and advance their careers at that centre would have come by to visit their family once in a while and see the facility and say, hey, maybe someday I will go there. If we had a facility there and individuals going to take those courses, that could have been excellent role models. Even if they do succeed in Red River Community College or University of Winnipeg or wherever other adult education opportunities arise, and if they do graduate and fulfill, they will be excellent role models for aborigines. That is one of the things that I see lacking for the aborigines, the role models within communities and in different towns and the city of Winnipeg.

We know, I know as a family man, that it is very important for children to have role models where they can say, hey, that individual, I am the same. They are doing okay. Why can I not? I know my little boy, he is 11 years old. He has his own role models, and I am glad he does. It gives him the inspiration and the aspirations to fulfill his dream.

When we talk about aborigines and visible minorities, they have the same dream as everyone else. They just need that assistance to fulfill those opportunities and those dreams, not be cut short as we have seen over the years. Over a hundred years we have seen that, always some barrier gets in the way. I hear the Premier mention it, and I heard the Prime Minister mention it in various programs, that the aborigines will be the top priority. Well, I say if you are committed, show us. Show us that aborigines will be the top priority. Lead, do not follow.

When we talk about programs and aboriginal wishes, we just saw a settlement in British Columbia that was a land claim settlement. It did not favour aborigines. The aborigines were very upset about that. We have outstanding land claims, and we have outstanding land claims in Manitoba. We do not know how those will fair, but they have to be addressed seriously and in co-operation with the aboriginal leaders in the north.

They will have to be discussed and, hopefully, the aboriginal people will get some form of compensation for the land that they have lost. It has not been very many years ago. In fact, it was in 1940, as an aboriginal, you could not even leave your reserve unless you had the Indian agent sign a piece of paper and a form. There was an actual form that the Indian agent signed for you to give you permission to go off your land to go and visit whoever, to visit your children in school. Even in residential schools, they were not even allowed to visit their own children in schools. We say, how come the aborigines are so dependent on social assistance and welfare? And the children of aboriginal people?

Well, let us go back a little bit in history. I am sure everyone of us in here has a family. How would we feel when our child is six years old, removed from our responsibility and given to some total stranger and said, that child is not your responsibility, that child is our responsibility for 10 months out of the year, but you can have your child for two months out of the year. How much of an influence would we have in bringing up our children? How would we even understand how to raise our children in the fashion we want them to be and also to give them the guidance that is necessary? How do we learn parenting skills if we do not have children to parent? I do not know. They were not replaced with a mechanical doll or anything. The void was left empty; it was left empty.

Then when that child grew up out of school and was 16 years old, they were given back to their parents, they would say, okay, now you parent that child—after 10 years, even more, of not being able to experience the parenting skills and learning as young people. When we are young and we have young children, we learn just as the child is how to be a good parent. We learn every day. Every day we learn to discipline, to assist our children in the rights and the wrongs. If you do not have any responsibility to share with your child or to do the disciplining, and if you have removed that child for 10 months, I know I would be so happy to see my child for that two months that that child could almost do anything they wanted. I would not be too hard and too strict, because I know I am only going to see my child for two months. After that, he or she is gone again for the other 10. I know I would not be a good parent. I know I would not be. There is no way that I could be.

* (1550)

So how can society, and a lot of the individuals, directly blame aborigines for the taxes and the needs of the welfare system and even in the whole justice system? I hear many times—I used to train aboriginal correction officers in the jail systems in Manitoba. I visited every jail there is in Manitoba, and I know that most of the inmates who are in there are aboriginal. I know that. I have seen it. Yet we hear, at least I hear some individuals say, oh, yeah, the aborigines, they are always on welfare, they are always in jail and stuff like that. Well, why? Think for a minute, why?

When you go through your whole life not knowing who you are, what your value system is and introduced into a foreign value system that is not traditionally yours and your family's for 10 months out of the year and you go back into your own community and your parents, your friends are telling you something different than what the residential school has been teaching you. Well, I do not think it will be clear in your mind. I know it would not be clear in my mind. I would be pulled here, I would be pulled there, and I would say, no, we are not supposed to do that, that is evil. I cannot do that with you. Sure, I respect you as my father, but I cannot do that, because I have to do what I am told here, not there.

So when you do grow up, you have to be sort of have mixed values and be sort of lost in society. That is why the aboriginal people today are saying to the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), we need the aboriginal culture and the languages to be taught in conjunction with English, so our children who are aboriginal can understand what they are all about. They might not practise it, they might not go along with it, but at least they would understand where their parents and their elders are coming from and they would have that choice, but we do not give them the choice, we do not give them that choice.

If you will recall earlier in the first session, I raised in this Chamber that I was very concerned about the Abinochi preschool program. The funding was lapsing and there was no commitment for that funding. I do not take credit for it. I am not saying that, but the government, in their wisdom, and I am glad that they agreed to fund it, because that was the preschool language program, a preschool Ojibway language program. That is when the children learn and they learn their culture, learn their languages, and that is what will stay with them when they are 18, 20 years old.

You know, as children when we are all growing up, where do we learn most of what we know, whether we know a lot or not? We usually learn when we are at a young age and when we are growing.

I was so happy when I got a phone call and the directors of Abinochi said, we have received funding for this year. I said, well, we should really sincerely thank the people who were involved and, hopefully, they will continue it forever, because without your culture and your language, I do not think you would realize who you are, and when you identify who you are then you have a meaning in life to proceed in.

So that is why the Winnipeg Education Centre was very dear, and the CP Station, the Aboriginal Centre was very dear and was a real meaningful project and program, and that is why the aboriginal people and the visible minorities still will continue the fight. They will not give up, because it is their life, their children's life and their grandchildren's life and on and on and on that they are fighting for. So I hope they win that battle. I know we are not in government. There is very little I can do, but I will do whatever I can to assist them, because I know what the benefit is.

I do not know if I shared some of my past life and my family life with you in my first throne speech, but I was raised with a family of 12 children, 11 boys and one girl, and I am very, very fortunate that I was one of the top six, because when we went to school we only spoke our language. It was Inuktitut. I did not know a word of English, because that is all we spoke in the house, and that is the only language I knew. The top six, my mother, my father, we spoke our language all the time.

Then what happened was, we started going to school. We started learning English, and all our friends—we were the only Inuit family in Churchill at that time, the only Inuit family—and when we started learning English, communicating with our friends, hey, we forgot that we should continue speaking Inuktitut all the time, so we started to mix both languages. Mom, today, she understands English, she speaks English—mind you, it is a very broken English—but I still speak to her in my own language. I am able to do that.

What happened was, because we spoke English all the time at home, our younger brothers, the bottom six, they did not bother learning it. They did not bother learning it, because they communicated

in English and, of course, Mom could understand English. I do not really know how it works, but she understands English perfectly, but she cannot speak it very good. I do not know how it works, but you could speak to her and she understands exactly what you are saying in English and so she would repeat back the words, so that is all they ever learned.

I know for a fact, today, that my brothers who never learned the language are having a difficult time, a really difficult time, because five out of the six are back living in the Northwest Territories. When they speak to the elders, they speak in Inuktitut; they do not speak in English. Fortunately, some have been there quite awhile. They can sort of communicate between both languages, but not fluently in Inuktitut, so they get sort of lost up in the conversation. That is why I know, and I am speaking from experience when I say that is why the aboriginal people will continue to fight for their language, to fight for their culture, because we need it and our children need it.

Also, I guess when you look across Winnipeg right now, and especially in the Point Douglas area, there is an increasing need for food banks. Why is that? You know, there are line-ups for food banks, and there are individuals who have never, ever used a food bank who are now forced to go to food banks. I know the economy is tough out there. It is hard, so we must do the best we can with what we have.

We have these programs there for a safety net. Well, let us put the net out. The fish are running. You do not cut back on programs when it is in the highest of need. We have to make sure that the people's needs are met. When you see people lined up to supplement their social assistance or their incomes through the food banks, that should send a clear, clear message to everyone here. When you see little children line up, I do not like that. You see, it is hard I know in the core area of Winnipeg, and it takes a lot of pride away for individuals to line up at the food banks to get their fair share of groceries to feed their families for the week, or even for the day it is difficult.

You see, when I speak about Point Douglas, it has the highest number of aborigines in the whole city of Winnipeg. A lot of the aborigines who come in from the north—and I am sure you will appreciate this—into the city, you have brought along your values, your pride, and when you have to line up at a food bank, you lose that pride. You see, when you are in the city, it is different than when you were back

home. When you are back home, you have the opportunity to supplement your income by hunting. When you are living in Winnipeg, you cannot go out and shoot a moose or a caribou or a deer. You have to either go to the grocery store to buy your meat or get in line; that is the only alternative you have when you are living here in Winnipeg. People realize that, so that is why we have the Stella Mission, Harvest house, and stuff like that. Thank God we have those. I do not know what individuals would do.

* (1600)

I know when I was growing up in the north it was a rare, rare occasion that I had beef or pork or something that was bought in the store, and we always ate wild meat because we could not afford—there is no way that our family could afford to go to a grocery store and buy a steak of beef or a roast or pork. There is no way in the world. So, if people do not have that, what are they living on? What kind of a diet are the individuals existing on? We all know, we all have gone to schools, if you do not maintain a proper diet, what happens? It starts to filter down.

First, it becomes a medical problem, right? People start getting sick. The vitamins and stuff that children need to grow, they do not have access to them. Then we say, or individuals say, they are a drain on the medical system. Are they? Maybe if we had adequate programs and assistance for individuals, maybe we would save—I do not know—in the long run by individuals not getting sick so easily and getting diseases, like from malnutrition, not proper diets and stuff. People get sick. I think that has been proven the world over.

We have here—like the City of Winnipeg, at least they allow people on social assistance, where you have an opportunity to get short-term or part-time employment. They at least allow you to earn \$115 a month so that way at least you could try and get off social assistance or you can get into some kind of employment. We know a lot of part-time employment leads to full-time employment opportunities, but with the provincial assistance program the unfortunate individuals who are on it—it is not because they choose to, it is because it is hard times out there—they can earn \$50. How many hours a month does it take to earn \$50, even at \$5 an hour? That is only 10 hours a month. What hope do you have of leading into a full-time employment opportunity?

I would like to see somewhere down the line, or as soon as possible, that being raised to allow individuals to at least earn \$200 a month—at least a minimum of \$200 a month—so that way the individuals can get the extra little things that their family needs and the individuals need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Even to buy yourself a little treat once in a while, I do not think that is asking for too much. Allow that, but as soon as they earn that magic \$50, if they earn \$55, \$5 is taken off. What incentive is that to try and better your own lifestyle and to try and increase the opportunities and things for your children? None, none whatsoever.

What happens is people say, well, I might as well stay on social assistance. It becomes a vicious cycle. That is when we get back into education again.

We have someone who is coming off the social assistance program and into training opportunities and they get into full-time employment, become taxpayers of the province. Then what happens is within six years, through paying taxes they pay for their own education. So it is not a burden on anyone. Within six years the education is paid for. On top of that it is pure gravy.

Also while the person is working for those six years paying for their education through taxes, they are not accumulating the social assistance that they would need to continue to live. So it is a double benefit. We know; we experience it in our own homes. When we are training or working in the education programs our children benefit, because we have the knowledge after in order to help them to do their homework, and they see us and they say, well, sure, yes, I will stay in school, but I need help with this, that or that.

What happens in a home when a person—you know we have a high number of illiterates here in Manitoba. What happens when our children—we say, go to school, get a good education, go, continue on in school. Who helps that individual at home? I do not know. I do not think the parents can.

That way when you train, you do not train one generation. You train two generations, and it could even be more, because when you get into a cycle it is hard to break from that.

We also look at Point Douglas' needs. We know there is a drastic shortage of houses and housing available for individuals in Point Douglas. We see some nice homes all boarded up. I fail to understand

why. They have infill housing. As far as I know, those are public housing units. I am sure they are. They belong to the province. Yet, why should we keep those boarded up and maybe children or whoever will get into them and do damage? Why could we not use them for low-rental housing units for families and individuals who need those housing units? What do we gain by keeping them boarded up? I do not think we gain a thing, not a thing.

An Honourable Member: Losing money.

Mr. Hickes: Well, you would have to lose money. Someone has to look after them. Someone has to maintain them. In the winter, who is paying to heat them? You have to heat them because—the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) knows what happens if you do not heat buildings. She has been arguing that here with historical buildings. She says heat them and preserve them.

That is what I am saying with infill housing. Put the people who need them in there. Sure, you might not get high, big rent for them, but at least someone is in there to look after them. Some individuals who go away on vacation and stuff, they would welcome a family to move into their home or a relative to move into their home to make sure their home is properly and adequately looked after. I am sure that has happened to other members of the Chamber today. I am sure that has happened because we know, when a building is empty, something will go wrong, something will happen.

Well, let us put the people who need those homes into those houses. Let us put some of the people who are in the area who are willing to look after those housing programs—give them the responsibility. You know we just saw about a week or so ago housing authority boards wiped right off the map. I think it was 98 of them. I know and I have seen it where the individuals who are part of those tenants' associations live right within the housing units. They know what is going on. They know if there is a problem.

In fact, when I was living up in Churchill, I was vice-president for the Churchill Housing Authority. I lived in a government housing unit, and you would be surprised at how many calls and individuals who came to see me about certain little problems here and little problems there. I had many calls and we were able to deal with them locally right there. I hope somewhere it changes. I do not know if it will, but I hope somewhere it will change.

I do not know how much time I have left.

An Honourable Member: Oh, you have lots, George. Go on.

Mr. Hickes: Lots yet. Okay. One minute. Okay.

I would just like to wrap up by addressing some of the needs in Point Douglas, like we have health needs. The POWER program, there is no commitment for funding of that project. It was previously committed under the Mount Carmel Clinic and hopefully that will be.

I would just like to end that I have been dealing with a lot of senior citizens in Point Douglas, and there has been a proposal—I think it was the Liberals who introduced it—and that is the Pharmacard for the seniors where they do not have to up-front the money. I personally would support something like that, because I see a lot of seniors who say we do not have the money to pay up-front for our medication, wait for our cheques to come back. If they had that Pharmacard, I think it would benefit the seniors, our parents, our grandparents of Manitoba.

I would support that 100 percent, and I think that is something—it does not matter whose idea it is or what government or what party. If it is best for Manitobans, let us view it seriously. I know it is going to be difficult to work co-operatively at times, but at times we need to put our politics aside and work for the betterment of Manitoba and for the people of Manitoba. So I thank you for that.

* (1610)

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): First, Mr. Speaker, let me welcome you back to what I am sure will prove to be, or perhaps I should say is proving to be, an even more exciting and challenging session. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your co-operation, assistance and understanding that you afforded me during the last session in my role as Deputy Speaker.

I would also like to welcome all members back to the Legislature and take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to all honourable members for their support and the co-operation that was extended to me last session while performing my duties as Deputy Speaker and Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole House.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not convey my congratulations to our newly-appointed Sergeant-at-Arms and if I did not express my

sincere appreciation to the pages, our Clerk, our deputy clerk, our committee clerks and all members of the Legislative Assembly staff who have been so helpful. I would also like to thank Premier Filmon for the confidence he has placed in me as I continue to serve as Deputy Speaker and Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole House.

I am also pleased, Mr. Speaker, to extend sincere congratulations to two of my colleagues, the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) and the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) on their recent cabinet appointments. I wish them every success in their new endeavours. I know they will work diligently in their portfolios to ensure that our government continues to build a strong Manitoba.

I also want to thank the people of Seine River constituency for the honour and privilege of standing before this Assembly as their representative. At each community function and event that I attend within my constituency, I am ever mindful of the challenges that confront us, and I am encouraged by their warmth, sincerity and, most importantly, by the confidence they have placed in me. During the last few months, I have had the opportunity to participate in many different community events, some of which included the St. Vital Mustangs' awards banquet, community centre winter carnivals and the Festival du Voyageur. I have also had the opportunity to meet with the Normand Park Residents' Association, the St. Vital School Division trustees and administration, the Save Our Seine committee and the South Winnipeg business association, to name a few.

One event, however, was especially a privilege for me. I had the privilege of enjoying a potluck supper with the Grade 9 students and staff of Victor Wyatt School as well as their friends, teachers, parents and chaperones from the Wasagamack reserve. This exchange program affords the young people of Victor Wyatt School an opportunity to visit the reserve and to learn more about aboriginal heritage and culture, while at the same time affording the young people from the reserve an opportunity to meet new friends, share ideas and participate in activities such as bowling that they do not normally have an opportunity to enjoy. This exchange recognizes that Manitoba's greatest resource is indeed our people.

Mr. Speaker, one of the initiatives that demonstrates our government's commitment to

aboriginal people was the \$81,300 provincial grant to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to continue its ongoing representation of Indian bands on issues relating to treaty rights, child welfare, and social and economic development.

As I meet with and listen to the people of Manitoba and of Seine River constituency in particular, it is clear that their concerns centre around the economy. It is therefore appropriate that the main focus of my remarks today will be the Manitoba economy. It is well recognized that the economy is in recession both locally and nationally. Indeed, we are faced by global recession. I believe that all of my colleagues and the honourable members of this Legislature feel as troubled as I do by the impact of this recession on our province.

In these difficult times it is only through co-operation and partnerships between government, business and individuals that we can bring about effective measures for quick, economic recovery. The Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy and Winnipeg 2000 are just two examples of such initiatives.

This government is committed to ensuring that the provincial economy has the necessary ingredients for self-sustaining growth over the long term. This will be accomplished only through the development of a strong and positive business climate by encouraging private investment, in honouring this government's commitment not to raise taxes through careful stewardship of Manitoba's resources, and sound fiscal responsibility and planning.

In times such as these, this commitment represents a serious challenge, but I believe that it is only through measures such as these that the Manitoba economy can evolve on a self-sustaining basis while cushioning the burden dealt by federal cutbacks in transfer payments to our province. Small business is the main source of economic activity in my constituency of Seine River and in this province as a whole.

The electronics and info-tech sector is one area where Manitoba small businesses have demonstrated an ability to keep pace with and share in the growth of a fast-moving industry. We must maintain and increase that ability as we seek to ensure that further economic benefits are realized from many evolving market opportunities. I am

proud, Mr. Speaker, to be part of a government that promotes such endeavours.

Recently, I listened intently as the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer)—and it is indeed unfortunate he is not present in the House this afternoon to hear these remarks—during his response to the throne speech, raised his voice at least three octaves louder than acceptable safe hearing decibel levels, and criticized my Premier and our government for supporting the U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and I quote, Madam Deputy Speaker, then we go to the whole issue of trade with the United States. He supported it and his whole front bench supported the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Madam Deputy Speaker, we have lost 12,000 manufacturing jobs, and we have a 10.1 percent unemployment rate in the city of Winnipeg. It is growing every day. It is growing every day, and all they do is fingerpoint at other governments and other areas.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to put some factual information on the record about free trade and the impact it has had on Manitoba's economy. My source is *Western Perspectives*, February 1991. Manitoba and Alberta have enjoyed the best export performance in terms of trade with the U.S. during the first 20 months of the agreement, compared to trade in 1988. Over the last five years, with respect to improving relative terms of trade with the U.S., the gap between export and import growth, Manitoba has had the best performance in the country.

* (1620)

This report indicates that between 1989 and 1990, Manitoba's average export increase to the United States was 9 percent. That is right. I repeat, 9 percent. Only Prince Edward Island at 24 percent, whose exports were mostly potatoes, and Alberta that also rivalled at 9 percent, rivalled Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote from Diane Francis' article in the Wednesday, March 7 issue of *Financial Post*. A fascinating report by the Canada West Foundation, a nonpartisan and federalist, shows that the Free Trade Agreement will not make us hewers of wood and drawers of water. It also underscores the dishonesty on the part of trade unionists, socialists and liberals who claim that 200,000 manufacturing job losses are a result of free trade.

The facts are, the recession and lousy sales by the big three automakers are the root cause. In the

last recession, 300,000 such jobs were lost without free trade. Indeed, service sector job creation more than compensated for these losses despite the recession. Is that not amazing?

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba was built on a tradition of agricultural activity. Having spent the early years of my life in rural Manitoba, I am well acquainted with this aspect of our heritage. Today, a large part of the Seine River constituency known as the St. Germain area is largely agriculturally based with a predominance of large market gardening operations, which serve as constant reminders of the valuable role which agriculture plays in the economic strength of this province. Sadly, however, as commodity prices fail to match cost increases, we are witnessing a serious erosion of net farm incomes.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that our government is addressing this problem through its commitment to diversification of farm outputs, greater utilization of agri products for domestic markets through local value-added processing accompanied by improved standards for rural communities and lifestyles. We must work quickly to maintain a position of strength in this fast-paced, ever-changing world.

Mr. Speaker, as a former educator and current representative of a constituency comprised primarily of young families, I am particularly saddened by the declining quality of our education system. In listening to the parents and educators of Seine River, I hear the repeated concern that our high school graduates are not adequately equipped with the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Consequently, we are unable to meet the labour needs of our growing small business sector.

Similarly, I am told that our university graduates are not always well-equipped to flourish in contemporary economic activity, which is oriented toward high tech services, brain work and information handling. In light of these deep concerns, I am very pleased that this government is committed to a renewal of the entire spectrum of the education system such that our children will be well-equipped with skills and knowledge linked to the new economic realities. I am confident that our education system can be shaped to bring skills and needs together.

I hope that as parents, educators, elected representatives and Manitobans, we will work together to achieve that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased that our government is committed to maintaining a leadership role in environmental matters. Even with our current fiscal realities, it is clear that environment is a growth industry. Environmental knowledge is a marketable and an exportable commodity, a fact which is recognized by our government in its recent commitment to advance an environmental industries development strategy.

In Seine River constituency, community organizations are taking their own initiatives to reduce waste, recycle to clean up our river and promote local environmental awareness. I would like to thank the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) for his role in the efforts of the Save Our Seine committee. This is a prime example of how communities and government can work co-operatively together in partnerships to ensure that Manitoba's natural resources are protected and enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the important issue of health care, I am indeed fortunate to have had the privilege of participating in our government's consultation team on alcohol, drug and substance abuse.

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

I would like to thank Premier Filmon and the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for allowing me this opportunity to be part of a unique, interesting and rewarding consultation process. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of my colleagues the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), a very capable and competent chairperson; the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) and the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

I enjoyed our association as we travelled across Manitoba, and I will always cherish found memories of our experiences. As we held public consultations across the province, we listened to Manitobans from all walks of life and we learned that Manitobans do want government to promote healthier lifestyles and, believe it or not, many Manitobans even suggested that putting more money into the system was not necessarily the appropriate solution to this ongoing, complex problem and that perhaps we should pro-actively pursue solutions based on effective, efficient, preventive programs.

I also sensed a willingness from many Manitobans to form partnerships and to work co-operatively with government to ensure that the importance of this problem is reflected in all government policies and programs.

Mr. Acting Speaker, high property taxes continue to be the major source of concern to most of my constituents. I am pleased that this government is committed to introducing amendments to The City of Winnipeg Act which will address the size of council and ultimately assist in reducing the uncontrollable spending at City Hall.

* (1630)

Mr. Acting Speaker, as a former City of Winnipeg councillor and one who has experienced first-hand the frustrations of the budget process at City Hall, I am convinced that a reduction of councillors is a very important initial step in ensuring fiscal management and fiscal responsibility at City Hall.

In 1986, when I first ran for City Council, I ran on a platform that supported a reduced council. Subsequently, when the council review of the white paper on changes to The City of Winnipeg Act was debated and voted on clause by clause, I consistently spoke in support of and voted for a reduction in the size of City Council.

Continually my constituents support our government's position. In fact, when over 1,400 Winnipeggers responded to a survey on Winnipeg's future, the results were overwhelmingly in support, and I quote, the question asked was: In your opinion, should the number of city councillors be (a) increased? The response was 2 percent; (b) decreased? The response was 82 percent—82 percent; and thirdly, remain the same? 16 percent.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we must all assume responsibility for today's fiscal realities. Current projections see little or no growth in government revenue over the next two years. Our options are limited. Taxpayers do not want any level of government to increase any tax. We cannot continue to spend, spend, spend, and in a number of cases throw good dollars after bad. If we share the burden, we can emerge as a strong province while at the same time maintaining our vital services.

Over the past few days we have all heard considerable shallow rhetoric from the honourable Leader of the Opposition and members opposite, but I believe that Mike McCourt said it best this Tuesday when he said, and I quote: "Well now, how

things change! The NDP, now the official opposition and confident of its regained power base is in thunderous flight these days denouncing the government, moving no confidence motions. Lashing about with might and mane against mostly the same issues and habits that Filmon and his sobuteruns (sic) displayed back in the minority days. We are accustomed to political wind-baggery in this nation of ours. The Right Honourable Prime Minister, for example, has few peers but Doer is making his mark as a finious (sic) fog horn. More to the point, he's doing it as the mythical King Midas. Promising gold from his mere political touch. The government which must count short supply of real money does not have the same luxury. We can only hope that the people of this province are adequately aware of the difference. This is McCourt and that's the last word."

Everyone has their own set of priorities. Let us use these priorities, those good ideas and our determination to succeed, to cope with today's realities and build a stronger tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is my last word.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is once again a great pleasure to be able to stand in this Chamber and to give my response to this government's second throne speech since the mandate of September of last year.

First of all, through you, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Speaker on work that he has done in the past number of years. He has done simply a fantastic job and I tip my hat to him.

In regard to the Clerk and the Clerk's office and the pages and the Sergeant-at-Arms and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, we appreciate the efforts. We know without you the Chamber cannot function in the manner in which it does function and that includes, of course, our Hansard staff.

I want to start off by commenting on the cabinet changes that took place a short while ago. One of the biggest questions that I have to ask myself is why those two ministers were shuffled out and other ministers were not shuffled around?

I must say it was a major disappointment for myself to see some of the ministers remain in the portfolios that they were given because they were very disappointing in their performances over the past couple of years. We had expected that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) would have done the right thing, the decent thing and relieved them of their

duties and at the very least, switched them around, give them a different portfolio, let someone else try. I am speaking in regard to the Department of Health and Department of Education.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I did want to comment in regard to the two ministers that have left cabinet. I personally had thought that they were very good individuals. Both had a lot of integrity, even though some might question the political savoir of one of the ministers, and the former minister from Portage la Prairie, I would argue, probably had done a considerable amount when he was in Consumers and Corporate Affairs. We saw him bring forward substantial legislation in which our critic at the time, Mr. Patterson, or the former member from Radisson, had worked—

An Honourable Member: Fine gentleman.

Mr. Lamoureux: The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) is quite right, a very fine gentleman—worked very closely with the then minister in trying to bring about good legislation for the consumers of the province of Manitoba.

I guess I can understand to a certain degree why he got considerably upset when the NDP would howl at him saying that this government is not doing enough when it comes to protecting the consumers. When you take a look at what the New Democratic Party has done in consumer legislation in the past 15 of the 22 years that they were in office, that in fact he does have a case that can be made in terms of him bringing in more than what the New Democrats did in their long period in office.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would anxiously await the next cabinet shuffle. I do think it is necessary as I try to point out or try to explain, there are some areas of concern that we have as an opposition party that were not addressed in that cabinet shuffle. Hopefully, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will see fit to make the changes that we believe are so necessary.

In terms of the throne speech, I was very surprised to see that the New Democrats had in fact introduced an amendment to the throne speech. The reason why I was surprised to see that was because it was only a few months previously that they voted against an amendment to the budget that the Liberal opposition party had brought in.

I went over the amendment to the throne speech that they had brought forward, and if I go through it very briefly, if you look at the first one, (a), you will find that that was taken into account in three different

areas of our amendment to the budget, 8, 9 and 10. In (b) it was taken care of in part 9; (c) was taken care of in part 6 of our amendment; (d) was taken care of with 7 and 5; (e) was in regard to aboriginal people; (f) was in regard to an environmental strategy. The Leader of the New Democratic Party, when he introduced the amendment, gave two or three words on those subjects. There was nothing that the Leader of the official opposition said that really showed any concern on his behalf for (e) and (f), the very motion that he had moved.

* (1640)

Things that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) had missed were things such as the free trade deal and the failure of the government to introduce anything, take any type of initiative to ensure that job training, the whole question of the impact of the free trade deal would be minimized by this government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are a few areas that I did want to comment on somewhat briefly. One is in regard to education. The whole question of what the government is doing in regard to education causes us a great deal of concern. We have a government of the day that is giving unrealistic increases to the private schools while at the same time not giving enough of an increase to the public schools.

It is laudable, and we can appreciate the need and the reason for having private schools and to bringing them up to that 80 percent figure, and we support that. But, Mr. Acting Speaker, where I have or the Liberal Party has a problem is, why is it that we have a government that is increasing the public sector at 2 percent and giving the private sector such a greater percentage of an increase? If we are in the hard times that this government proclaims that we are and in times of budgetary constraint, that should be reflected not only in the public schools, but also in the private schools.

I am very disappointed in terms of the New Democrats' approach to the whole private school issue. Time after time they will take the political side of things. Whenever they talk about private schools, they talk about Ravenscourt and Balmoral.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are a number of private schools that they never ever mention, schools like the Holy Ghost or St. Paul's, St. Edwards, Joseph Wolinsky School. It is a very long list, but the New Democratic Party chooses to leave those schools out, and they choose that so they can fan a fire of hate toward the private school system. That is

unfortunate, because the responsible thing to do is to move toward that 80 percent compromise that the Catholic school system has agreed to.

After all, Mr. Acting Speaker, if you take a look at our Constitution, it says that they are entitled to 100 percent, including capital expenditures. They are not asking for that. They are settling for a compromise that will give not only Catholic schools but all private schools the same treatment. That is something that is very important. It is a compromise that we have recognized in our party, and we find it very unfortunate that the New Democrats see this as an issue that they can score political points on by bashing two private schools and tarnishing the remainder of the schools.

It is very unfortunate, especially when you take a look at some of the children, even some of the members of the New Democratic Party who attended. The Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) himself attended a private school, and yet they can come across as holier than thou.

We look to the west of us, where we have Saskatchewan. They have an independent school board. We did not see Mr. Blakeney when he was the Premier, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, try to dismantle that, because Mr. Blakeney and the New Democrats in Saskatchewan knew that it was necessary. I am sure we are not going to see the New Democratic Premier of Ontario starting to dismantle the independent and private schools in that area.

I would suggest to those New Democrats who are here now to talk to some of their colleagues and start looking at the principle of the issue and maybe meet with some of their counterparts from abroad and start addressing what is in the best interests of all Manitobans, including those who attend private schools. After all, they too are working people.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the government has chosen to pass the problem of school financing down to the school boards while at the same time not offering any ideas in terms of how they can take cost-saving measures that will ensure that the services would be protected. We have seen a number of services that are going to be lost. The government in Manitoba has criticized, and justifiably so, the national government, their Tory cousins, for the approach that they have taken in terms of the transfer payments toward education, and have criticized them heavily.

What the federal Tories are doing to them, they are doing to the school boards. They talk about a 2 percent increase, and you have to ask the question, is it really in fact a 2 percent increase if you take into account the cost-of-living increases, inflation and so forth? It works out to be a decrease.

How are the school boards going to be able to make decisions that the government says, in particular the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) says, that the school boards can make? The Minister of Education on numerous occasions tells the public that the school board is the one that makes the decisions. At the same time, Mr. Acting Speaker, whether it is building a school, setting a curriculum, balancing a budget, it is through the Minister of Education who makes the policy decisions, because they control the purse strings.

Unfortunately, as a direct result of what the government of the day has chosen to do, some Manitobans will pay more than others, because what you are doing is you are forcing the school boards to collect their taxes from property tax owners. That in itself is a very unfair tax.

I look at Winnipeg No. 1, and the issue of education is by far in the top three anyway in terms of issues in my riding. Nothing upsets my constituents more than when you start talking about the need to reform education and that the government of the day is not doing anything about it. We have now introduced a resolution on reforming our school divisions or looking at reforming our school divisions for the past number of sessions. It will not be introduced this session. We hope that the government has received that message.

It is very unfortunate the remarks that they put on the record when it did come up for debate, so we feel we know where the government is coming from and, unfortunately, it is not taking us in the right direction. Because of the number of inequities that exist, Winnipeg No. 1, which is by far the largest school division, of over 33,000 students, has to offer many other different programs that other school divisions do not have to make available. There is a higher demand for lunch programs in the core area and in areas such as Weston and Shaughnessy Park and areas in Burrows as opposed to out in Tuxedo and so forth.

All of Winnipeg No. 1 residents are the ones who have to pick up the tab for all of these needed,

valuable programs that not only Winnipeg No. 1 residents benefit, but the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba benefit, because many people will move. They had access to the programs that are offered in Winnipeg 1. There are other programs that other divisions are able to offer because of their tax base that they might have that are in some cases better, some might even say superior to other school divisions, because they have the finances. Some school boards do not necessarily have to increase their taxes as much because they do not have as many demands.

* (1650)

Mr. Acting Speaker, since I have been elected, one of my top issues has been to try and get the government to recognize the problems of our school divisions. It is very popular for us to talk about reforming City Hall. Everyone wants to see City Hall and, in particular, the number of city councillors reduced and so forth. Well, I am sure the government will find that it would be equally as popular to do the same thing with the school boards, and it has to be looked at. The government has to recognize the fact that the sooner they look at it, the sooner we are going to be able to resolve so many of these inequities. It is beyond me as to why none of the back benches or Conservative MLAs in this Chamber has not made it an issue for himself or herself, because I do not believe it is being fought in the Conservative caucus. That is disappointing.

Even if they had someone, an MLA from the north end, that represented Winnipeg No. 1 School Division, they would get the same type of issues being raised that I am getting. Maybe it is not as high a priority. Mr. Acting Speaker, it is important for the government still to address the needs of all of the residents.

They talk about efficiency. I do not want to draw any conclusions or make any party statement but, surely, 10 school divisions in the city of Winnipeg is unnecessary. My personal opinion on the issue is that Winnipeg could probably suffice with a much lower number of school divisions. In Calgary there are two, an independent and a public—a city of the same size. It is actually likely a bit larger than Winnipeg now, but it is something that is very, very necessary.

Mr. Acting Speaker, before I leave the issue of school boundaries and the whole question of reform, I trust that some of the Conservative

government MLAs will raise the issue, at least look at the issue and look at it with an open mind. I would be more than happy to sit down and go over some of the issues that have been brought up with myself and point out specifically where many of the inequities lie.

I also wanted to comment on Health. Health is our fastest growing expenditure in Manitoba. It is our greatest expenditure. I think it is a responsibility for all three political parties in this Chamber to come up with solutions to start addressing the whole question of health care in a very positive fashion.

The Liberal Party, through different mechanisms, has done just that. We have come up with suggestions that are cost savings, more efficient for the government in terms of services and getting better services to the people of Manitoba. We look at the Pharmacare card program, which was an excellent idea brought forward by the Liberal Party I believe in the '86 campaign, once again brought forward back in '88.

The New Democratic Party adopted our ideas on the Pharmacare card program, and we appreciate that. What we need is all three parties to agree, and most importantly the Conservative Party, because obviously they are the ones who are in government, and they can make it happen.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has said that it is not feasible, that it cannot be done. All we need to do, Mr. Acting Speaker, is look to the west of us in Saskatchewan, where they have it. Not only do they have it for seniors, they have it for everyone, so how can it not be feasible for Manitoba and be feasible for Saskatchewan? If anything, I would have thought it would have been the opposite.

I believe that the Conservative government and particularly the Minister of Health should not be so quick to brush it to the side. He should reopen the whole question of the Pharmacare card program and look at implementing the program, because it is something that is long overdue.

My colleague, the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), has talked about the community-based clinics. Community-based clinics are another cost saving, efficient way of trying to ensure that we have health care well into the next century in terms of universality and something that we believe the government of the day should be moving a lot faster on. They give indications that this is something that they are willing to look at, but they have to start

acting. They have been in office now for three years. They have to start being more responsible and start taking initiatives that will benefit—it does not have to be their own initiatives; there is nothing wrong with taking a Liberal initiative. They have done that before; there is nothing wrong with doing it again.

There is a problem when it comes to health care. I had touched upon it at the beginning when I was making reference to the cabinet, and that is the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). Mr. Acting Speaker, we have a minister who operates on a confrontational basis. We saw that when the doctors were up for contract negotiations, and the manner in which he treated the doctors. We have seen that in the treatment of our nurses, of 9,500 nurses, the backbone of our health care system. The manner in which the government has chosen to deal with our health care professionals is not proper. The government has a responsibility to negotiate in good faith. The Minister of Health has not been doing that with our health care profession.

At a time in which the Minister of Health should be working with our doctors, working with our nurses—who else knows better where and how we can save and better service Manitobans through our health care system than our doctors and our nurses? How can he expect full co-operation from them when you treat them in the manner in which they have been treated?

* (1700)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have often argued, the greatest resource an elected official has are the constituents that they represent. As the Minister of Health, he represents a great number of constituents. I would suggest that it is time that he go to those constituents and start tapping into that great source of knowledge and come up with some ideas and start working with our health care professionals instead of opposing them.

Universal health care is very important to the Liberal Party. It was the Liberal Party that ensured universal access to health care, and I am concerned about the potential for universal health care and what is going to be happening to it. We have seen in the past, governments in particular, the New Democratic Party when they were in government, when they closed down health care beds. The manner in which this government is dealing with our health care, they say it is a No. 1 priority. I am not convinced that it is a No. 1 priority. In short, I would

like to see them give more positive signs to ensure that we will have universal health care, because it is so very, very important, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I wanted to comment on the deficit. The deficit is quickly becoming a very heavy burden, if it is not already a heavy burden, for not only the Province of Manitoba but for all of the provincial and national governments. If in fact in Manitoba it was a department, as it was pointed out from one of the previous speakers before me, it would be the third largest department. That is of great concern, especially knowing that most of that deficit is owed abroad. Unlike the national deficit, where most of the deficit in terms of interest is paid through Canada Savings Bonds, Treasury Bills and so forth and in interest it goes back to Canadians, the provincial deficit is not the same. We have money that is leaving the province, money that could be supplying better services to Manitobans, so it has to be addressed, and it is important that it be addressed in a very honest fashion.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

We can all recall, Mr. Speaker, the government's first budget when they brought in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. At the time, we had branded it as a Tory slush fund, and the major purpose for that fund was to make the Conservatives look better when the deficit starts to rise. That was a major part of our argument as to why we opposed it. It was a way in which the Conservatives would be able to cook the books, because if we look back a couple of short years, we actually had a surplus budget, and that is the way the books should have been portrayed.

Now the throne speech has spent the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to bring down their bottom line that they so often talk about, and that is, of course, their deficit. So our arguments, in most part, when the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was brought in, turned out to be very true. Mr. Speaker, it is time that the government be more honest with their bookkeeping, and it will be interesting to see what happens to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund nowadays. Will it grow? I would suspect that at this time we will see very minimal growth in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

There is a concern regarding taxes. No one likes to see personal income taxes increase. I do not like to see personal income taxes increase, Mr. Speaker, but one has to ask the question: If you do

not increase personal taxes, are you setting Manitobans up for one year of a 5, 6, 7 percent increase? Is there going to be a time in which you are going to make up for not increasing personal taxes? There has to be a time when you ask the question of services and the services that you are offering to Manitobans or, in this case, services that you are cutting.

One of the services, when I mentioned about education, was the ESL program. That is the type of service that is needed yet is being cut back on. Even though I would not want to say that we would be in favour of increasing personal income tax on a yearly basis, I think it is irresponsible to rule out personal income tax increases, because you do not know what the revenues are going to be like in the future. The tax money has to come from somewhere.

The New Democrats had suggested a 10-year freeze on personal income tax. Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) did not realize, I guess, when he said that, is that there are so-called rich Manitobans whom he was including under that freeze. I am sure, if they had time to rethink that policy statement, they probably would not say a 10-year freeze, that there is in fact a bit of regret. I am sure that some day the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) will admit to that mistake.

City Council is something that the Liberal Party has looked at for a number of years already. We see that the government has finally come up with a proposal that will, among other things, reduce the number of city councillors in between 12 to 15. We think it is the proper way to go. It is time that City Council start concentrating more on the policy rather than the administration. The whole mentality of "you scratch my back, I scratch your back" that so many people in the public perceive of their city councillors will hopefully dissipate, because it is something that is long overdue. In that sense, I congratulate the government in addressing this particular problem, but right from the onset, Mr. Speaker, the minister made a mistake by appointing a wards boundary committee.

This is a form of gerrymandering in its worst way. It is beyond me why the government—I should not say it is beyond me—one of two things, it is either one of the more politically stupid things the Conservative government has done, or in all fairness, the minister did not have an understanding -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) does have the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess, Mr. Speaker, we need to ask the question why it is the government would choose to go about appointing a political board rather than following what has been set out in legislation, and that was to establish a ward commission that would not have cost the taxpayers any money, that would not have been political.

* (1710)

Mr. Speaker, what the government has done has called into question the whole process. Whatever comes out of this committee is going to be invalid. Look what is happening over in Saskatchewan with the electoral boundaries in Saskatchewan, with what the Premier of Saskatchewan has done, and the chaos that has now been created as a direct result.

What the Conservative government in Manitoba has done is even worse. The government should in all honesty dismantle this board and do what the legislation says. The legislation says that it should be the University of Winnipeg president, the Chief Election Officer and the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. That is the group of individuals who should be looking at the whole question of the ward redistribution. -(interjection)- The Deputy Premier is asking me if I am questioning the integrity of the committee. I am questioning the integrity and the wisdom of this government and how the government can make such a mistake that would take any credit that this government would have received had they done it the proper way, the way that was set out in the legislation.

They have lost that. They have tarnished what they are doing because they decided in a very political way to gerrymander the whole process. I will suggest to you when the legislation comes forward that they will find out that that was a mistake, that they should not have done it. This is when one has to wonder how much integrity the government of the day, the ministers in particular, the Minister of Urban Affairs, has. If the government has any integrity -(interjection)- and the Deputy Premier says he has. He says the government has. He is not sure if he has. The former Minister of Highways says he has. I trust that the Deputy Premier has.

So if he has, then do the right thing and repeal the committee and put in place what the legislation

says. -(interjection)- The Leader of the New Democratic Party says, what happens if they come back with 15 wards? What is wrong with 15 wards? I would appreciate for the New Democratic Party to come clean and tell us the real reason why they oppose 15 city councillors, or 12 to 15.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to enter into the debate regarding the Speech from the Throne. I welcome you back, Sir, as well as all my colleagues on both sides of this House, and I congratulate the new members of the cabinet and all of those other ministers who are reassigned different portfolios.

I have listened to some of the members opposite as they have praised the government and its policies. It would appear to me they live in a world that is quite different than the one I live in. I am confronted by, and I understand, the hardship this government and their federal cousins are forcing upon many Manitobans.

For the last four Christmases, I have helped the social assistance department in the town of Selkirk deliver Christmas hampers. It seems to me that after we had delivered those hampers on December 23 or 24 by eight o'clock at night every year I seem to be getting more and more tired. It seemed that we were doing more and more work every year.

Unfortunately, although it speaks favourably of the generosity of the residents of Selkirk, we were delivering more and more hampers every year. Every year at Christmas, more residents of Selkirk needed a hamper, which is a food handout, to survive and to enjoy the supposedly festive season, so I looked into the numbers.

In 1987, 170 hampers were requested and delivered. In 1988, 190 hampers were requested and delivered, which represented a rise of 11 percent over the previous year. In 1989, the number jumped to 238, which is 25 percent more than in '88, and last year, just a few months ago, we delivered 288, which was again an increase of 21 percent from the previous year. It is a lot of hampers and it is a lot of work. People were quite surprised to see their MLA delivering hampers.

As well, families and individuals who receive municipal social assistance in Selkirk rose 14 percent from February '90 to February '91, and I do commend the Town of Selkirk because they did

increase the assistance rates by 7 percent this year. It is a very telling statistic.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dewar: They tell of Manitobans who are forced to do without some of our basic necessities of life, the proper diet or clothing for their children, of course, human dignity and self-respect. These numbers also tell of failed Conservative economic policies. Sorry, guys.

I mean Conservative governments for the last year spoke about the strong economy and bright provincial future, and since September this province has fallen into recession as jobs are lost and public education is slashed. Health care is put in risk. Ten thousand Manitobans have lost their jobs in the last year. In February alone, 1,200 people in the manufacturing sector lost their jobs.

Manitoba Rolling Mills, Selkirk's largest employer, laid off 400 employees for a week due to poor economic conditions, and this is the first time this has happened since the 1981-82 recession. I worked there then and remember being laid off and working, laid off and working. This terrible cycle of uncertainty finally caused many employees to quit.

I feel true empathy for working people in this province who are going through now what I went through then, but we were lucky enough then to have a provincial government who cared about working people. They were prepared to stimulate the economy. We at the Rolling Mills and other Manitobans fared well while the rest of the country lingered in recession. The NDP government then made job training and job creation their first priority. It can still be done if the political will exists but, unfortunately, it appears it does not.

What this government proposed to do—well, there is talk about cutting important employment programs like CareerStart and the Northern Youth Corps. I feel one of the more tragic cuts will be the closing of the eight Human Resources Opportunity Centres in the province.

* (1720)

I would just like to read from the impact statement on recommended adjustments from the government's Department of Family Services. This is a quote: The Human Resource Opportunity program assists persons on social assistance to enter or return to employment. The program reduces economic and social dependency and

increases the client's problem-solving and employability skills. The process involves vocational assessment and counselling, employment preparation, programming, placement into academic upgrading and skills training. -(interjection)- That is right.

Again, it goes on to say: The target group served are mostly socially disadvantaged or chronically unemployed Manitobans, the majority of whom are social assistance recipients. Referral agencies include district Income Security offices, city welfare offices and municipalities.

It goes on to say: Approximately 4,000 clients were assisted in 1990 and 1991. I have this brochure here from the Selkirk Human Resources Opportunity Centre, which describes the program in more detail: The program is designed to help people develop the skills necessary to choose and get a job. It is important that you understand that the Selkirk Human Resources Opportunity Centre is not a job but prepares participants for work, further training or school. Participants gain the skills they need through personal development and work exposure, and all of the men and women who participate in our program have something in common. They have all had difficulty either getting or keeping a job but, despite this, they want to work and are prepared to work on the problems affecting their employment.

Here are some of the work activities there: woodwork, metalwork, spray painting, signwork, shipping and receiving, cafeteria. Here is a program that helps individuals get off welfare, and I personally know several individuals who went to the program. Some are working full time, some part time, some not working at all. It is unfortunate, but that is always going to be the case. Some have still not secured any full- or part-time employment, but I know all of the participants are better off for it. They have gained tangible things like money—if you call \$124 a week money. It works out to about \$3.30 an hour—friends, employment skills and, of course, intangibles like self-confidence and self-respect.

It would be a terrible blow to those most vulnerable in our society if this program was allowed to be cut. These individuals in many cases will be forced back upon provincial and municipal welfare rolls and inevitably government would have to pick up the tab anyways. It would only make sense to keep this program in operation and I would urge the government to do so.

I would like to make some comments on a survey completed by the residents of the Selkirk constituency last December and I am certain that is a very objective document, believe me. Here is one of the first questions. Helping people through the made-in-Canada recession should be the No. 1 priority for all levels of government? Eighty-four percent agreed with that; 6 percent said they disagreed; and 10 percent had no opinion.

Another question: The province should initiate an all-party legislative committee to meet with business, labour and the public across the province to discuss ways to combat the wave of plant closures and layoffs? Eighty-five percent agreed with that; 7 percent disagreed.

Here is another question which is quite interesting: The government should force existing legislation that would require the City of Winnipeg to treat raw sewage before dumping it into the Red River? Ninety-eight percent agreed; 2 percent disagreed. I wonder who those 2 percent represents. They must still enjoy having raw sewage dumped into the Red. Of course, 83 percent would like to see the province implement a recycling program in the area.

When talking about different priorities, the No. 1 priority is to raise environmental protection standards. The next level is for job creation programs and the third dealing with health care, and they would ask us, it said: Although under federal jurisdiction, do you agree the NDP should speak on the following matters? Continue to oppose the free trade deal. Eight-one percent agreed that we should continue our opposition to the free trade deal, and the proposed free trade deal with Mexico; 79 percent voiced their opinion that we should continue our objection to the free trade deal with Mexico. Wise advice for this government to follow.

Speaking of the free trade deal, I had some very frank discussions recently with the Triple S Business Development Board in Selkirk. This publicly funded local development agency assists and monitors business activities in St. Clements, St. Andrews and the Selkirk area. Anyway, the discussion came around to free trade and its effect on our local business climate and I asked the board what they thought about free trade. Only one individual raised his hand and he said, yes, free trade had affected his business and so was asked, well, in a negative or in a positive way? He said in a negative way. No one questioned his opinion and

no one came to the defence of free trade. Here we have a group of local business people and no one told me that free trade was helping the local economy. The only comment on it was a negative one.

Then the conversation came around to civil servants. They were saying cut, cut, cut, too many civil servants. When I mentioned that huge cuts in the civil servants would hurt the local economy and would probably negate any gains made by this Triple S organization, there was silence in the room, especially since they had raised their concerns over government job loss due to reports that the Selkirk Highways department and 25 jobs may move to Beausejour. So on one hand, they were saying cut government jobs, but then on the other saying, well, you could cut them as long as we do not lose them in Selkirk. -(interjection)- Yes, it is hypocritical.

An Honourable Member: There is only Conrad listening.

Mr. Dewar: Well, he is a good audience.

Now the government has finally put its faulty decentralization plans on hold, maybe as well it would reconsider moving the Highways department from Selkirk to Beausejour. The government admits that it would cost money to move these workers and decentralization was supposed to involve moving jobs to rural Manitoba and not to take jobs from one community to another. It is the time that government put on hold such political action and consulted with the public and affected employees on the merits of moving positions.

I am sure the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) would not want to be remembered in his home community and the town where he went to school, as a Conservative politician who tried to hurt the economic well-being of Selkirk. I hope he does not want to be remembered that way, but if the jobs go, unfortunately he will be. As an MLA from rural Manitoba, I am increasingly disturbed by the actions of this government in breaking their election promises of last year. Decentralization under this government has been a disaster. As has been noted by a number of commentators, the Conservatives chose to move government offices not on the basis of whether the service would be appropriately provided from the new area, but whether it would be politically advantageous in the short term.

As a result, we have the absurd situation of the correspondence units of the Education department

at limbo for some four months while the government looks for a new office in Winkler, its lease having been given up in Winnipeg and the building demolished for a parking lot. It is clear that decentralization has been a bungled mess from the numbers alone, with just 152 of the 700 jobs promised having been moved a year later. In fact, many rural communities have already lost jobs, and many more will lose jobs before the year is out under the new unofficial centralization plans of this government. In the last two weeks alone, we have discovered a number of instances in which government jobs in rural Manitoba are in the process of being cut.

The Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) is actively considering closing Human Resources Opportunity Centres—

* (1730)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In accordance with Rule 35.(2), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the question on the subamendment to the House. The question before the House is the subamendment moved by the honourable Leader of the second opposition party (Mrs. Carstairs). It reads:

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

And this House further regrets that:

- (a) this government is jeopardizing the educational system by arbitrarily restricting funding, failing to prioritize programs, and limiting access to post-secondary education by failing to adequately support colleges and universities as well as requiring these institutions to increase tuition fees;
- (b) this government is undermining the health care system by failing to implement cost-effective community-based and prevention-oriented care;
- (c) this government is failing to address the needs of rural Manitobans by threatening to cut programs to Manitoba farmers, including participation in the Gross Revenue Insurance Program, by supporting the federal government's decision to tie interim assistance to participation in GRIP, and by failing to

present any action plans to diversify rural economies;

- (d) this government is failing to safeguard children and families who are vulnerable by failing to maintain, let alone enhance essential services to Manitoba families;
- (e) this government is allowing environmental standards to be eroded, thereby jeopardizing our natural heritage to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

All those in favour of the proposed subamendments will please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can I have Yeas and Nays, please?

Mr. Speaker: Call in the members.

* (1800)

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yea

Barrett, Carr, Carstairs, Cerilli, Cheema, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Edwards, Evans (Interlake), Evans (Brandon East), Friesen, Gaudry, Harper, Hickes, Lamoureux, Maloway, Martindale, Santos, Storie

Nays

Connery, Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Ducharme, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Manness, McAlpine, McCrae, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Orchard, Penner, Praznik, Reimer, Render, Rose, Stefanson, Vodrey

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 20, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the subamendment defeated.

The hour being after 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, March 14, 1991

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