



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Forest Fire Conditions

Hon. Harry Enns (Acting Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), I have a brief statement to the House.

I am pleased to report that favourable weather conditions, including rain and cooler temperatures, are assisting our firefighting efforts throughout the province today. Favourable weather will allow us to be much more aggressive in our firefighting efforts, and we anticipate making good progress in the next few days. The long-range weather forecast looks positive for firefighting with more precipitation to the end of this week.

At last report, we have 66 fires burning in the province. We have some 500 firefighters on the line, including 50 professional firefighters from Saskatchewan. Otherwise, we are using Manitoba crews. We continue to have 30 helicopters and 11 water bombers, including four from Alberta and two from the Northwest Territories assisting us. Water bombers from the State of Minnesota are available should they be needed.

The Manigotagan area fire remains one of our main concerns. We are continuing to protect the community with 200 firefighters and 60 pieces of heavy equipment. With the favourable weather conditions, the fire will be aggressively attacked today. The St. Theresa Point area fire, which was threatening that community, is being held.

Manitobans are reminded that outdoor burning is not permitted and back-country travel is not recommended. Persons responsible for

fires are being charged. The Manitoba Natural Resources firefighters and firefighters from other provinces are continuing to do an excellent job. The favourable weather conditions will certainly help with their efforts.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) for bringing forth this report on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources. We appreciate the opportunities to keep up to date on what is happening in a troublesome situation for Manitobans who are affected by these fires. Our hope is, too, that we can take advantage of the opportunity of cooler weather and some precipitation to get these fires under control.

We also appreciate the co-operation from neighbours like Saskatchewan, Alberta and Northwest Territories for their assistance in this matter and also the potential assistance from the State of Minnesota. I want to also point out the efforts of local people, local firefighters, all those who are working to help out people who have been affected by these fires, and I am sure that the government can count on our support, our co-operation to do everything we can to maintain a relative level of comfort for people who are in the area.

I also, too, want to point out that the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) has been very active in working and helping the people of his constituency to cope with what is a very bad situation. I think the MLA for Rupertsland deserves a pat on the back for the work that he has been doing in this area as well.

So we look forward to continued updates from the government on a situation that is really very poor for the people who are affected by these fires. So thank you very much to the minister for that.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all

honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon eighteen Grade 5 students from Ralph Maybank School under the direction of Ms. Barbara Young. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey).

Also, forty-four Grade 9 students from Isaac Newton School under the direction of Ms. Jane Lower. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

We also have thirty-eight Grade 9 students from Garden City Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Gordon Cameron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Property Taxes Reduction

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in the early '90s when the deficit was at a record high level, the government raised taxes through the clawback of some property tax credits, \$75 for seniors and another \$75 for other homeowners. We have felt that that and the education funding decreases have resulted in very high property taxes in Manitoba. It is an issue we believe has one of the largest concerns for people about tax pressure.

I would like to ask the government: in light of this concern, in their poll that was released over the weekend looking at tax reduction priorities, why did this government not look at property taxes and reduction of property taxes in Manitoba as one of the options for tax relief in this budget?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for his question and note his newfound interest in tax reduction. We did consult with over 1,200 Manitobans during the budget consultation process, and certainly we looked at a variety of advice that

was given to us. By far, in those consultations, the most common form of tax reduction that Manitobans were looking for was for the income tax, and we followed that direction and lowered the taxes in this province by three percentage points, from 50 percent to 47 percent, giving us the third lowest income tax rate in Canada.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this government polled the people of Manitoba with public money to look at the elimination of payroll taxes for Manitoba large businesses. Of course I do not know why they would poll when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised to eliminate all payroll tax in four years in 1988. [interjection] It is okay, it was only a Tory promise. We did not believe it anyway. Do not worry about it.

Why would this government poll Manitobans with their own money to look at the elimination of payroll taxes for larger Manitoba businesses and not look at the reduction of property taxes for Manitoba homeowners and Manitoba seniors, that they increase taxes by changing the property tax credits?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, besides raising numerous, numerous taxes during the 1980s, the Leader of the Opposition was at the Treasury Board table and the cabinet table when other taxes were created, amongst them the payroll tax. This was a tax on jobs. This was the most difficult tax that Manitobans had to face. We have committed to eliminating it. In fact, we have eliminated the payroll tax on 90 percent of businesses in Manitoba at this time. We are going into a process, with the Lower Tax Commission, to look at other ways and other taxes that can be eliminated and lowered.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Well, they are still committed to eliminating the tax, I suppose, like their '88 promise, in four years. They just did not tell us which four years—the year 2010? But you will not have a chance, because there will be a little bit of a change in the next period of time.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: I did not say what change.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I know they are sensitive about their four-year commitment in 1988, and we will let them live with it.

Lower Tax Commission Property Taxes

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): If the government is saying it is going to have this matter before the so-called tax commission, why is this government refusing to put the matter of property taxes before the people in a public consultation process? They have raised property taxes directly with the clawback on the property tax credits, both for seniors and for individual homeowners. Indirectly, there has been a shift from some \$200 million to \$400 million in the education taxes levied by the school boards since this government has been in office. Why would you not allow the people to have this matter before the tax commission? Why not let people speak on property taxes, along with other taxes?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is factually incorrect. The Lower Tax Commission will be announced in the near future, and I think he will be pleased with the fact that we will be looking at all taxes in Manitoba.

I might just question the member's sincerity on lowering taxes. His member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) indicated that the major tax reduction we announced in this budget was just a cup of coffee. I can imagine the member for Brandon East and the member for Concordia sitting around the cabinet table in the mid-'80s when they raised all these taxes. They could simply say: it is just a cup of coffee; we can raise that tax. Just a second cup of coffee, we can raise another tax. I can tell you, when they were finished in the 1980s, Manitobans were all coffeed out.

Leonard Doust Information Tabling Request

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice: over a week ago I asked the minister to immediately table in this House the

terms of reference for Leonard Doust's review of allegations of criminal wrongdoing in the Conservative vote-rigging scandal. I have now asked five times. I ask the minister: could he possibly explain to Manitobans why he is refusing to table the retainer letter and other communications with Mr. Doust? What is the cover-up this time?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, as I indicated to the member, this was a very delicate matter. I did not want it to appear that I was in any way—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1345)

Mr. Toews: You know, Madam Speaker, I do not find the situation funny. I do not find what happened in that particular circumstance funny; members opposite may. I can tell you that I am as concerned about that situation as any Manitoban, and I want to ensure that the matter is handled properly. I received a copy of the terms of reference from the deputy minister who provided to me those terms of reference, and I am prepared to provide those to the member opposite.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, for the sixth time, I ask the minister: will he now agree to table immediately the terms of reference, the retainer letter and other communications, because I understand there have been many other communications between his deputy and Mr. Doust, so that Manitobans will know what Mr. Doust was asked to look at and what time frame he was asked to look at it in?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I am certainly prepared to table the appointment of the special counsel terms of reference, and it is here for the members.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister possibly explain why he is failing to table what has been asked of him now seven times, and that is all the communications between his department and Mr. Doust, or is he hiding a request to Mr. Doust

that he not provide that report until after an election expected mid to late June?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I have tabled the terms of reference that have been provided to me by the Deputy Attorney General. As you are aware, this is not a matter that any elected official or any member of the executive should be involved in. I do not know the extent to which other materials can be released, but if the member would take the trouble to read the terms of reference, the terms of reference in fact deal with issues of public release.

Child and Family Service Agencies Child Protection Workers

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Last year we raised serious questions regarding statements made at the baby Sophia inquiry by supervisors and workers of Child and Family Services that they were handling three times the recommended number of children—child welfare cases. The issue was raised again in the Winnipeg agencies' strategic plan document, but this minister stated that it was up to each agency to address the issue.

I want to ask the minister: given that, after a similar child's death in New Brunswick, the minister there and her department took responsibility and direct action by hiring 11 new child protection workers and reviewing working conditions, will this minister take similar action, and where is this reflected in the budget?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. I do want to indicate that we take the issue of child protection and child welfare very seriously as a government, and that is one of the reasons that we have increased significantly year after year the resources for the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency. I would say that anywhere between \$5 million and \$7 million per year over the last number of years has been committed to Child and Family Services in Winnipeg because of the issues that they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

The issue of workload is a very serious issue, and we within the department are trying to

work with the agency to identify the circumstances and the situations around workload to try to get some accurate description of how many caseworkers have significant caseloads versus those that may not have as great a caseload and try to figure out with them and work with them to try to ensure that the workers are doing the best that they can with the increased resources that we have been providing.

Hiring Freeze

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, to the same minister. Can the minister explain why the Child and Family Services reorganization plan specifically states that they are supposed to redeploy 31 workers instead of hiring new workers, and it specifically states they are not to hire new workers? Can she explain why?

* (1350)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I do want to indicate that Winnipeg Child and Family Services is a mandated agency whose day-to-day operations are not run by the government in the province of Manitoba. I do want to indicate that, if that is a question that my honourable friend has, I think it is a question that she needs to ask the CEO of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency to get the answer.

Ms. Cerilli: I want to ask the minister, who is responsible for Child and Family Services, why she is continuing to put children at risk, and when the recommendations from the baby Sophia inquiry will be released and those recommendations will be provided for. Will she make the commitment to provide for those recommendations by removing the freeze on hiring at Child and Family Services?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, my honourable friend is a little off the wall. I did not put any freeze on any hiring at Winnipeg Child and Family Services. If the agency has some directive in place, I will certainly look into it, but I do not make the decisions on the day-to-day operations. All I know is that we have put in excess of \$5 million per year of additional money into the Winnipeg Child and Family

Services agency. They have to run their operations the best they see fit within the resources that they have available. We have increased significantly the money for protection and care of children in our Winnipeg agency.

Post-Secondary Education Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, in 1996 this government cut \$22 million from the post-secondary education institutions in this province, and under Bill 34 it offloaded the municipal taxes onto each institution. This was the equivalent, as we said at the time, of close to a 9 percent cut across the board, and it has been there for each of the last two years.

I would like to ask the minister to tell us whether he is asking Manitobans to believe that the 2 percent increase this year to post-secondary education is equivalent to that cut of \$22 million each year.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, overall funding for post-secondary education in this fiscal year is in the neighbourhood of 5 percent. The base budgets are in the neighbourhood of 2 percent, but we are addressing some very critical requirements in post-secondary education, addressing the challenges that fiscal fitness is presenting us with in Manitoba. By fiscal fitness, I refer to the fact that we have come to a point, after some very difficult years in Manitoba, where the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) is able to lay before this Legislature and Manitobans a budget that provides 5 percent for education in Manitoba, provides a 10 percent additional expenditure for health, at the same time reducing taxes in Manitoba. Those reflect the priorities Manitobans told the previous Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) during the pre-budget consultations. I personally took part in one of those consultations, and I know how they work. I know what the people in my community were saying: They were saying: put some money into health and education and do some modest tax reduction. That is exactly what we saw in the budget just last week.

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister, whom I will in fact commend for actually taking

responsibility clearly for that \$22 million cut each year—and he is the first minister to have done that—confirm that the rapid increase in fees, the reductions in courses, the reductions to the libraries are all issues that Manitoba students and their parents are facing as a result of his government's \$22 million cut each year into post-secondary education?

Mr. McCrae: I think that the best measurement of the commitment of a government to any particular pursuit is the percentage of its total budget that it puts toward that particular priority. Compared with the level of funding for education by the Pawley-Doer administration, I am quite happy to stand here and talk about a 19.3 percent total budget commitment on education versus the 17.7 percent left to us by the New Democrats. When they came into office, it was at 21 percent. So I say: who are the hackers and slashers in this place except the Pawley-Doer administration, hacking and slashing education, at the same time putting Manitobans and our grandchildren into debt for the next 30 years. Madam Speaker, go figure.

Ms. Friesen: Well, since the minister wants to talk in percentages, would the minister tell the House whether he has taken the responsible step of speaking to the institutions about the impact of those 9 percent cuts across the board in each of the last few years made specifically by this government? What has been the consequence, and has the minister asked for a report?

* (1355)

Mr. McCrae: In our institutions, we have achieved amongst the lowest, if not the lowest, tuition fees for students at our community colleges, third lowest fees at our universities. That is pretty significant at a time when we are still trying to finance the debt left to us by the previous administration. Honourable members tend to forget about this when they raise their questions in the House.

The honourable member for Wolseley sits right next to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) who is telling us, if they had the opportunity, there would be no tax cuts from the New Democrats, contrary to what we hear from the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr.

L. Evans) who says our tax cuts in our budget are not sufficient. It kind of makes you wonder who is in charge over there.

Fiscal Stabilization Fund Minimum Balance

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Whether it is academics, the Provincial Auditor or the Liberal Party, we have called into question the ways in which this government manipulates the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Yesterday in the House the minister indicated, in relation to the fund: "we will be building that up with future revenue that comes into government, and it still remains as our target."

The specific question to the Minister of Finance is: What is this government estimating to be their target for the next budget with respect to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund? What percentage?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Finance): The target remains at 5 percent.

Budget Multiyear Budgeting

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Can the Minister of Finance then indicate whether or not this government is committed to bringing into this Chamber multiyear budgeting, something which former ministers of Finance have advocated for? Is this minister prepared to do that?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Finance): If the member would look into the budget document, there is a medium-term plan which outlines the projections for future years.

Fiscal Stabilization Fund Provincial Auditor Recommendations

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Finally, can the Minister of Finance indicate when this government will adhere to the advice that has been given it by the Provincial Auditor, whether it is the Fiscal Stabilization Fund or the pension liability fund?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Finance): We are working very closely with the Provincial Auditor to recognize some of the issues that he has, and I believe we are making good progress in that area.

Forest Fires Evacuee Expenses

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): My question is for the Acting Minister of Natural Resources. In the tense situation facing residents in the fire zone, clear communications and flexibility are vitally important on behalf of everyone, as government workers, volunteers and firefighters attempt to manage scarce resources. Given these concerns, I want to ask the minister to make a quick public announcement concerning the commitments of the province in covering meals, accommodations and other expenses of people displaced by the fire.

Hon. Harry Enns (Acting Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I can assure the honourable member, from personal experience at having had the privilege of overseeing that department during the disastrous fires of '89, that Manitoba has an enviable record of responding to all the requirements involving many thousands of people, if necessary, to cover those kinds of items that the honourable member mentions. I am sure that when the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) returns from personally viewing the fire fighting situations, which he is doing this morning, he will give a more full and complete report on these items to the honourable member and to the House.

Firefighting Resources

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Could the minister tell the House how much equipment and resources have been put into the fires at Manigotagan?

Hon. Harry Enns (Acting Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I think, if the honourable member refers to the statement I just made, some 60 pieces of heavy equipment, along with some 200 firefighters, are fighting that particular fire. But, again, I invite the honourable member to await the minister's return

tomorrow from the scene, and I am sure he will have an updated report for us.

Manigotagan Community Council Meeting Request

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I would like to table for the House a letter from Mr. Ivan Saber, who is the mayor of Manigotagan Community Council, in which he expresses some concerns. Would the minister contact the Manigotagan Community Council and deal with their concerns as outlined in this letter to my colleague the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) from that council that we received earlier today?

* (1400)

Hon. Harry Enns (Acting Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I will ensure that these matters come to the immediate attention of the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) upon his return.

Leonard Doust Information Tabling Request

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, now that we have received these so-called terms of reference with regard to Mr. Doust's appointment, it is interesting, first of all, how polite the language is, because I will just quote. It says in there: "there are comments with respect to the candor of certain individuals . . .," which is rather remarkably different from what Mr. Justice Monnin found: "In all my years on the bench I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry."

I ask the minister again. There are references in here to ongoing communications with Mr. Doust. I ask the minister: why is he keeping those communications private and secret? Why is he not tabling these in this House, as we have asked?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, Madam Speaker, it is apparent that the member opposite does not want a full inquiry into exactly what happened. My concern is any decision that the

special counsel makes cannot be influenced by either the deputy or by myself. If any such direction is given to the special counsel, that has to be in writing and to be made public. The extent to which materials are available, that is a matter for the special counsel to make, and I will be bound by what the special counsel says. I am very, very concerned, however, that this member may well, with some of his inflammatory remarks, prejudice any future proceedings.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister who, I guess, thinks that Mr. Justice Monnin—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can this minister possibly explain to Manitobans why, after I asked that the terms of reference be tabled in this House on April 26, today terms of reference are tabled in this House dated April 30? Why are terms of reference only provided after Manitobans ask for them? There were no terms of reference. What are the nod, nod, wink, wink communications?

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

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, indeed the member answers his own questions. Perhaps the terms of reference were not completed when he asked for them.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain, given that Mr. Doust was appointed on April 12, given that this report says at the end: "To ensure a fully transparent process, and public accountability, these Terms of Reference and any subsequent amendments"—subsequent amendments—"are, and will continue to be, publicly available.", would he tell us what earlier communications are there that he is hiding to make sure that Mr. Doust does not provide his report until after a provincial election? Is it not true that this government made sure that Mr. Doust did not—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, this is truly a member that has no concern about what the

document says. He is attempting to use a document for purely partisan political purposes. What the document in fact says is: "Your report on these issues should be provided to me"—and that is the deputy minister speaking—"by or before June 30, 1999." There is nothing preventing the special counsel from handing down a report tomorrow if he has made provision to do it.

Liquor Licensing Amendments

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to ask some questions to the Attorney General as regards the position of this government with regard to liquor legislation. We are all concerned in this House about drinking and driving. I had a situation in my own community where a classmate, in the same grade at school with my son, Grade 9, was killed tragically by a drunk driver. That is why I am puzzled and wondering if the Attorney General was consulted with some of the recent changes to liquor legislation in this province that have dramatically increased the numbers of licensed spaces, including provisions, for example, that removed the 300-seat limit in beverage facilities. I would like to ask the minister whether he was involved in that decision?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): This government, I believe, has a very good record in terms of our concern about social responsibility in terms of drinking, and we have brought in the strongest and the toughest laws against drinking and driving. I can tell the member opposite also that the MLCC has taken social responsibility as one of its major activities that it does. However, the member refers to a change which occurred which was not a legislative change. He was quite wrong. In fact, it was a policy change, and it does not surprise me at all that he has raised it because he is always against any kind of investment in Manitoba by anyone. In fact, he even went so far as to do his own news release that says how the NDP is against any kind of expansion. It is the same kind of story that we get from the NDP over and over again against all kinds of development, all kinds of business.

Madam Speaker, in summary, the changes which occurred by policy simply brought Manitoba in line with other provinces—which said, according to the policy changes, that the capacity level will be determined by zoning or building and fire codes and health regulations.

Mr. Ashton: I want to ask the Minister of Justice again—not the minister for expanding dramatically the numbers of spaces, something which I believe does raise questions in this province when it comes to drinking and driving—whether he was involved in the discussions, by the way, with these regulations that were brought in without any legislation and in fact by a minister who has not even called the standing committee to deal with liquor legislation in two years. I want to ask the Minister of Justice what his position is—

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

Mrs. Vodrey: The member continues in every question he asks to show he does not listen, he does not understand. He started with laws; he has now moved to regulation. This is neither, as I have told him. This is a matter of policy, the matter of policy that concerns expansion which is based upon zoning regulations, building codes, health and fire regulations, which he objects to, as always, because he objects to all business, all business investment in this province, in Manitoba.

The expansion and the ability to have capacity increases does not deal with in any way the amount of drinking that an individual does. In fact, all the previous information has shown that people are drinking less. In terms of the field manual, there have been additions to the field manual to all the licensees, which make it clear what their responsibilities are, and the MLCC is working to ensure that social responsibility is absolutely adhered to across the province, but the member opposite objects to any investment in Manitoba.

* (1410)

Mr. Ashton: I am wondering if this minister who has made this decision without any public consultation, a decision, by the way, that was not

even supported in this case, in the case of raising the 300-seat limit, by the Manitoba Hotel Association—it seems perhaps to have been conveniently sought by some well-connected Tory supporters in the hotel business. I wonder how she would like to explain to the family of the young person I talked about, Grade 9, who was the victim of drinking and driving, the fact that she thinks there is no connection between a dramatic expansion in the numbers of licensed spaces and the question of drinking and driving. If she does not see the connection, Madam Speaker, she should not be the minister responsible for the Liquor Commission.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I am going to tell the member again. First of all, our province has the toughest drinking and driving regulations. Our government has shown a sensitivity and an action never shown by the other side in terms of how we view drinking and driving. I do not accept any of what the member across the way has said about our government's or, in particular, my concern about drinking and driving and the lives of families.

However, he seemed to allude that there was not support for this. Well, I have two documents; one from the Manitoba Restaurant News, one from the Western Hotelier, both of which indicate support. The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is continuing to take proactive moves in the province, says the Western Hotelier.

First of all, a big thank you goes out to the MLCC and the board of commissioners for showing a desire to modernize our liquor regulations, according to the Manitoba Restaurant. This brings Manitoba's ability, according to the Fire Commissioner, building zones, health and other regulations—brings us in line with other provinces across the country.

Let me make it clear to the members opposite, this does not include an increase in drinking in individuals. Social responsibility remains a major point of action for the MLCC.

Urban Shared Services Corporation Financial Statement Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, last week the Urban Shared Services

Corporation released a press release which indicated that they had lost \$2.5 million, far from saving \$7.5 million, which they said they would do initially. It has been shaved down to a minus \$2.5, including a \$1.3-million overrun on food costs.

Would the minister responsible simply table the financial statement instead of allowing the corporation to put out a press release that really does not tell us very much about the staggering losses that are going on inside this corporation? Will he table the financial statement now?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I remind the member for Crescentwood that the Urban Shared Services Corporation is a corporation created by the nine urban hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg. They put out some information last week about their first year's performance, and they did acknowledge that they had some first-time costs and some transition costs in terms of the establishment of the new food services system and that two facilities are going to be longer in terms of coming on stream, both Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital. That led to some additional costs in their first year of operation. They indicated very clearly this is a 20-year operation.

Certainly, in terms of the savings in capital costs, the savings in operating costs and continuing to focus on providing quality and nutritional food are the priorities of the Urban Shared Services Corporation.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

I took under advisement, on April 15, a point of order raised by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) respecting the use of the word "liars." Just before the point of order was raised, I had cautioned the honourable member for using a quotation from the report by former Chief Justice Monnin.

Upon reviewing the Hansard transcript for April 15 and reflecting on the matter, I must agree with both the honourable member for Burrows and the acting government House leader. Page 387 of the current edition of Erskine May states: "A Member is not allowed to use unparliamentary words by the device of putting them in somebody else's mouth."

However, the member for Burrows did not directly or indirectly allude to any members of the Assembly when he used the Monnin quote. Therefore, the words as used by the honourable member on April 15 were not unparliamentary and consequently were in order.

(1420)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Economic Growth

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) recently referred to the 3 percent cut in personal income tax as equivalent to a cup of coffee per week. This analogy speaks volumes about the attitude of members opposite when it comes to the issue of taxes. Let us imagine, if you will, members opposite back in the mid-1980s during the dark tax-and-spend period of Manitoba's history. We know that the NDP believes strongly in the role of government—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Pembina.

Mr. Dyck: —to influence people's day-to-day lives, so they gathered round their caucus and decided that Manitobans drink too much coffee. What else could explain the province's high debt, high unemployment and struggling economy. So, in their infinite wisdom, they began a concerted effort to reduce Manitobans' caffeine levels. By the end of 1987, thanks to the creation of five new taxes and the raising of 16 existing taxes, Manitobans would no longer be able to afford to drink coffee. Even Juan Valdez and his donkey left our province as they were unable to continue their coffee business.

So, as we look back at the NDP's little social experiment, it did not work. Did Manitoba's

economy grow? Did unemployment drop? Did the debt shrink? The answer, of course, is no. This cavalier attitude members opposite have in relation to tax cuts speaks volumes, so I suggest to them that the next time they are enjoying a cup of coffee, they think about the over 20 cups of coffee a week that they denied to Manitobans back in the 1980s. Manitobans are all coffeed out. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I wanted to talk about the budget also, but obviously the members opposite are terribly sensitive about my searching question regarding the matter of coffee. My God, you are sensitive. I would suggest, if you do not like coffee, you can have hot chocolate or some other drink.

Unfortunately, the members opposite believe their own rhetoric on a lot of matters. They do not look at the facts. I mean, they blandly say the economy did not do well under the previous government, but the fact is the rate of job creation was much better under the NDP government of Mr. Pawley than it has been under this government. Definitely. Look at the numbers.

In fact, in 1992 and '93, the level of jobs dropped in this province. The former Minister of Finance knows that. It is in the books; it is in the statistics. So, Madam Speaker, do not confuse yourself with your own rhetoric. If you want to go blindly along pretending that your economy was so great compared to that which was under the NDP, well, you are just fooling yourselves, because the figures tell you otherwise.

Madam Speaker, they are also fooling themselves if they think they can sustain the level of spending in this budget. They are fooling themselves because, in the revenues here you have got, they have included monies from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and the medium-term plan that is referred to in this document also has a budget surplus they are hoping for next year that is based on the same kind of a revenue base which would include monies from a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They just do not have the money to put into it next year. Therefore, given the fact that this budget is predicting a poorer economy next year, lower levels of investment,

lower levels of employment, lower levels of economic growth, there is no way under God's heaven that you are going to sustain—

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

Forest Fires—Volunteers

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I have enjoyed the debate in here as much as anybody has today.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Emerson was recognized to deliver his member's statement.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, again for giving me the opportunity, first of all to recognize the tremendous amount of work that has been done by many of the volunteers, specifically in southern Manitoba and in much of central Manitoba during the last three or four days of the tremendous devastation that we have seen by the fires that have been caused by we do not know who or by what. On Saturday and Sunday the community of St. Malo was in severe danger when fire came within half a mile of the edge of that community. It was only through the effort of local volunteers and local fire brigades that the fire was stopped from entering that community. Sundown had a huge fire going on Sunday. Menisino, Piney, Vita, Zhoda, La Broquerie, all of these communities were, at one point or another during the weekend, threatened by fire. It was the local fire brigades, the local Natural Resources officers and all the people that pitched in to fight these fires, they are the reason why we had no huge loss of real property in those areas.

So we thank, all of us in this Legislature, the efforts that were put into fighting these fires. Secondly, we thank the municipalities for having put in place the kind of resources that allowed these firefighting activities to take place by putting in place voluntary fire brigades, and all their women for providing services to these firefighters on this weekend that allowed the saving of these communities. So, Madam Speaker, I ask all members here to join me in thanking those communities.

Winnipeg Airports Authority

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute today to the work of the community board of the Winnipeg Airports Authority who had its annual meeting this morning, the fifth annual meeting that I have been privileged to attend. Its staff and its employees have had an incredibly successful year in making the transition to full community operation as a nonprofit, community-operated board.

At their annual meeting today—unfortunately, no members of government were present at that meeting—the board announced two very successful initiatives. One is that we will in July have the first direct connection to Denver in a number of years by Air B.C. Secondly, our airport is now in partnership with a corporation from Alberta in operating on a nonprofit basis community-based airports in North Bay, Ontario, shortly in Castlegar, B.C., and in St. Andrews. The expertise of this board is now being shared across the country, and it is a model of community organization and community entrepreneurial approach to the management of airports on a nonprofit basis.

This community board is also a model of accountability. I look at the annual report which has four pages of board accountability information in terms of meeting the standards set for for-profit as well as nonprofit corporations. They released their entire financial report with no holdbacks. They provided a two-hour meeting in which all questions were answered, in distinction, Madam Speaker, to the Urban Shared Services Corporation, the Winnipeg Health Authority, which will not even release financial information, let alone have open public meetings that would be accountable to the people of Winnipeg. It is simply unacceptable that boards that spend 100 percent public dollars hide behind the Minister of Health's statements, that these are owned by the hospitals. We own the hospitals, ultimately, and everyone who has been involved knows that.

So I offer my congratulations on behalf of my caucus and on behalf of the people of Winnipeg to the Winnipeg Airports Authority

for a very successful year, both in terms of their accountability and in terms of their achievements.

Property Taxes

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity to make a quick comment on a point which we have raised in the past and will continue to do in the future, and that is in fact the whole issue of the property tax. Even though one can be quite supportive of the first decrease in personal income tax, there is a great deal of concern, that Manitobans share, that the government has totally ignored, and that is in fact the property tax. There is a need for government to address this particular issue, at least to give some reason to be optimistic that the government is not only going to take it seriously but is also prepared to take action. It is something which we believe is absolutely essential. It is something which we are committed to doing, and that is looking at the property tax in bringing direct relief to property taxpayers. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Broadway who has 25 minutes remaining.

* (1430)

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, if you are a professional grave digger and you find yourself inadvertently in a hole, the first rule, according to Dennis Healey, the British politician, is to stop digging. In most parliamentary systems like ours, unlike the presidential system of the United States where there are fixed dates for elections, in most parliamentary systems derived from England the election is at the call of the incumbent party in government.

We have heard the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province make a pledge that the election will

happen in 1999. The honourable thing to do if you make a pledge, you do not hedge. You call it. In our system also, there is a variable of several political cycles. It runs from three years minimum to a maximum of five years constitutionally, but it averages out to a variable political economic cycle of four years. It is like the business cycle: up, down, up, down.

According to the Princeton scholar writer Edward Tufte, who wrote a book, *Political Control of the Economy*, after studying some 27 countries, the election data in those 27 countries, he came to the conclusion that economic movements in the months immediately preceding the election can tip the balance of probabilities of either winning or losing the election on the part of the incumbent government. It is generally observed that voters reward the majority party incumbent if there are perceived actual, real or apparent kinds of economic prosperity by re-electing them to office. But on this system generally there is no such economic upswing.

If you take the case of Manitoba in its current situation now, it is no surprise that the initiative of the government to stimulate economic activities in the province in the few remaining months before the call for election and the most appropriate policy instruments to use here are tax cuts or direct transfer payments from lower levels of government, from provincial to lower levels of government. Indeed the federal government already did that. They made a transfer payment of \$131 million federal money to Manitoba as a province and then Manitoba now is trying to use this money to dole it out to lower level institutions and agencies to stimulate economic activities. It might be too late in terms of time. This budget, being an election budget, is expected to bring good news to everyone. The disappointment is that it only brings good news to a certain segment of the population.

Take the case of the tax cut which will start in July of 1.5 percent cut in the provincial income tax rate. We always have to ask the question, if there are positive allocations of resources from any level of government, who benefits from this allocation? And the next question is at whose expense are these

allocations being made? Certainly those tax cuts will increase the disposable income of people. But what kind of people? Frances Russell in her column stated and gives an example: If you have an income of \$100,000, it will bring you \$1,700 disposable extra income—

An Honourable Member: That is the category you are in.

Mr. Santos: No, I am less. If your income is only \$20,000, it will only bring you an extra \$150 disposable income. What if you do not have an income? You are unemployed. Then you do not have any benefit at all. So what about the poor? What about the afflicted? Do they get any benefit from this? Are they not Manitobans as well? You will be disappointing them and they are indeed disappointed. They obviously get nothing.

In this material world of physical assets and their monetary values placed on those assets that we manipulate in our society, this budget is the fulfilment of what has been written: for him that hath, more shall be given, and to him that hath not, even the little that he hath will be taken away from him. That is the effect of these tax cuts. More wealth to those who already are wealthy and nothing, or minimal benefit, to those who are not.

Is this upholding our obligation as government to help the plight of the disadvantaged group, the poor, the sick and the afflicted? Of course not. It is written: he that honoureth the great Maker have compassion for the poor, but whosoever oppreseth the poor insults the great Maker because it is written: the poor will always be with us. Be that as it may, had not God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that the Lord has promised to all those that love him?

* (1440)

King Solomon, the wisest king ever there was in days of old, said: and so I return and observe all the oppressions that are being done under the sun and the tears of the oppressed, and there was no one to comfort them. On the side of the oppressors, there was power and there was no one to comfort them. If this is happening in

our society, something is wrong with the moral, ethical obligations of government to help those who are needy and to allocate to them the appropriate share of resources that are due to them as members of our society.

It is also written: when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. Where there is no vision, the people perish. If a ruler harkens unto lies, all his servants are weakened. When the wicked multiply, transgressions increaseth, but the righteous shall see their downfall.

If the budget, as we have stated, is a political instrument of allocation of resources to the people of a community, then it is the very essence of politics which is allocation of values and resources according to who gets what, where and how. But this is the actual ugly picture of reality. A political philosopher and political scientist, Christian Bay said: we have to distinguish between two types of politics that are going on. The first is true politics. This is the never-ending search for equality, for social justice, for liberty, for the pursuit of happiness of individuals.

The second type, which obviously is more rampantly practised all around us, is what he called pseudo politics. This is the pursuit of political power and what power can bring, regardless of means employed. If that is pseudo politics, that is the one that we see around us. It is the relentless pursuit of political power by few who wish to occupy positions of the ruling class without subjecting themselves to scrutiny and political accountability for their moral obligation as stewards and trustees of the people.

According to the Italian engineer—he is an engineer like our Premier (Mr. Filmon), and then he became an economist. His name is Vilfredo Pareto. He was the one who authored what we call the Pareto principle. What does that principle state? If at least one person is better off from a policy action and no one person is worse off, then the community as a whole is better off for that social policy action. That is the Pareto principle. If no one suffers, at least one gets the benefit not at the expense of anyone, then that is good policy.

Pseudo politics assumes something about the nature of man, the nature of the masses, the nature of the people. Pseudo politics assumes that the majority of human beings are weak. They are depraved creatures with neither skills to govern themselves nor wisdom to control the destinies of others. Therefore, it will be easy for any ruling class to procure their concerns by the use of bribery, chicanery, deceit, and if that fails, the concerns can be secured by force. We do not like force in our democratic societies, because it is written those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.

Therefore the governing elite, trying to evade this inevitable use of instrumentality of force that we have been witnessing outside of our country in Kosovo and elsewhere, would like to appease the discordant minorities. How? By purchasing their obedience, giving them dole and grants and all kinds of benefits of an unexpected nature even, but we know that these groups in society are not really focused. They are only interested in their own respective, particular, special-interest groups. They are not concerned about the community at large nor the general welfare of all. They promote only their own good as distinguished from the good of all, which is the highest good in a political community. The summum bonum, the highest good is the good of all the people. Once we subvert that and divert our resources to particular groups, then we are promoting this kind of pseudo politics that are going on in front of us.

An Honourable Member: How about unions?

Mr. Santos: They are included, too.

The trouble with this kind of pseudo system is there are too many pretenders, too many hypocrites around—maybe including myself, I do not know, but I am trying to avoid that. Instead of the pretenders, the pseudo politicians, trying to be talking about the general interests of everyone when actually they are working for the benefit of some and few—the cats, in that sense, are better than they. The cats, when they catch the mouse, they eat the mouse. They do not tell the mouse all animals are equal, and they do not say: I am eating you for your own good.

We pretend, pretend until it becomes so artificial that the people, even the masses, are

cynical about every one of us. He said: oh, they are all alike. That is not good at all for the stability of our democratic political system.

There are many objections that could be directed to this budget. First of all, although it is promoted by the provincial Progressive Conservative Party, they do not like to call themselves Progressive Conservative, because they are neither progressive nor conservative. They do not want to call themselves Filmon's team. This budget is not progressive. If it is progressive, it will not focus on income taxes that are directed only to the high-income people.

An Honourable Member: What about property tax?

Mr. Santos: They ignore the property tax. So it is not really progressive. That is one objection to this budget. Instead of restoring the property tax from where it was, 325, they reduced that to 250 in 1993. They did nothing about it. They did not even say anything about it. That is not progressive.

The second objection that could be levelled against this budget is that it is not sustainable in the long run. Why? The \$131 million given by the federal government to this province, they want to spend in one shot, when it was designed to be spent for a duration of three years, accordingly as they needed it. That is not prudent management. If anybody calls it prudent management, I would say that is not so.

Also, by dipping into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund by more than \$90 million beyond what their own self-imposed regulation would allow, they show their desperation. They find themselves really in a hole, a political hole, and they keep on digging. That is not the law. The law is you stop digging so you can at least recover a good measure of your credibility.

* (1450)

There are basically two types of behavioural personalities in the political arena, the lion and the fox. The lion, you know, he is solid. He cherishes traditional ways of doing things. He is content with what is and would preserve it because he is strong enough to preserve it. He is

unwilling to gamble. Distinguish that from the fox. The fox is clever, shrewd. He throws caution to the wind. In economic times, he is a risk taker.

So what is this government doing? Is it behaving like a lion or behaving like a fox? Oh, they want to spend all the savings, take the risk. They want to spend all the federal grants all at once. That is the behaviour of a fox.

An Honourable Member: Where does the snake come in, Connie?

Mr. Santos: The snake. Well, I will tell you a story about Greek mythology. There is a mythical monster—listen, listen—a mythical monster, fire-breathing monster. It is called Chimera. He had the head of a lion, the body of a goat, but the tail of a serpent.

An Honourable Member: Are you describing a Tory?

Mr. Santos: That is a Chimera. The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says: are you describing a Tory? You can answer the question.

An Honourable Member: I think that is what you were attempting to do.

Mr. Santos: I notice the shrewdness of this party in political strategy and manipulation. I admire it. It does not mean I sanction it. There is a combination of budgetary items in this budget that is simply very difficult for any loyal opposition to object to for the sake of opposing it; otherwise, they will appear ridiculous.

This is the expenditure on health field, trying to remedy the crisis that they allowed in the first place to take place. Should we continue this destructive force of confrontation between the party system, even if we are aware of this chicanery and lack of candour on the boast for special spending? We know that is not backed up by the statistics. Or shall we oppose their proposed spending that even exceeded what this New Democratic, fiscally responsible NDP would advocate? Why should we oppose for the sake of opposing this expedient suspension of the predictable pattern of Tory behaviour of

slash-and-cut when suddenly they reverse their direction unexpectedly and shrewdly by pouring all the money that they can get into health care, which, we advocate, needs such kind of funding in order to prevent the miseries of the patients in hospital? Do we not know as an opposition that we are being placed in an electoral trap between the hard rock and the deep water, between the Scylla and the Charybdis of political strategy and manipulation.

Today is the age of communication, the age of manipulation of information. Communicating to the public is an art and a skill. *Nemo dat quod non habet*. No one can give what he does not have. When there is no money, you cannot boast of public spending. When there is no money to draw it from, when you spend all your savings and the account is almost bare, how can you justify extra spending and claim yourself to be the prudent manager of the economy of this province?

Usually, when you find plenty of cheese around, you know there is a mousetrap. If the Conservative Party Manitoba, the so-called Filmon team, want to have their cake and eat it too, I say let them do it. After they fired 1,100 nurses, they want to hire 670 nurses. Are we going to prevent this? If a pot says to another pot, why are you so black, what will the pot reply? We in the opposition legitimately believe that, with this nonconservative, non-Progressive Conservative Party-Filmon team, the lustre is fading away. Let us have an election.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House today to speak on this budget brought down by my government, and I would like to offer my congratulations to the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) and his predecessor. The highlight of the priorities of my government as we prepare to lead this province into the 21st Century: our spending priorities clearly show that we are prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by progress and evolution.

Budgets are the truest tests and the most fundamental indicators of a government's values and its philosophies. This government has continued to strike a responsible balance

between human investment and fiscal responsibility. It is this prudent combination which will pave the way for continued success and prosperity in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I would like to not only commend the Minister of Finance and his predecessor, the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson), who was our previous Finance minister, but all the members on this side of the House for the contributions that they have made in helping the minister and this cabinet prepare this very visionary budget for all Manitobans to enjoy.

This budget is our fifth consecutive balanced budget, and we are projecting a \$21-million surplus in this budget. More Manitobans are employed than at any other time in our history, and family incomes in this province experienced the largest increase in Canada.

We are making commendable progress in paying down a debt accumulated by the reckless spending habits of the previous administration. The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) has referenced several issues. The honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), my seatmate on this side of the House, has answered that very well here today with his private member's statement.

Madam Speaker, \$75 million will be spent this year toward repaying the province's debt. This will help ensure that our children and our grandchildren are not held responsible for poor choices made by members opposite when they were at the helm of government during the '80s in six years, six years that we will be indebted to, because of their mismanagement, for some further 28 years now. It frees up our resources so that they can be used to more beneficial and socially relevant areas, which is being demonstrated because of the fact that businesses are responding to our call in the environment that we have created as a government through the five balanced budgets that we have levelled over the last few years.

* (1500)

We can also take pride, Madam Speaker, in the fact that our 1999-2000 budget reflects the

priority of Manitoba citizens. This government engaged in prebudget consultation meetings in all corners of the province and listened to what Manitobans felt was important. We are always attentive to the concerns and the priorities of people we work for. It was interesting to meet with a few of these people who did participate in these prebudget consultations after the budget was presented on the 29th of April. They said that they heard some of the recommendations that they made through their people. The people that they had at their various tables were able to recognize that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) did indeed listen to what they were advocating and offering as recommendations.

In these budget consultations, Madam Speaker, health care was identified as a priority area, and it is this government's priority too. It is our top spending area, and this budget sees \$194 million additional funds devoted to the health care system in this province, yet more—

An Honourable Member: No, 84.

Mr. McAlpine: Well, the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) says no, 84, because of the fact that there has been money that has gone into this, but it is still this fiscal year. He does not understand that, and it is unfortunate that he twists and fudges the numbers to his benefit and in terms of what he is trying to do. The problem is that people are not listening to that kind of rhetoric, Madam Speaker, and thank goodness that is the case. We will see when the next election is called and when he is going to have a fight in the constituency that he is going to be vying for, the candidacy for the NDP. He will find out really what the people are saying to him, and they will answer to him by their votes or the lack of them.

It is more important than the fact that we are allocating additional funds to health care, the manner in which we are spending these funds, Madam Speaker. We can put all the money that we want into something, but it is also important how that money is spent. It is interesting how the opposition reacts to the money that is being spent in these institutions. We all know that we as a government have the responsibility of funding to these institutions by way of formula,

and there are administrations in each one of those institutions that have the responsibility to determine how that money is going to be allocated throughout their institutions.

That is what the opposition fails to see. If they all of a sudden feel that they are going to make changes to that and that they are going to be able to direct, through their dictatorships, in terms of the way they see in managing funds, but they never did that through their term in office when they were at the cabinet table. They certainly did not, and they are not going to change anything now in terms of those issues. What we are trying to do here is to create an environment where people take responsibility and are diligent and prudent with the funds that are allocated to them. Yes, it is a slow process, but, yes, we are making some progress, and I am thankful for that.

We are witnessing an unprecedented shift in the demographics of this province. This, coupled with the introduction of sophisticated and costly medical equipment, meant that we had to rethink our approach to health care and health care spending. Money has to be spent wisely and strategically in order to reflect current realities.

This budget allocates an additional \$20.5 million for home care services bringing our total support for this program to \$147 million. Madam Speaker, \$15 million more will be spent on long-term care services for a total funding commitment of \$300 million, and the culmination of these two initiatives will allow us to reserve hospital space for those who need it and will also permit us to provide services to the elderly in a more appropriate setting. This increases their independence and comfort levels because most people do not want to be institutionalized. They want to be in their homes as long as they possibly can. So by providing extra funding for home care and personal care facilities, those are the things that the people are asking for; those are the things that are going to keep people out of the institutions; those are the things that are going to help people in hospitals and institutions, keep down the waiting lists and the line-ups in the hallways as far as emergencies are concerned.

That is another issue that we have to address, Madam Speaker, the responsibility of these institutions to ensure that there is balance throughout the service to these people, so that there are not the line-ups in the hallways and in the emergency wards. Providing services in the community represents a logical and effective use of health care resources, and that is all part and parcel of the whole aspect of dealing with the funds that are allocated by this government, and as I mentioned, \$194 million, a 10 percent increase in our health care budget is going into this budget. It is for this reason that we will devote funds to develop primary centres so a combination of health care services can be provided to Manitobans in a community setting. Manitobans want to stay in the communities that they have worked and raised their families and where their friends are, so not only is that good for them but it is also healthy.

These strategies to free up hospital beds will help us to achieve yet another component of our health care plan and that is reducing the waiting lists for tests and for treatments. We have also announced an additional \$5 million for the purchase of medical equipment such as CT scanners. Acute care services will receive \$62 million in increased funding which will allow us to perform more important surgeries for the health of Manitobans. Eleven thousand more Manitoba women will receive mammograms this year, 15,000 more dialysis treatments will be performed and 600 more Manitobans will receive hip and knee replacement surgery than last year. This hip and knee replacement surgery in the constituency of Sturgeon Creek, where the changes have been made at Grace Hospital, where there is an opportunity to have these orthopedic surgeries carried out for hip and knee replacements and shorten the waiting list that has been building up for years and years and years as these residents become older.

It is interesting that a few years ago when the community was looking at—and the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), when she stood in her place in this House and complained about this government not maintaining the obstetrics department at the Grace Hospital and I shared a lot of those views, but it was not until it was found that there were five brand-new operating facilities at the Grace

Hospital that could be used for these hip and knee replacements. I am really pleased to be a part of that initiative to create the opportunity for these 600 to 800 seniors with hip and knee replacement operations needed to be able to have those carried out. [interjection] Yes, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), he says it is not only seniors and I know that there are young people who do need those operations as well. The interesting part of it is that they will not have to be on a waiting list forever.

* (1510)

Madam Speaker, we allocated \$123 million for health capital projects in this province, and I know that the people of Sturgeon Creek are pleased that the Grace Hospital will receive \$2.5 million for renovations and upgrades. This government will work to maintain community health facilities and hospitals alike.

I think that it is really important that we stay in tune and stay abreast with the issues that we have, but we, as a government, have to look to these health care institutions, whether it be the hospitals or the medical professions, to give the advice and to give prudent advice to the ministers of the day for the direction that we have to go and where the money should be allocated in terms of health care. It is not just enough to say that we need more money, but it is how this money is spent and how it is going to be spent wisely in the interests of serving all Manitobans.

Too often the government is blamed for things that they do not have any responsibility for, like the firing of 1,000 nurses, which over the past number of years this government had nothing to do with. It was the union leaders of the Manitoba Nurses' Union that did that to themselves in many respects, and the nurses today are paying a price for the direction that the union advocated at that particular time. I remember right after the strike—I think it was in 1993—when the union leader insisted on certain levels of negotiation in order that the nurses could have some parity. As a result of that, the LPNs were put out of jobs, and then the R.N.s had to become B.N.s and things like that, Madam Speaker. That is the kind of thing that

we have to deal with, and the nurses, unfortunately, had to upgrade in their positions and would not be able to get positions in hospitals because they only needed so many B.N.s or so many R.N.s. Those people who were left were all administrators instead of the people who were giving service to the patients, which is what is most important in the service of our health care dollars.

Health care is obviously our foremost priority, but, Madam Speaker, it is followed closely by education. This budget recognizes and upholds our commitment to the education and development of our children. We regard education as both a social responsibility and a critical investment. What we put into the system now is returned to us in the future by the success, happiness and fulfilment of our children. Providing young Manitobans with high-quality education equips them with the resources to make self-respecting and forthright personal decisions, and it enables them to seize the exciting and enriching opportunities that our government has been creating.

It is like anything else, Madam Speaker, the education system requires a solid foundation on which to build all other components, and we will continue as a government to focus on core subject areas like mathematics, science and language arts. Yet it does not make much sense to invest resources and energy to the education system if we do not monitor how our children are progressing.

That is why we are committed to assessing the performance of the children on a regular basis. In this way, Madam Speaker, we can identify and address learning problems which may have a negative impact on a child's education if left unchecked. Our government believes that students deserve this kind of attention and respect, and education renewal will benefit from the \$3.2 million in additional funds announced in this year's budget. We have committed more than \$17 million in this critical area since 1994-1995.

When I was in a middle school, Golden Gate Middle School here just this past week, it was interesting when I picked up a school profile report in reference to this particular instance of

which I have just spoken. It was interesting, at Golden Gate in the heart of Sturgeon Creek—and it will remain in the new constituency which, with the new boundaries, will now be called St. James–Golden Gate is a school recognized for its excellent French immersion and English programs, and Golden Gate offers the Academic Curriculum Enrichment, the ACE program, for honour and accelerated students at the Grades 6 and 8 levels.

As well as high academic standards, Golden Gate is recognized for its outstanding band, athletic and practical arts programs. While developed technology and science lab facilities are also a part of our school, the school of Golden Gate, programs are provided for students with individual special needs, Madam Speaker. I think they have something like about 17—no, there may have been fewer than that. I think it was 17, and I think they have dropped down to about 7 now, special needs students. Parents are becoming increasingly more involved through parent councils, budget and technology committees, and band-parent associations, volunteer services in various school events.

But, Madam Speaker, it was really interesting, when I looked at this profile report from Golden Gate that they send out to the community for parents who are interested, they have graphs and things on how they are doing and how they compare with other schools in the division. St. James-Assiniboia School Division places a high—and I am going to read from their profile report.

It says, and I quote: "St. James-Assiniboia School Division places a high priority on improving student achievement. Providing information on student performance is a first step. Teachers gather information about students on a regular basis using a variety of assessment methods. In addition, annual division-wide tests tell teachers and parents how well students are achieving curriculum objectives in comparison with others in the same grade. These divisional tests, written by all students, except a few designated special needs students, are given in core subjects at the Grade 3 to Senior 4 levels. The results are reported in these school profiles annually. Schools and teachers use these test results, along with information from classroom

observation and evaluation, to develop plans for improving student achievement."

Madam Speaker, we have heard the opposition talking about the testing and the criticism that has been offered. Here is a school and a community that endorse exactly what this government has presented through the Minister of Education. I really respond positively to this school, to the administration and the people at Golden Gate School for their innovative approach to informing, not only for the betterment of the students but also for the parents, who are taking a very serious interest, as referenced in this school profile report. It is quite interesting so that maybe the Minister of Education might share this at some point with the critic of the opposition so that they can have some real understanding and real reference to the people who are working directly with the children in the communities as they are. I think this is a good example of a progressive-thinking administration at Golden Gate School. I really congratulate them on their efforts serving the people and the students of Golden Gate.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, our target areas in education announced this year are professional development, building maintenance and upgrades, technology, the purchase of school buses, and offsetting increased classroom costs. We are also mindful of the special needs of different segments of our schools' population. Some \$1.3 million in extra funding has been earmarked to assist students at risk of underachieving or dropping out of school. I cannot emphasize the importance of a full and complete education for the young people in Manitoba and society in general. This is the greatest investment that we can make.

But too often we as a government who fund, like health care, by way of formula to the different divisions—the school trustees who are elected, as members here are in this Legislature, have a responsibility, and owe that responsibility to the areas that they represent, to allocate the funds to the various schools and the programs that are there—we do not have a lot of say as a government in terms of how this money is spent. So, when I see something that comes forward

and the responsibility that the Golden Gate administration is taking, I am really pleased to see. I can endorse something like that because of the fact that they are taking responsibility and the direction that this government is offering and is expecting of people who are elected like us to the Legislature, they as trustees have that same responsibility, and so on down the line.

Too often, though, Madam Speaker, we have people out there with different agendas. That is where the problem comes in. There are people across the way who have an agenda and it is an agenda to defeat this government any way, shape, or form that they can. They will put any amount of rhetoric on this, but I can tell you this is not going to happen. They have had—their day in the sun has lasted as long as that clap across the way. I am happy to see that they have reached some enjoyment for this day in the fact that their day in the sun has been short-lived. I think that Manitobans will certainly endorse me on that.

We as Manitobans complete high school but realize that a high school diploma by itself is no longer the passport to success it was in my generation. I would like to see at the university level the same responsibility that this administration at Golden Gate Middle School has taken.

We have professors at the universities, professors who have been on their, on their, on this, I forget what they are called, but it is a—and there are professors across the way there. I guess if they happen to lose their job here, if they are not re-elected, they can go back and serve as professors at the University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg.

This is something that I really see that is really seriously wrong with this whole aspect. When I talk about the agendas of these people who are in power, it is not the people in this Legislature that have the power, it is the people who have the agendas. It is our university and the educators that are at this higher level, and you know what? I have never seen and I have had some experience with this, too often there are too many dream stealers. Students come in with their high dreams and everything like that but, no, what happens is that there is somebody

out there with an agenda who is stealing these dreams.

I do not want to get too specific on this particular issue but I think this is a problem today. We have to allow students, and I would be a very strong proponent of giving young students the opportunity to go out and choose their education rather than have the education crammed down their throat by people who have another agenda for those people.

An Honourable Member: Oh, Gerry, scary, scary.

Mr. McAlpine: The member for Crescentwood said that that is very scary. He wants to have control over all the people. He does not want people to make decisions for themselves. He wants people who have agendas. He wants people who are in high places in situations, whether it would be health care or education, and he wants this crammed down our students' throats.

Madam Speaker, that is why the people of today in this day and age in the province of Manitoba are ready to support this budget. They are ready to support this government all the way, as far as we are concerned. That is why we have created this environment, to allow people to take responsibility and enable them to make decisions for themselves.

This government realizes, while a university education opens many doors, it comes at an expense. Not only is it an expense as far as monetary expense to ease the financial burden sometimes associated with higher education, this government is devoting significant funds to support student loans and bursaries as well as interest relief and debt reduction programs.

Madam Speaker, if we are going to serve the people who want a true education and are really out working hard and struggling to do that, I think this is one of the things that we have to address. The money that we are spending we offered through the Manitoba tax credit, the only such incentive in Canada. This will bring \$15 million in support to Manitoba students and their families. That is what we are going to do by putting the money into the hands of the people

who are going to control their own destinies. This is something that should have come in a long, long time ago, and this is only a beginning. This is only a beginning in terms of the direction that we will see this government go. We will be envisionary, and the Finance minister has recognized this. The minister who is responsible for the government purse, he has seen the interest as an educator himself in this area.

Our funds for Education now stand at \$779 million with a commitment to increase next year's funding by at least 2 percent. We are putting the resources in place to help our young people attain success on their own. On their own and their own visions and their own dreams will be fulfilled, and that is what is important, not what somebody else's agenda is.

We are doubling apprenticeship training opportunities for providing \$7 million for youth employment programs. This will give the opportunities for these young apprentices to serve the business community, because there will be a shortage of qualified workers in our society as we create as a government an environment that will bring businesses to this province. There will be a lower unemployment rate if this opportunity is continued, and the people of Manitoba re-elect this government after the next election. Our budget also allocates \$50 million to labour market development programs, to give \$6.5 million to help get Manitobans off social assistance and back into the workforce.

Madam Speaker, this is a waste of talent. This is a waste of energy by people being on welfare. The people do not want to be there. This is an opportunity for people to get out and get the training that is necessary to get them a job, whatever it may be, whatever field that they choose, the opportunity will be there for them. This will help a broader range of Manitobans benefit from the incredible opportunities that are presented by this province, because of the environment that is created in the business community and the interest that is created by the business community.

* (1530)

This government listened to Manitobans, and we know that health care and education are

important and ultimately benefit each and every Manitoban, but this government holds in a similar regard that this sector will receive \$23.5 million in additional funding in this year's budget. Everyone benefits in our community, and that community needs to be protected. Our citizens have to be made to feel safe. That money that we are putting into that area of our commitment to the Justice department, we will feel that citizens play a role in preventing crime in our own communities.

This budget will see highly successful citizens on a patrol program receive extra grant monies, and to further emphasize crime prevention measures in our community, we will continue to provide \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg to offset the costs of an additional 40 police officers. This was a challenge that we met a year ago. The Justice minister at that time recognized the importance of this, and this is when we were going through the police officers, the community police officers, and the theft of automobiles in the province and how it was playing havoc with our own situation and safety in the communities that we live in. This additional money going to offset the cost of an additional 40 police officers is one that is needed, and we will continue to do that.

I know that elderly Manitobans are particularly concerned about neighbourhood safety. I hear that, Madam Speaker, in Sturgeon Creek. The constituency has a representation of some 35 percent to 40 percent elderly, one of the highest I think in the province, if it is not the highest. Many of the constituents have expressed this concern to me, the safety of the streets, and I am confident that these measures will help them to feel safe within their own homes, as seniors deserve this assurance.

We will continue our efforts to protect the safety of each and every Manitoban under the framework of the Take Back the Streets Initiative, which was announced in my government's throne speech.

We are able to commit such substantial sums to important areas such as health, education and justice because of our successful efforts to put our fiscal house in order. When you live beyond your means, as previous

administrations consistently did, someone ultimately has to pay the price. Now that this government is freeing itself and all Manitobans from the burden of debt, we can exercise more options for the benefit of all.

Madam Speaker, just look at the interest savings on the \$75 million that we need to pay down the debt this year and the same amount last year. Consider the amount just on simple interest alone, at 6 percent, what that is doing and how this debt is going to be paid off in some 28 years from now.

Madam Speaker, we are on track as a government. This government does have credibility. When it says that it is going to do something, it does that. It has demonstrated that in this budget. I think that we, as all members of this Legislature, should take notice of that and we should be applauding it instead of criticizing as the opposition members do.

This budget sees Manitobans rewarded with substantial tax reductions. Yes, we could have gone further if the money had been there, but I think the Finance minister was prudent in his thinking in reducing it, which is within the affordability of his department and his governance.

The personal income tax rate will be reduced to 48.5 percent in 1999, with a further cut to 47 percent for January 1, the year 2000. This is in addition to previous income tax reductions, which combined, have saved Manitobans more than \$200 million since this government came to power.

Madam Speaker, is that not a far cry from what the opposition did by increasing our debt in six small years to the point that we paid \$500 million a year, every year, to pay just the interest? Can you imagine the impact that that would have on this budget?

You know, we, as a government, are on track. We are going to continue to be on track. Madam Speaker, I look forward to representing this government after the next election in a new constituency of St. James. I understand that there are going to be a few people over across the way that may not be here, and I wish them

well in their new careers. But I look forward the rest of this debate with interest. I would hope that the honourable members over there will put some positive spin to this. Who knows? There is maybe even a slim possibility that they may even vote in favour of this budget. That would be a real turning point in their careers.

With those few remarks, Madam Speaker, I want to thank you and wish you well in your endeavours in the next few months, too. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, this budget is a fascinating document. You know, I was so angry about the level of deception—I guess, it is the word—in the budget that I got quite angry last week, and I said some things which I apologize for. I do apologize for them, but I do not apologize for the anger that I feel about the way in which Manitobans are prevented from understanding the true content of this budget and the content of budgets past.

Manitobans that have talked to me since the budget was brought down, including many people in my church congregation who are not, by nature, NDP supporters, simply have no understanding of what the numbers in this budget really mean. They tell me that their concern about the next election, which they expect next week, will be primarily a concern about credibility and trust. They are not much interested in this budget, Madam Speaker, simply because they have no ability to assess the reality of the numbers that are in here. They said to me, over and over again, the problem is that no matter what they promise, they do not do it anyway. So, whether the budget goes through or the budget does not go through, the perception of the people who have spoken with me is it does not matter because you cannot trust this government to keep its word on anything.

We have rehearsed that issue, I suppose, often enough in this House, but it is important to recognize the sheer hypocrisy of standing up in the House and saying that they will provide \$645 million for capital expenditures in 1995 for the next five years, and then coming in seven weeks later and saying: Whoops, we cannot afford to do any of that stuff; anything that is not already in the ground is cancelled. People understood at

the time that they knew in 1995, when they brought in their budget, that the federal government had cut funding by \$260 million—the federal government of which the current Liberal Leader was a cabinet minister and he voted for those cuts—but this government knew that.

The federal budget was already out for almost a month before their budget came down. They knew that the cuts were there. They promised the construction program anyway. They cancelled it afterwards, and they tried to get Manitobans to believe that they cancelled it because of the federal cutbacks. So there are two pieces of hypocritical deception in that process. The first is the cancellation. Having invited Manitobans to believe that they were going to address the health care crisis they had created, they broke their word. The second piece is that they then blamed it on the federal government when they knew when they made the promise in the first place that the federal government was cutting its funding. They knew that. They invited Manitobans to believe otherwise. They misled Manitobans in their last budget, and Manitobans are still remembering that.

* (1540)

Now, they are not only remembering the deception, Madam Speaker. Manitobans are thoughtful, intelligent, progressive people. They care about their community. They care about their health care system. They have hope for the future. They hope that they will have a government that will actually fulfil the commitments that were made in the past, and Manitobans understand—

An Honourable Member: They are hoping for a new government.

Mr. Sale: Well, they are hoping for a new government, as my honourable friend says. Manitobans understand that had this government built the personal care homes, had this government invested in keeping our nurses here, had this government invested in training nurse practitioners, in training enough anesthetists, in training enough neurologists, in training enough obstetricians in 1992 and '93 and '94 and '95 and '96, we would not have the crisis we have today.

So not only did they cynically break their promise, they set in motion by that cynical, hypocritical action the crisis that puts my family members and your family members, aboriginal people in the North, people in the south in hallways, on waiting lists, and going to Grafton for their diagnostic tests.

The government of Gary Filmon set in motion the health care crisis of 1999 by the cynical cancellation of their promises in 1995, and the people of Manitoba are saying, well, we are glad to see \$84 million more being committed to health care for the year 2000 than was committed in 1999. They are pleased to see that, but they understand two things. The first is that the crisis we have is because the government would not spend its election slush fund when it should have. It wanted instead to wait to have the money so that in a pre-election year they could throw it around like Midas, breaking sod hither and yon, throwing money at problems in a helter-skelter fashion. Secondly, Madam Speaker, Manitobans understand that they cannot trust this government to even fulfil the promises made today.

I have to give my honourable friend from Inkster some credit here. He has bashed away at the question of Emerson. Maybe the Liberals have been polling and they think they are going to win Emerson. I do not know. The honourable member from down there probably might want to differ on that issue, but the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has just been bashing away on Emerson.

I do not blame him in some ways. He is saying that hospital has been promised and promised and promised and there is no sod broken. So he has been challenging that question. We have this faded sign that finally the government took down in Oakbank. The members over on the other side laughed when we talked about the tumbleweeds blowing by it. We actually have video of that in case they would like to see it, the tumbleweeds blowing by the sign that is so faded that they were embarrassed enough that they would take it down. Is that home under construction?

Those great big balls of dry stuff that blows across the fields I call tumbleweeds. Maybe the

member thinks that only tumbleweeds grow west of Winnipeg. I will tell you that we have them blowing around the country that I came from as well. It is also Conservative country right now. Maybe there is something connected there.

So the first thing is that Manitobans understand that they want to see money spent in the health care system. They have been telling us that for years and we have been telling the government that for years, but they wanted it to be spent in 1996 when they could have avoided the crisis that has seen more than a thousand nurses leave their profession. Either voluntarily or involuntarily, they have left. They are not here.

The irony of this government saying in 1999, we are going to hire back 600 nurses, only to find that as recently as this week hospital beds are being closed, because the staff cannot be found to keep them open, because this government failed to deal with the health care crisis when they had the resources, they had the opportunity and the federal government cutbacks were hurting most.

They could have done it. They could have used the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to bridge the problems in health care. Instead, they waited and waited and waited until the crisis was literally unmanageable, but an election was at hand, and so they could try the old trick of bribing the voters with their own money, and the voters are saying: yes, we want to see health care spending increase, but we wanted to see an increase when you could have done something with it instead of pouring it into crisis management.

There have been lots of nurses and doctors who have spoken to us. I spoke to a leading physician last night at a nominating meeting. Unhappy news for the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), he used to be Liberal. He has joined the NDP. Unfortunately, the sad thing is, he has joined the NDP, but he is leaving for Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the end of the summer because this government has failed to provide support for his specialty, which is oncology. He is a leading cancer researcher, a leading researcher, and we are losing him because of the conditions we have created in our

health care system. He says it very frankly, he does not want to go, but his research is suffering, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, has offered him an opportunity to continue his research at a level that will mean that he can push forward with the kind of ground-breaking work that he is doing here. And we have lost him.

I tell the members opposite that I have had many conversations with nurses who have reluctantly left their profession. They wanted to nurse, but the conditions were so bad, the stress was so heavy in 1994 and 1995 and 1996 and 1997, that finally by the end of '97 and into '98, they quit. They quit because they were laid off, because beds were closed or because they were burned out. I ask the members opposite, who I take to be totally honourable people, go and find out from your Health minister how many nurses are on stress leave. How much stress burn-out money are we paying to nurses right now? How many hours of overtime at double-time are we paying? Nurses who should be two nurses are one nurse because we are paying them double overtime to fill shifts.

I ask the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), go to your hospital, go to Grace Hospital and ask the administrator to give him his overtime wage bill for the last year, to find out just how much overtime has been paid out to nurses. I ask him to go to the administrator of Grace Hospital and ask him how many shifts has he had to cover from Medox and from We Care and from other private-sector nursing providers at twice the wage he would pay a Manitoba nurse? Go and ask him how many shifts have been covered from the private, for-profit nurse providers like Medox at twice the cost of an R.N. or B.N. for Grace Hospital?

I ask the member for Sturgeon Creek, who is not prepared to go and ask the administrator of the hospital for frank and straightforward information, to go and ask the administrator of that hospital how many shifts were not covered; how many times did patients in the Grace Hospital go with shifts that were not covered because he could not get coverage. In one of our acute care hospitals, in one-month period, there were 300 shifts that were not covered. In other words, that hospital was short-staffed for 300

shifts in one month because of their cutbacks, because of their failure to deal with the nursing crisis.

* (1550)

Madam Speaker, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund has been characterized as a kind of shell game as recently as today by Mr. Dafoe, former editor of the Free Press. He indicates that it is never possible to find out where the pea is; sometimes it is not even possible to find out where the pod is, using the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

I was really distressed when I heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) reading from his budget speech about the deficit that he had inherited. You know, the Auditor, the federal government Department of Finance and even—and I give the former Finance minister credit on this—the former Finance minister has acknowledged that this government came to power and experienced a \$58-million surplus in their first year in office. It is in the budget; it is in the Public Accounts; it is in the federal Public Accounts; it is in Moody's; it is in Dominion Bond Rating Service. Every single one of these agencies indicates that in 1988-89 there was a \$58-million surplus. This government took that surplus and ran that surplus. [interjection]

An Honourable Member: . . . lied.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) used the word "lie" from her seat, and I wonder if you heard that. I think that is unparliamentary.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, if I said anything from my seat that might offend my honourable friend across the way, I would apologize for that. I just did want to point out though that when the New Democratic government was in power and they brought in a so-called budget with a \$58-million surplus, they left out, they were dishonest, I might say, with the people of Manitoba when they left out a 3 percent settlement with the nurses that was not even included in that budget. Were they going to change their minds and not treat the nurses fairly after they were elected?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I thank the honourable Minister of Family Services. The point of order raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood has been dealt with.

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Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, it is interesting, I think the members opposite perhaps are not able to do their own financial homework or perhaps they have trouble reading statements. The budget that was brought in by the Pawley government, on which the government fell, did not have a \$58-million surplus in it. [interjection] I just ask the minister to listen for a minute. I just ask her to listen for a minute and then she might hear the actual truth. The minister might just want to listen and understand that the budget that was brought in did not have a \$58-million surplus. What happened was that at the end of that year, at the end of the actual fiscal year, there was a \$58-million surplus as attested to by the Auditor, et cetera. We did not forecast a \$58-million surplus; it happened. It had nothing to do with who was government. It had to do with increased revenues that were not foreseen.

We have never claimed that we brought that surplus in. What we have said is that, when you formed government, you enjoyed that surplus, \$58 million. You could not stomach that, so you created a false deficit by borrowing \$200 million, and you showed a deficit which did not exist. The Auditor pointed that out; Dominion Bond Rating Service pointed it out; Moody's pointed it out; the federal government pointed it out. You had a \$58-million surplus and you ran it in three short years to a \$766-million deficit—\$766 million in '92-93.

Let me pass to another interesting issue the government has trouble with. During the Pawley era, there is no question, and we would not debate the question, that we ran up deficits totalling approximately \$2.6 billion. That is on the record. There is no debate. However, during your years in government, during the Filmon years in government, you ran up deficits totalling \$2.08 billion. Okay. Ours was higher; yours was lower. No question about that. Why did the debt apparently rise so much more? The issue, of course, was currency fluctuations, and

if this government wants to look at what happened in the last quarter of this year, you will see exactly the same thing. You will see that in the last quarter of this year your debt rose by over \$500 million, \$500 million, the direct and guaranteed debt of this province went up in the last quarter. Why? Currency fluctuations, because the Canadian dollar tanked against the American dollar and because our debt is denominated, at least in part, in American dollars. Of course, when you do the conversion, our debt rose.

So I have no problem with acknowledging that every government in Canada ran deficits. The Conservative Government of Canada federally took us into a hole, which is taking an enormous amount of our energy to try and dig ourselves out of. The question that will not be acknowledged by this government is their honest acknowledgment that \$2.08 billion in deficits were incurred by this government when they inherited a surplus. They ran it to the biggest deficit in Manitoba's history and, in the process, ran up \$2.08 billion of deficits, which they added to our total provincial debt.

But then let us take a look at that debt at the same time. This is an interesting issue. The Minister of Education now—one of our failed ministers of Health—likes to talk about how if we did not have any debt, we would have another \$500 million or \$480 million to spend. Well, that is true. What we have always wanted him to point out—and we would ask any members opposite who would like to do so—what things we would not have in order to not have that debt. Perhaps he could point to which hospitals or which roads or which parks or which waterworks or which schools. What is it that he would have us not have invested in to have the second lowest debt service cost in our country, tied with Alberta behind B.C.?

Every other province in this country has significantly higher debt service costs than this province. We are down to 8.3 cents on the dollar, and if you take a look at the debt service cost through the Schreyer years, the Lyon years, the Pawley years and the Filmon years, you know, it is a pattern of remarkable stability. It never went above 11, and it did not go much below 7. We are at 8.3 now. Is that a

sustainable level of debt? Well, I would ask any of the ministers opposite to think about any company they want to think about, any home or any family they want to think about. Could you afford to spend 8.3 percent of your income to maintain your mortgage and your car and your children's education? Could you afford to do that?

The answer from those members would be that absolutely you could afford to do it, absolutely you could afford to do that; 8.3 cents on the dollar to sustain all those assets, there is no problem with that. No one would claim that Manitoba's debt, given our economy, was unsustainable. What, of course, you do not want is a rising level of debt in a time when you have rising resources. You want a stable pattern, and Manitoba's debt pattern has been incredibly stable. This government has kept it stable. The Pawley government kept it stable. There is no problem with our debt level, Madam Speaker. Should we continue to pay the debt down in good times? Yes, we should. Should we be afraid of deficits in bad times? No, we should not. Let them read economic history and understand that the Great Depression was largely caused by governments withdrawing purchasing power in a futile attempt to chase money down the drain.

So, given the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the opportunities that were there to invest in '96, '97, '98, this budget fails so badly, and Manitobans simply are not particularly interested in it, and that to me is one of the most interesting things in itself. They do not care much about it because they do not believe that the government will actually do the things that it is talking about in here.

* (1600)

I want to talk about the failed promises on education. This government again is afraid of letting its members do their own homework, so the government will not distribute to its own caucus the FRAME reports that the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) probably has barely become acquainted with, that show—and the member for, where is Mr. Dyck from? Pembina, the member for Pembina, who was a school trustee, I think, knows the FRAME reports, and

the member for Pembina will acknowledge that in 1992-93 this government was providing \$732 million to our schools, the FRAME report, and presumably, as an honourable member, he would acknowledge that this year they are providing \$710 million, FRAME report. Same report, same mathematics, same accounting framework, same schools, and the same overall enrollment. Less money, \$22 million less, seven years later. Seven years of inflation and \$22 million less.

How does the member for Pembina or any of the other members expect Manitobans to have any confidence in a budget that tries to portray spending on education as having gone up, when people know from their property taxes and from the higher numbers of kids in classrooms and from the layoff of guidance counsellors, and from the layoffs of 700 teachers, they know that spending has gone down? So, again, the budget is not so much seen as a set of hopeful promises, it is seen as a set of cynical, breakable, incredible promises and Manitobans simply are not interested in it.

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) spoke earlier today about higher education, pointing out that again by one of those little sleight-of-hand transfers, the whole burden of property taxes, grants in lieu of taxes, was transferred from a government account line to Universities and Colleges with a promise, you know, one of those promises with your fingers crossed behind your back—oh, the government will increase your base budget to cope with this, but in fact, the cuts of \$22 million pale by comparison with any restoration of funding that has been made in this election year.

This is a government that is so locked into its own rhetoric that it expects students to be grateful for a promise that if tuition fees go above 10 percent increase this year, the Minister of Education will get jumpy. He will not do anything about it; he will just get jumpy, and they expect students to be grateful for that. They expect students to say is that not good, the government is concerned about our future. It will get jumpy if tuition goes over 10 percent. This is a government that has watched tuition costs double for Manitoba students while it cut Access. It is the only government without a bursary program, a bursary forgiveness program.

It is a government that never has had a tuition policy, so it announces now a nonpolicy, a kind of nudge, nudge, wink, wink to the institutions. Keep tuition under 10 percent and the Minister of Education will not get jumpy. Well, is that not a wonderful promise?

This is a government that has had in its possession the Roblin report for some four years now I think it is. The Roblin report said a number of things, but chiefly it said that the real priority ought to be skills training at the post-secondary level. Roblin recommended a doubling of that capacity. Instead, what happened? Instead, what happened, were cut-backs to our community colleges, tuition fee increases, and a waiting list at Red River Community College alone, just one community college, of 1,200 young Manitobans who wish to have the skills to compete in the economy that this government talks about so often, 1,200 young lives on hold because this government failed to allocate resources that its own former Premier recommended ought to be allocated to provide that capacity.

I ask the members opposite to understand what a couple of young people in my riding said. They said: our lives are on hold. We cannot get into Red River at least for a year. We cannot get a job that will allow us to live on our own and be independent, contributing citizens. So do you know what they do, Madam Speaker? They leave Manitoba. They leave because they can get into community colleges in Alberta and B.C., particularly in B.C., which has done an outstanding job of expanding its post-secondary education system so that, in fact, at any community college in B.C. you can take the first two years of university. What a wonderful move made by that government. So they go to Ontario, they go to Alberta, they go to B.C., they go to Saskatchewan, and do you know what happens? Unfortunately, they do not come back, because they see opportunities there and they go to work there.

So we lose our brightest and our best because we fail to provide the skill training opportunities that would have allowed them to stay. At the same time, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses tells us on their most recent survey that 50 percent of their members,

that is, 2,000 firms in Manitoba, find getting skilled labour their most serious problem. Madam Speaker, 50 percent of the members of CFIB find getting skilled help a serious problem, because this government failed to provide the opportunities. This budget does nothing, another cynical promise easily broken, easily broken.

What about taxes and tax relief? Over the past time that, unfortunately, Manitobans have suffered this government's attentions, taxes have risen three times as much as they have been cut. Members opposite will find that difficult, because their cabinet ministers, their Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), their Premier (Mr. Filmon) tell them that taxes are going down, taxes are going down. Unfortunately, members opposite appear to not do their homework on these issues either. So I draw to their attention a memorandum which was sent to the then Minister of Finance April 7, 1993. It is from the Federal-Provincial Relations and Research Division, dated April 7, the same day that it was forwarded. They are reacting to the budget and the analysis on the budget done by Jack Katz of Doane Raymond, a chartered accountant. They are objecting to Mr. Katz's analysis and they go to some great length to say things like: these assumptions are clearly much too high in several areas, including baby supplies. It should be noted that the base extensions to the sales tax do not include things like baby foods and formulas.

They note, though, that the exemptions for baby bottles, nipples, soothers, teethers, baby cups, and cutlery is being removed. This is the government in 1992-93 that taxed baby bottle nipples. Their own Finance department is writing the memo. Then, they talk about Mr. Katz's overall analysis and they say, in summary, the total annual impact of tax-related changes on individuals are as follows: tax credit changes—this is the cynical cut to the property tax credit of \$75—a \$53-million increase. That is what your own Finance department said that was worth. Sales tax base broadening—base broadening. In other words, we are going to tax baby bottle nipples and a bunch of other things, \$48 million. Gas tax and gasohol, \$13 million. One budget, \$114 million of tax increases in one budget, and they have the effrontery to say that they do not increase taxes, that they have not increased taxes in 11 years. Their own Finance department

senior officials tell them: You increased taxes by \$114 million in one budget.

* (1610)

You know, Madam Speaker, they then go on to say something very interesting. To achieve this increase in other ways would require, and I quote: "increasing Manitoba's income tax rate from 52 to 57.7 percent."

In other words, in one year, Madam Speaker, they increased the personal income tax rate equivalency 5.7 percent, and they want to take credit for a five-point reduction over a four-year period. They want us to take some kind of joy into the streets because they have reduced taxes over a four-year period, or at least they claim they will. Who believes them? By five points. In '92-93 alone, they increased them by 5.7.

That does not include what happened with property taxes because over the time this government has held office, the special levy, levied by school divisions, but levied to protect kids' education, levied to keep the loss of teachers at a minimum, levied to keep the fact that textbooks are so out of date that they still tell people about geography that died 15 years ago, those taxes went up by \$166 million during their time in office. What does that equate to? Well, at \$24 million per income tax point, it is somewhere between six and seven income tax points. So the increases caused by your failure to fund education adequately, the increases caused by '92-93's budget—'93-94 actually; the memo was dated in '93—of \$114 million adds up to increases of more than 12 points of personal income tax equivalency, more than 12 points. This government has reduced income taxes by a total, if we are to believe this budget, of seven points, increased them by a total of 12 equivalency.

This government has raised Manitoba's taxes sharply and deviously. That does not count the effective bracket creep. That does not count the myriad fees that seniors pay for Pharmacare, that seniors pay for the opportunity to camp in our parks. It does not count fishing licences and land-transfer taxes, a litany of fees that extract money at every level of the system. It does not

count home care charging for ostomy bags. It does not count the fact that Manitobans are now paying as much as \$22,000 a year to live in a personal care home and eat frozen food. Those increases are nowhere in the calculations of this government.

They have extracted taxes, like a dentist extracts teeth, from Manitobans, all the while pretending they were going down, when in fact even over the last five or six years their revenues are shown by their own budget document to be up by a total of \$1 billion since 1990-91. So the budget is a document that Manitobans might like to believe, but they do not trust.

What about the issue of the City of Winnipeg? There was not a line in this budget about the fact that come the next reassessment for property tax, there is going to be a massive shift of tax burden from the inner city to the suburbs because the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) just discovered his road map a couple of weeks ago and found his way into the inner city. Maybe he now is beginning to recognize the fact that many of the properties in the inner city are worth only half what they were worth five years ago.

An Honourable Member: There are meetings that have been called, but you were never there, Sale.

Mr. Sale: It is interesting, the Minister of Housing says I was not there. Let me tell the Minister of Housing that from 1969 till 1985 I worked in the inner city. I wound up building senior citizens' housing in the core area. The Minister of Housing should do a little bit of work. I will send him my biography in terms of my record in the inner city. I am talking about the inner city. He probably does not even know where the Social Planning Council is. Obviously the minister is sensitive about the fact that he cannot find his way into where the real needs in the city of Winnipeg are, on which this budget is utterly silent.

But, you know, Manitobans want to believe that they will spend money on health care. Manitobans want to believe that the burden of taxation would be lifted fairly. So why did this government not refer the question of property

taxes, the excessive property tax level, to their so-called tax commission? Why did they want to avoid the fact that their government hiked property taxes by \$75 in 1993-94 and has offloaded onto property taxes \$166 million in the period of time that they have been in office by failing to fund the public education system?

Obviously they do not want any tax commission to look at the fact that now property carries more than half the burden of the operation of our schools in this province. They do not want people to pay attention to that. They do not want people to pay attention to the fact that the property tax burden in the inner city is one of the keys causing the distress, the economic, physical and social distress, of the inner city.

This is a budget that people simply cannot trust, cannot be believed, but my goodness, they wish that this government would in fact spend that money on health care. It would have been so good had they done it in 1997 when it was really needed.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, I rise today to put on the record some of my remarks regarding the budget that our government has tabled. I am very pleased to have this opportunity in the House here today. The recent provincial budget provided a framework with which to meet the new challenges facing Manitoba. Tax cuts, increased spending in important program areas, a balanced budget and continued supports for strategic economic initiatives, are all designed and encompassed within this budget. Manitoba will indeed be a better place in which to live, work and raise our families.

Manitoba's fifth straight balanced budget will be welcomed around the province. It features across-the-board personal income tax cuts on top of reductions announced in last year's provincial budget and those announced in the recent federal budget. This type of initiative is important to all Manitobans, putting extra money back in Manitobans' pockets so they themselves can benefit their life and the economy of Manitoba.

With these reductions, Manitoba's personal income tax rate will have been slashed by five

points in just three years. Measures introduced by our government since taking office will have saved Manitobans over \$200 million in annual income taxes by the year 2000. We have all known all along that tax cuts create jobs, unlike some of our honourable members across the way, and they do indeed keep our young people at home. High taxes kill jobs and drive our young people out of Manitoba. These reductions are part of a long-term plan to ensure Manitoba remains competitive as the world around us changes.

I am pleased to see that small business also benefits from this budget. The budget provides a phased-in cut in the small business income tax rate from 9 percent to 5 percent in the year 2002, saving Manitoba businesses \$24 million in taxes annually when fully implemented. Small businesses are a critical component of our province, providing hundreds of jobs for Manitobans and helping ensure that our economy remains diverse and competitive at home and abroad.

As further measures to create jobs, this budget also introduces Manitoba's equity tax credit to provide incentives for Manitoba investors to purchase qualifying securities newly issued by Manitoba companies through the Winnipeg Stock Exchange. Other measures in this budget will also help stimulate the provincial economy. They include the extension of the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, Film and Video Production Tax Credit, and retail sales tax rebate program for the first time to buyers of new homes, additional funding for highway construction and maintenance, support for mining and exploration, and continued support for Rural Economic Development Initiatives.

* (1620)

Another important initiative is a \$75-million payment towards a provincial debt. Our government is on track to pay off this province's debt within 27 years. As debt decreases, fewer tax dollars will go towards the interest costs.

This year interest costs will be \$116 million lower than they were five years ago. Paying off the debt of the past is critical. By paying off the

debt, we will be well positioned to meet the new challenges that lie ahead.

On the topic of the economy, Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to talk about how our government's sound fiscal policies and innovative programs have had a positive impact on my constituency of Portage la Prairie. For example, K & G foods, a local mushroom producer, is expanding thanks in part to a \$1.5 million repayable loan under the Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program. This will go towards the construction of a two-building composting operation. Using new technology that will help K & G foods significantly increase its yield per square foot and the number of crops produced each year, the additional product will be exported into expanding markets in Minnesota and North Dakota and will help the company open up more U.S. markets with additional product. The success K & G foods is experiencing is a testament to the health of the rural economy and the ability of our entrepreneurs to explore and develop new markets both locally and beyond our borders. I am pleased that the company will create more than 40 new jobs over the next two years.

The provincial government also remains committed to supporting the efforts of the regional development corporation, such as we have in Portage la Prairie named Central Plains Inc. Delivering programs that stimulate existing businesses and generate new ventures creates a winning situation for local business and residents. With the help of the agency, Central Plains Inc. has created more jobs in our rural economy, and our community is flourishing. Central Plains Inc. continues to play a vital role in stimulating the local economy in Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas, and our government will continue to work in partnership with this agency as it has in the past to deliver economic development programs.

The aviation industry in Portage la Prairie will also benefit thanks to a recent provincial initiative. Students at Stevenson Aviation Technical Training Centre will benefit by working on two newly purchased aircraft, which was assisted by provincial funding. Stevenson Aviation Technical Training Centre, which is

located at Southport, south of Portage la Prairie, has received up to \$280,000 in funding towards the purchase of two new types of aircraft.

The funding will be put towards the purchase of a 1970 Mitsubishi MU2G fixed-wing aircraft as well as a rotary-winged aircraft at a later date. Both the rotary-wing and the fixed-wing multiturbined engine aircraft will be needed to meet the new aviation mechanical training standards in Canada.

Apprentices in the aircraft maintenance engineering program will make extensive use of these aircraft in their training program, working on all parts of the aircraft, including the instrumentation, avionics, engines, and its structure. The MU2 features more advanced avionics systems such as the autoflight system, global positioning system, radar, and radio navigational equipment.

Manitoba has an important role to play in the aerospace industry. Our expertise is well-known worldwide. This funding will help ensure that the students of Stevenson Aviation are working on up-to-date equipment. I have no doubt that the skills that they acquire there will serve them well as they enter the aerospace industry here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to tell you that the economy of Portage la Prairie and the surrounding area continues to look bright. Our local unemployment rate currently is at 4.6 percent, which is below the provincial average and well below the Canadian average. The number of people collecting social assistance in Portage as well has dropped significantly. In fact, 500 fewer people annually since 1993 are receiving social assistance. Portage residents are finding work and receiving the training necessary to be competitive in the workforce. It is important for me to recognize and congratulate all the people who have worked so hard day in and day out to help the residents of Portage la Prairie in the training programs and helping them find work.

The city's Social Services unit in Portage la Prairie has gone the extra mile to ensure that this has happened. I would like to take a moment to recognize a few Portage la Prairie businesses

that have seen success in the past year. Crocus Foods Limited, which employs 50 full-time and part-time employees processing carrots, lettuce, cabbage for the garden market saw an increase in sales by 25 percent over last year. They anticipate a similar growth in 1999.

Madam Speaker, Outdoor Technologies in Portage la Prairie reported steady sales working out of the Portage la Prairie Industrial Park. Outdoor Technologies employs 20 persons in Portage, an additional five persons across the country in sales position.

I would like to recognize Western Bearing & Auto Parts as well for their expansion from 450 square metres to 990 square metres. I sincerely wish Western Bearing continued success.

I am delighted to tell you as well of the strong economy in Portage that has led in increased building and construction within our community. The municipality issued \$11 million worth of building permits in the R.M. of Portage la Prairie, which is up by \$2 million over 1997. The increase in building permits has been distributed equally among business and agricultural and residential. The number of building permits has increased by 30 percent each year. Indeed, the growth in Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas can be attributed to the strong economy and the entrepreneurial spirit which exists within our community.

I am pleased that the Manitoba economy as well is doing well. Our government has played a significant role in this success. As mentioned, our unemployment rate within the province is currently the lowest in Canada at 5.7 percent. This equates to 2.5 percentage points lower than the national average. This government is working for Manitobans to create jobs and job opportunities.

Our commitment to job creation and stimulation has benefited youth in this province. Manitoba currently has a 10.6 percent youth unemployment rate, which is almost 4 percent lower than the Canadian average. I am proud to tell you, Manitoba young people are finding jobs, and not just finding jobs, but finding them

here in Manitoba so that they can remain within the province.

Our government has continued its tradition of finding summer employment for Manitoba's youth through programs such as the Green Team. Since its inception in 1992, the Green Team program has provided summer opportunities for close to 9,000 Manitoba young people. Programs, such as the Green Team, creating a winning situation for all participants, youth gain valuable work experience, and important projects are undertaken within our communities and our parks. The youth in Portage la Prairie continue to benefit from this program.

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba economy is in fine shape entering the new millennium. Our government has a vision on how to keep this province strong and how, indeed, to expand our markets for our products. We have developed a plan that will lead this province into a new era, an era of global markets and endless possibilities. We have entered a time where the Internet and its encompassing technologies have changed the face of the marketplace. Our government has ensured Manitoba business and products will be on-line and showcased throughout the world—the Manitoba marketplace, a website linking Manitoba with the world on a comprehensive database detailing Manitoba products, services, information and business opportunities. The website will provide investors with access to both private and public business opportunities and give Manitoba businesses more exposure to the world through that of the Internet.

* (1630)

Once again, our exports, as shown, to the United States have grown. Manitoba's exports to the U.S. outpaced the national average for the fifth straight year. In fact, in 1998 it reached a record \$6.5 billion. The 1998 growth rate for Manitoba was 13.1 percent, and the value of our exports to the U.S. now is almost three and one-half times what it was in 1990. In the past six years, the value of Manitoba exports to the U.S. has grown by 227 percent. This province now stands at seven consecutive years of double-digit growth in its exports to the U.S. Our growth to

the U.S. was the second strongest export performance of all the provinces, far above the national average which is 143 percent over the same period.

The evidence is there, Manitoba's economy continues to thrive. Manitoba's economic growth outpaced the national economy in '96, '97 and '98. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada and our lowest rate in almost 20 years. Recent statistics show family incomes in Manitoba experienced the largest increase in Canada, more than four times the national average, and we continue to set new records for manufacturing shipments, export and consumer spending. Therefore, Madam Speaker, this makes Manitoba a competitive and attractive place in which to do business in just about every sector of our economy.

Our government is also striving to create a healthy environment in which we work, live and raise our family. This is seen in our commitment to programs such as health care, education and family services. On the topic of health care, our budget provides an increase in health care spending of \$194 million which is 10 percent above what it was last year. In health care, Manitoba will spend \$2.1 billion this year. The priority given to health care spending is a major element in our government's plan to ensure that our health care system meets the needs of Manitobans. Some \$5.8 million is spent every day delivering the health care services to Manitobans.

I am proud to be part of a government that is making the largest single investment in health care services by any government in this province's history. Our government is committed to continuing to reduce the waiting times and improve access to medical services, continuing to recruit and retain health care professionals, especially nurses and specialists, and continuing to provide more options for community-based health care. Our government has committed \$123 million to this year's capital expenditure. The 1999-2000 capital program is supporting 36 individual programs around our province, including the construction of new hospitals, personal care homes and improvements within existing health care facilities.

Locally, funding has been committed to study the most effective way to upgrade the Portage General Hospital, through extensive renovations or perhaps through full replacement or partial replacement, thereby ensuring its continued role as a regional acute care facility. Thanks to our commitment to health care, I am proud to tell you the Portage la Prairie General Hospital is now able to double the number of patients that the dialysis unit sees each week as a result of \$70,000 in additional provincial government funding. The increase in dialysis patients was made possible as a result of increased medical coverage and staff training. The hospital will increase its services from 10 to 20 patients, as mentioned, per week. As well, residents of the Lions Manor are benefiting from \$400,000 in provincial funding for the installation of state-of-the-art smoke detectors, fire alarms and a sprinkler system.

We are addressing the changing needs of health care in this province. Our government has increased funding to Manitoba's 10 rural RHAs, those being outside of the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon, by more than \$13 million, thereby attempting to meet the needs of our aging population and the advances in new technology.

Locally, Madam Speaker, \$1.1 million for Central Manitoba Regional Health Authority will provide for increased home care volumes to hire resource and case co-ordinators. It will also be used to expand laboratory and diagnostic imaging services.

I am pleased to tell the House that our government is providing improved access for children to physiotherapy, occupational and speech and language therapy. The Central Manitoba RHA will receive \$150,000 additional funding to provide for quality diagnostic and treatment services for Manitoba children in their community. This additional funding will reduce the stress of treatment afforded those children outside of their community. This will afford their treatment to be provided within their community which is near their friends and family.

We are ensuring that hospitals are staffed with quality health care providers. We are

attracting specialists to address the high-demand fields of neurology and anesthesiology. We are actively recruiting more nurses and assuring nurses who want to remain within Manitoba. All these measures will ensure that our health care system remains responsive to the changing needs of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, on the topic of family services, our government has also recognized the importance of ensuring our children get a good, healthy start in life because a good start leads to life-long advantages. This budget provides an allocation of additional \$25 million for programs designed to identify problems early and provide supports to help families better meet the needs of their children. One of the barriers to families achieving their goals of self-sufficiency is ensuring that their children are properly cared for in a safe, nurturing environment. Manitoba's high-quality daycare system provides many options to parents. The budget dedicates an additional \$5.3 million to child daycare programs to further increase the number of spaces and options available to parents and family.

Another way we are helping families is by raising the exemption level for the retail sales tax on clothing for children under the age of 15 to \$150, thereby reflecting the increased costs of providing for the needs of our children.

Our government continues to promote positive parenting through a series of in-home support programs. The BabyFirst initiative helps ensure infants receive the care and stimulation they need. Families throughout Manitoba will benefit from this initiative, and our government will be funding the central regional RHA in the amount of \$117,696.

An Honourable Member: How much was that again?

Mr. Faurchou: I should repeat that number: \$117,696, which will have a lasting positive effect in Portage la Prairie and surrounding area.

I am pleased to tell you that three daycare facilities in Portage la Prairie will be expanded as a result of \$20,000 in provincial funding under the EarlyStart program. The Portage

Day-Care Centre, the Wee World Day Care Centre, the Westend Day Care Centre will all expand and upgrade through this provincial funding.

As a parent and as a former school trustee I am pleased that the budget also applies to our educational system. I am pleased that the budget understands the future of Manitoba and what our children need to address that future. The budget increases funding to school divisions so they will have more resources to meet the needs of the province's children. The additional funding is directed to a number of priority areas including classroom costs, professional development, opportunities for teachers, support for technology, and the purchase of school buses.

The budget also outlines support for the province's post-secondary institutions as well, thereby ensuring Manitobans gain the skills they need in the new, demanding global economy.

* (1640)

Our government's strategic plan to develop an economy that fosters growth and investment has borne results. Manitoba has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as I have mentioned, and the highest level, thereby being also the highest, employment rate in this province's history. The challenge lies not only in job creation but ensuring sufficient numbers of skilled workers. To assist with that, the budget doubles the apprenticeship training opportunities by the year 2000-2001, provides over \$7 million for youth employment programs that generate career related employment, dedicates almost \$50 million in labour market development programs and invests \$6.5 million in helping Manitobans make the transition from welfare to work.

Our government is committed to provide our young with a solid education, an education that will provide them with the necessary skills to become healthy and productive adults. We continue to increase funding in the number of areas that provide our children with the skills necessary to enter the 21st Century. Whether it be by funding for computers or computer software, upgrading facilities, this government has come through for our children of Manitoba.

We will increase accessibility to post-secondary education so all Manitoban youth will have the option of attending university and we will reward students with the increased scholarships and bursaries. Manitoba's learning tax credit and the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative are important steps in helping our young scholars succeed. Our government will work with parents to ensure our students are getting the most out of our educational system. We will continue with the standardized testing to ensure students, parents, and teachers know how a student is progressing so they can take remedial action at the earliest of possible time.

In addition we have committed additional funding and support of special needs students and students with behavioural problems who are at risk of underachieving or dropping out. We believe that a quality education should be afforded to all Manitoba children, and, also, we recognize that some need special attention and special programming.

Our government has committed funds for technical advancement in schools. We have increased the informational technology grants to ensure students have the skills needed to achieve success in today's global marketplace. Over the past few months, we have been upgrading our wiring and cabling within our schools. We have also donated 7,000 pieces of computer hardware, providing funding for computers for school and school libraries.

We have also enhanced professional development opportunities for our teachers and provided additional support for curriculum development, standards development and piloting and implementation.

I am pleased to be part of a government that has made education a top-spending priority, second only to health. We are building an education system that offers our children and our youth the knowledge and skills that they will need to lead successful lives right here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, on the topic of justice, our government is committed to provide safer homes, streets and workplaces. We know that the best people to discuss safety issues are the

people within our communities. We have gone the extra mile to discuss that with the people of Manitoba, and we have asked for their input through the consultations that we have held on the Young Offenders Act.

I am also delighted to tell you that our government has funded locally run crime prevention programs, one being the Ward 5 East Citizens on Patrol, which was presented with \$1,523 provincial funding in order to implement their program. Former Mayor Carlson and I presented \$28,000 to community crime prevention, which supports Block Parents, Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens on Patrol and a restorative justice committee within Portage la Prairie. Our government continues to work with the citizens, town officials, rural municipality, as well as others to prevent crime in Portage la Prairie.

As well, I am very pleased to express to all members here that the Portage la Prairie Citizens on Patrol were recipients of the 1998 Manitoba Crime Prevention Award, which was presented by our Justice minister. This organization has been very valuable to all residents in Portage la Prairie.

Our government is dedicated to assist victims of crime. In Portage la Prairie alone, the Victim Services program has been enhanced. Our government has provided \$225,000 in additional funding to the RCMP to help victims of crime, and the program has been extended. Portage la Prairie, Virden, Dauphin, Selkirk, Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon all benefit from this most valuable program.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, the new millennium is fast approaching and Manitoba is at a critical crossroads. Manitoba's finances are healthier than at any time in the last quarter century. We are enjoying steady growth and we have the lowest unemployment rate in all of the dominion.

This budget reflects a great deal of work, and it strikes a balance between what Manitobans have expressed to us. I am certain that this will hold us on a course that provides growth and success and ensures appropriate levels of funding for those priority programs.

The tax reduction and other announcements in this budget are all part of a plan for a brighter future. They are essential parts of our government's plan to meet the new challenges, but we cannot be complacent. All honourable members, the status quo is not acceptable.

Careful fiscal planning, forward-looking policies have brought us to where we are today in Manitoba's history. We must continue to build on the positive effects of these policies and use our strengths to progress even further. The 1999 budget shares the benefits of our responsible fiscal management and the leadership which has been shown by our government.

Our government has the experience, vision and commitment to meet those challenges. I am very proud to be part of a government that is committed to the betterment of all Manitobans, a government that has vision for Manitoba and is planning for a real future for our province, a government that recognizes the importance of fiscal management and responsibility, a government committed to health care and social services.

In this budget speech delivered by our Honourable Harold Gilleshammer, our government has outlined a vision for Manitoba, and we will follow through with his vision and the promises, I guarantee it. I look forward to continuing to work for the citizens of Portage la Prairie, and I am proud to say that I will be supporting this budget. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1650)

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member for Portage la Prairie and the words that he put on the record here having to do with the budget that was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer). I hate to be the one to break it to him, however, but when the member for Portage la Prairie indicates that when fully implemented the government will do this and do that, the problem is that things are never fully implemented from this side of the House when they promise things for the people of Manitoba.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, what is announced and what is implemented are usually two different things. What is announced is all kinds of flowery language about health care, all kinds of promises on education, all kinds of promises on all kinds of different issues; what is implemented, however, are all kinds of cuts. The member for Portage la Prairie does not have to take my word for this. He can go back and he can check. In 1995, at pre-election time, and he can look at all those promises and all that flowery language that was used by this government just over four years ago in the pre-election, the runup before 1995's election, and he can look at what the government then was talking about.

They were talking about increases to health care. They were talking about huge capital expenditures in the area of health care, buildings, equipment. Those were the things they were promising. They were promising a brighter future for students in education. They were promising increases in funding in education. They were promising more support for special needs. They were promising more support for textbooks. The list went on and on. What happened after the election?

An Honourable Member: It all came true.

Mr. Struthers: Somebody says it all came true. That is just not true, that is just not true. An honest analysis of what happened pre-1995 election and post-1995 election will tell all honourable members that that just was not the case. The promises were made before the '95 election, and they were broken after 1995. It did not take them long to backtrack after 1995. The former Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism was here and he knows that. He knows that little political game that was played before and after the 1995 election.

Madam Speaker, you do not even have to look at the 1995 election to figure that out. You can go back to 1990. You can go back to pre-1990 and see where some of the very promises we saw in 1995 originated from. Some of the same things promised in '95 were originally promised in 1990. I would encourage the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) to go and talk to the people in Birtle, Manitoba

and in Shoal Lake, Manitoba, especially Shoal Lake, where they were promised in 1990 and promised again in 1995 that they would have a new hospital built by this Conservative government. I would encourage the member for Portage la Prairie to go and check it out. Go see where that new hospital is.

Again, do not take my word for this. Look it up in the announcements. We have great technology available to us to go back in time, to go back nine years. Look up the news releases. Look up what his government said they would do. Compare it to what is there now at Shoal Lake. Make those comparisons, then answer me this question: why would we believe this government today? What guarantee is there that this government is going to come through with any of the flowery words, any of the promises?

An Honourable Member: It is our word.

Mr. Struthers: This government's word is not worth the paper that this budget was printed on. I am afraid to tell the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) that when he says "our word," "our word" was no good in 1990. "Our word" was no good in 1995. I would submit, Madam Speaker, that this government's word is not worth much more in '99 than it was in '95 and in 1990.

I would suggest that the last thing we do is try to denigrate the good work of the 4-H program and the young people who are supposed to be learning through 4-H, as I did when I was young, that the kinds of values that the 4-H program was set up to teach to young rural children. Madam Speaker, 4-H programs do not teach students to break their word. In the 4-H program when they talk about Your Head, Your Heart, Your Health and Your Hands, they are not teaching young children to go out and promise things that they do not ever intend to deliver on. This is serious business. This is the word of the government.

Madam Speaker, in 1995, this government promised \$678 million in health capital. After the election, they broke their promise; they cancelled the program. Well, on the surface of it, some people who may be a little on the cynical side might say, well, okay, it happened; it happens all the time; sometimes there are

errors; sometimes people get excited and promise things that they may not be able to come through on, but a lot of people were depending on those announcements worth \$678 million. A lot of people depended on those announcements for their health, for their well-being, for their children, for their parents, for their grandparents. It is just not right for any government, this one, the previous one, the next one, the one in another province, the one in another jurisdiction, to purposely make those kinds of false promises and then, without ever having an intention of fulfilling that promise, cancel the program after the election. [interjection]

The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) wants to get into a discussion about taxes, and do you know what, Madam Speaker, that will come up a little bit later, and he will get his chance then to heckle all he likes, but the only way that the member for Arthur-Virden will be able to score any points when it comes to taxes is if people decide that they are not going to listen to the debate because this government, over the course of its 11 long years in power, has in fact raised taxes.

Madam Speaker, I want to continue talking a little bit about what the Dauphin constituents tell me is the most important issue facing the province of Manitoba in the spring of 1999, and that is health care. Health care is the No. 1 issue of my constituents. The city of Dauphin has 31.5 percent or so of its population that are over the age of 65. Another large percentage falls between the ages of 55 and 65. The demographics for the province of Manitoba indicate that more and more of our constituents are heading to that age in which more and more health care services are going to be needed. The last thing this population of ours needs, with the demographics that we have, is a government that is going to offer up all these promises in health care and then cynically turn and not meet those commitments.

The other part of the demographics of the Dauphin constituency that I worry about is that that age group of people which I am glad to say in Dauphin and in Grandview and in Gilbert Plains and some other parts of my constituency we have been noticing a bit of an increase is

young families with young children. Now, here is another age group that really depends quite heavily on a stable health care system, a stable, well-funded health system, a health care system that can meet the needs of young families in our areas.

* (1700)

There are a lot of, I think, some very positive discussions taking place in the Parkland area, my constituency included, in which we are talking about a lot of opportunities for young people to come to our area and open businesses, a lot of opportunities that we think are in the offing for some good jobs, jobs that pay a decent salary, opportunities in our area for young people to move into the Parklands. This would be bucking a trend that has been prevalent throughout the Conservative 11 years of power, where the depopulation of our area has taken place.

An Honourable Member: Not true.

Mr. Struthers: Now, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) says not true. The member for Arthur-Virden should check his facts. All through the Parklands, there has been depopulation of our area. We have been losing people from our areas and we have been losing people throughout the province of Manitoba, exporting them to other jurisdictions, and this government sticks its head in the sand and will not deal with that. This government thinks that it can offer up some low-skilled, low-wage jobs and think that that is going to keep people in this province. Well, wake up, it is not.

In the Dauphin area, we do have a lot of local people doing a lot of very good things to encourage people to settle in the Parklands. Now, Madam Speaker, what is the reason why people would come back to our area? I would suggest that one thing that they depend on—[interjection]The Minister of Agriculture says the Tories are in power, but that is what has caused them to leave in the first place. They are not going to come back because you are still in power. They are looking for in our area a consistent, well-funded, well-equipped, well-staffed health care system.

Under this government not only are the people in my area not getting the opportunities for employment like they should, they do not have that well-funded health care system that we need in our area. We do not have it. We do not have it when this government keeps communities like Grandview in the dark, keeps communities like Grandview in the dark when it comes to staffing its hospital and to staffing the community with doctors.

Now, I do not think the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) wants to hear this too badly with the motions that she makes, and she wants me to speed up, but this is something the Minister of Environment needs to hear. Health care is very important to our area. We cannot put up with the kind of promises that this government makes and then breaks. It is their word that is at stake, and a lot of people are depending on this government to come through with their word.

You know, Madam Speaker, even in the announcements that this government thinks is so positive, even in these announcements where they are announcing more health care money, even in those positive announcements, this government has a tendency to lean towards deceit. It is not \$194 million that this government is putting forward in new spending in this budget. It is not a 10 percent increase over last year. I will give it to this government, though, \$83.6 million in increased health funding. I will give you credit for that. Why do you not, though, for once in your 11 years of long reign in this province, why do you not for once just say the honest number, \$83.6 million, 4 percent over last year? Take credit for what you have done. Do not try to blow it all out of proportion like you do every time you introduce a budget in this House. Be honest about it. I will give you credit for what you do. When you do good things, I will give you credit for them. So if you had announced, in an honest way, that you were increasing health funding by \$83.6 million, or 4 percent over last year, I would have applauded you. That would have been a good thing.

But do you know what? To stand in this House and say \$194 million and try to portray it as a 10 percent increase over last year, that is

just not right. That is just not the right thing for this government to do. Be honest about it.

What they are trying to do, Madam Speaker, like they did last year—remember last year? Last year, this government announces \$100 million in new spending. What they do not tell us is that they have added that spending the previous year through special warrants. How many times is this government going to spend the same dollar over and over and over again? They cannot do it. It is not proper. The Provincial Auditor does not think you are doing it the right way.

Madam Speaker, health care in Manitoba is way too important for this government to play little political games with. Tell us the honest figures. Indicate exactly what it is you are willing to do and then come through with it. Why would I or any of my constituents or any other Manitobans, for that matter, believe this government's wild, wild projections of health care spending? I would submit to you that whether the number is \$194 million or whether it is \$83.6 million, that this government does not intend on spending either. I do not think this government intends to spend even the \$84 million they have in this budget for health care. I do not think they ever intend to spend that money. I dare the government to defy what I said just now. I dare this government to try to tell me that on the basis of their word that the people of Manitoba should believe that they are going to spend any more money in health care than they did last year. I cannot see that happening.

Madam Speaker, let us take a look at an example of what I consider to be the deceit of the health care announcements in this budget by the government. A couple of months ago, we heard about a \$7-million fund that was being put in place to attract back some of the nurses that this government had fired over the years of being in power. They are trying to reattract the nurses that they have already chased out of the health care system. They are going to spend, they say, \$7 million to do this. They have set up this fund.

Madam Speaker, they are not spending the money. They are not serious about attracting nurses back to Manitoba Health. They have set

up a committee, and they have said to this committee: Here are some criteria that we want you to use, but we want you to decide how we are going to go about re-attracting the nurses that we have fired out of our system. The committee will get together. The committee will meet. The committee will talk about the criteria. The committee will meet some more. The committee will come up with some recommendations. By that time, the election will have been held, and then what? Hopefully, we have a government that will listen to what the recommendations are from this committee, and we will have a government that will act on recommendations.

But I say to you, Madam Speaker, that this government will not do that. I say to you that this government has very cynically put up the figure of \$7 million in a fund, and they never, ever intend to spend that money to bring nurses back to this area. Their hope is that they can call an election, win the election, and go right back to business as usual for this government, never having to spend the \$7 million. They got from that announcement what they really wanted. They have the headlines that say that the government is spending \$7 million, that they have this fund available to attract nurses back to Manitoba. The government should not have fired the nurses in the first place. It did not make any sense.

I remember a couple of years ago, Madam Speaker, right in this House, we heard from the former Minister of Health that he was going to take the bull by the horns and fix up the health care system. He was going to open beds, reopen some beds, to help solve the problem of hallway medicine; he was going to end having all these people in the hallways who were not getting proper care. So he was going to reopen some beds. There was just one little problem. He had fired the nurses who would staff those reopened beds. They could not do it because they did not have nurses in place to accomplish that.

Now, there is forethought. There is foresight. That is good planning, is it not? It sure is not. You have to think of these things. Before you go and fire 1,100 nurses out of the system, you have to understand their value to the system. Before you chase them all away to other jurisdictions, you have to understand that, if you

really want to solve the problems in health care, you cannot be firing nurses. You cannot be playing politics with a \$7-million fund to attract nurses back. It is just not going to work.

* (1710)

I would love if this government would come up with some ideas on how to attract nurses back to our province because I think nurses are important to our health care system. They are important to people living in Manitoba. I do not see it happening with the announcements that have been made by this government, either prebudget or in the budget.

Madam Speaker, the other area upon which I would like to spend a little bit of time is education, some of the things that this government has been talking about, announcing, has been talking about in the budget, and indeed in the Budget Debate that we have been having since the tabling of the budget last week. Education, too, is important to the people that I represent in the Dauphin constituency. There is no doubt that what this government has been doing has been offloading taxes from the province to the local school divisions and local rural municipalities and local town and city councils. There is not a division in rural Manitoba that has been missed. There is not a division in rural Manitoba or, I suspect, in the city of Winnipeg that has not had to backfill the cuts of this provincial government.

I referenced the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) earlier, and in his speech he talked about being a trustee. So he knows that what I say is accurate. He knows that over the 11 years of this government on this Premier's (Mr. Filmon) watch every year, year after year, we have seen an offloading by this government onto the local level. I remember seeing this from the vantage point of being a school principal. I remember having to implement budgets that this government, budgets at the school that had to actually do the dirty work of this government, and this government's Minister of Education.

You know, it is easy to sit here and come up with these ideas on how you are going to cut here and cut there when you do not have to look

across a desk at somebody who is being laid off. It is easy to do that here in Winnipeg from this building without having to move a student off the list of special needs because you do not have the money in your budget to do it with, to fund that student. It is easy to say you have not raised taxes and then let the local town councillor take a lot of abuse from local ratepayers when that person, that local councillor, has to raise taxes on your behalf.

It is easy, and it is cynical, on the part of this government to put billboards up in elections saying that you have not raised taxes in 11 years. [interjection] The Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) thinks that they have been lowered. She has really accepted the rhetoric of the government. They have not been lowered. You have raised taxes. You have raised taxes in a lot of devious ways.

An Honourable Member: While she was Minister of Education.

Mr. Struthers: While the Minister of Environment was the Minister of Education, the Dauphin Ochre School Area had to raise local mill rates to cover her cuts, and has this government understood that that is the wrong thing to do? Has the government at least acknowledged their role in this offloading of taxes? No, Madam Speaker. The next minister comes along and does the same thing. This budget does the same thing.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This budget allows for the continuation of this government's policy of underfunding education, thus making it so that the local level in all the constituencies represented by members across the way puts the onus on those local entities to do one of two things. Either you have to cut back—you have to cut back on money going to textbooks; you have to cut back on teacher prep time; you have to put more students in the classrooms and knock the daylights out of your pupil-teacher ratio; you have to cut back on school-sponsored trips. You have to do all those cutbacks, or you have to raise the local mill rate.

Does that not bother you a little bit? Do you not see that that is the wrong approach? Do you

not see that you should live up to your rhetoric about working in partnership with school divisions and the parent advisory councils? Of course, Mr. Acting Speaker, the other thing that happens, the option, I guess, for the local schools is that you can send your kids out to sell chocolate bars, you can do garage sales, you can do yard sales.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) wants more than \$500,000 to run an ad campaign saying how great things are in health care. I would love to see either the current Health minister or the previous one sitting at a yard sale raising money to do that. We make our kids do it. We tell our kids, if they want textbooks in classrooms, go and sell some chocolate bars. Go and get a whole bunch of those chocolate-covered almonds and sell them like crazy to try to raise some money so that you can have science equipment in the chemistry lab. On top of that we are now going to nail you 7 percent for provincial sales tax. Is that the road that this government thinks, does this government think that that is the road that reasonable people in Manitoba want this government to take? I do not think so, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Acting Speaker, education, again, is much too important an issue for this government to simply be using as a political pawn in their plan for re-election in the upcoming election. This is our future. This should be approached as an investment in our future, not an area which we can cut so that we can balance the budget, not an area where we can offload taxes onto the local levels so that we can brag that we have never raised taxes. It is too important for that.

If this government was really, truly, honestly committed to the education of our young people it would not be taking this dishonest approach. It would be really working in partnership with school divisions, with school boards, trustees, working in conjunction with, in partnership with the local teachers' association. They would be working in partnership with a parent advisory council. Instead of relying on parents to join a parent advisory council so that they can help out in the next fundraising event, they should be really including parents in the decision making of their local schools. I remember that is what

the parent advisory council was introduced for in the first place.

* (1720)

As a student teacher, I remember a parent advisory council at the Meadows School in Brandon in 1978. Now, that parent advisory council was not put in a position where they had to fundraise over and over. That parent advisory council really did have a say in the ongoing education of our students, of our young people, which is what I would hope everybody in this Chamber would see as a proper role for a parent advisory council. The role of a parent advisory council, maybe not on paper, maybe not through legislation in this House, but certainly in practice, has come to be that of a fundraising committee. It has been put in that position by this government, who has been underfunding our public schools.

I want to touch on another issue that is very important for constituents of Dauphin, and that is agriculture. In our part of the world, agriculture is our industry. You know, quite often, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have people come to me and they say: you know, what we need in our area is an industry. We need an industry so we can have jobs. We need an industry so we can have a tax base. We need an industry in our community because people are leaving, they are going out of our area. I have sympathy with those requests. I think that is a great thing, that people are interested and they want to take part in that discussion about how to make our part of the world a better place to live.

But you know what? We have an industry. It is called agriculture. We have an industry in our part of the world as in other parts, an industry that has sustained growth in the Parkland area, an industry that has provided a pretty good way of life for a lot of people in our part of the world. We have an industry that is the No. 1 industry in the province: agriculture. We have an industry right now that is in crisis. What we need in the industry, in the short term, is an injection of cash. I may as well put it bluntly. That is what is needed. Not like in some other industries, this industry of agriculture needs some help.

The industry of agriculture in our area does not need a program from Ottawa that is inaccessible, that is inadequate, which is what we are getting from Ottawa right now, to which this government has signed on. What farmers need from time to time in our area, as well as many other areas of the province and indeed throughout the country, is a hand every now and then. Think about the number of farmers who have left the industry over the years and think about the headlines that hit the papers when a factory closes down. How many jobs are lost in the area? How many farmers have been lost from our area in the Parklands? Why are there not more people screaming and yelling about this? Why not? Maybe the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) thinks that they are all happy, that everything is just hunky-dory.

I mean, come out to our area sometime. Come out and look at the farm sites that have been closed up. Come out to our area and look at some of the small communities who depend on the agricultural industry in our part of the world, and take a look at the decline that has taken place in some of those areas.

Let me be clear, Mr. Acting Speaker, this is not because farmers are incompetent. This is not because farmers do not work hard enough. They have been doing their part. There are a lot of reasons, most of which are out of the control of the farmer that ploughs his land north of Dauphin or the farmer that grows cattle at Rorketon. We have signed on to some agreements that have had a very negative impact on the farmers in the areas which we represent. When we cause that kind of trouble for farmers, we have to have the backbone and we have to have the foresight to stand up and say that we are going to help you when you need it.

What did I see in the throne speech that would indicate to me that this government is willing to stand up for farmers? What did I see in the throne speech? There was nothing in the throne speech. I would suggest that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) read that throne speech. Do it cover to cover, and you try to show me something in that throne speech that was of value to the people that I represent, who earn their living through agriculture in rural Manitoba.

Not only that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want you, and I want members of this government, to go through this budget with a fine-tooth comb and show me where farmers are going to be benefiting directly from measures announced in this budget.

I can save the member some time. I would suggest they go ahead and they do that. I can save them some time by saying zero. There is no support here for the farm communities. You are not going to take my word obviously, so go ahead and check it out. Go back to the Finance minister's budget speech, take a good look at it and read it cover to cover again. See what you can come up with when it comes to agriculture, see what you come up with.

What I want people to understand most about the whole budget process is that announcing a budget in the Legislature and then getting all the media after does not mean that you are going to get \$83.6 million in health care. It does not mean you are going to get three points off of your income tax. It does not mean anything unless this government is willing to implement what it announces. If past practices are any kind of indication, what we will get is a whole lot of promises followed by a whole lot of cuts.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1730)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am delighted to be able to get up and to speak in favour of this budget. It is a good budget, it is a budget that I believe reflects where we are. The members opposite are heckling me. I cannot hear what I am saying. They want to talk about coffee. I am getting there momentarily, but I have a few other things that I need to address before I get that far. First of all, I want to say how pleased I am to be able to respond to the budget and respond to the good budget that we have in front of us this year.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I was elected in 1995, the reason that I ran for office was the fact that the government was looking at running a balanced budget and putting in the balanced budget act, and so I was pleased to be able to

respond to that and to be a part of a government that believes it is important that we do run a balanced budget. So I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) for the good work that he has done in preparing this budget and presenting it to the people of Manitoba.

It is interesting that all along, the four years that I have been here, that the opposition has been constantly opposing the budget and opposing the whole aspect of balanced budgets, and I thought that they were on a roll and would keep on going and going. Now, I have been listening carefully, and I find out that they are starting to think that maybe this is not all that bad. This is very interesting.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

I think that now either they are getting very ready to flip-flop and move across or somehow this new New Democratic Party is taking place. I am not exactly sure what it is, but it is very interesting to see the changes that are taking place, at least some days. Now, we are not sure. Again, from day to day that flip-flops. [interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says call an election and we will see change. Absolutely. I am just not exactly sure how we are going to be able to move all of our people across to that other side, so it is going to be very interesting to see.

As I was saying, the opposition has been opposing a balanced budget, the whole area of trying to live within our means. It reminds me a little of the comments that the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) was just saying, and he is talking about money and the whole area of dealing with dollars. If this is the way the New Democrats and the members opposite talk about increases and how they say there have been no increases, I would just like to refer to 1992. He was talking about the fact that in education we had had zero increases, there had been no increases in education funding.

Now, I need to have mathematics put in perspective here but, in 1992, we spent \$1,009,379.50 on education; in 1999, we are going to be spending \$1,179,000,000 on education. Now, to me, that reflects an increase.

In fact, it is a 19 percent increase, so I guess you can use and you can reflect mathematics any way you want. In the business world that I come from, that is an increase. Now, again, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) uses his numbers to reflect the things that he wishes to reflect, but I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I cannot concur with that. Well, it is a 19.8 percent increase, if that helps him anything to go back and to try and relate this to some of the numbers that they put on the record.

So, anyway, Madam Speaker, I find it very interesting that when they start quoting numbers and they start quoting statistics how when you put them into perspective and you take the actual dollars that are there, it is quite opposite to the information that they are putting on the record.

The other thing I just wanted to comment on was that they somehow feel that our government is being tightfisted or is not reflecting the needs of the people by not living beyond their means. I would just like to put this into a personal perspective. I think that my own life and the way that I run a business has been reflective of one who is trying to live within the means that I have. On the other hand, I also believe that I have been responsive to the people that I have been working with and been responsible for in sharing what is there when the times are better. I see no difference in what is taking place today.

Madam Speaker, I would like to refer back to Boundary Trails. Now, I know that the comments have been made and they have been speaking rather at length about the fact that dollars are not being spent in health care. Well, it is absolutely right. In 1996, there was a freeze put on dollars that were being spent in health care. That is correct. When I put this down to myself running a business, when I had the income decrease dramatically, that is what happened in 1996. In 1995 it started when the federal government dramatically withdrew funds which were specific to health care, which were specific to education. We needed to relook and we needed to backfill those dollars, which we did. We never did cut back, but we did put a hold on for a while, and coming back to Boundary Trails, this absolutely is taking place right now.

Again, I would encourage members opposite to come out to southern Manitoba sometime to see what is taking place. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is talking about the fact that people are leaving Manitoba in droves because there are no jobs here. Well, I would encourage you to come to southern Manitoba. Maybe people in Winnipeg want to leave the province. There are jobs out there. Right now, if a hundred people wanted to get a job in southern Manitoba, they could get a job. These are not as what you would determine as being the menial type jobs; these are good jobs. Yes, there are some jobs that do not require specific or great skills, but there are some jobs that require some very skilled people.

I am just reflecting the numbers that I have heard, the statistics that you give. When I put these into perspective of what is actually happening, I certainly question the numbers that you put on the record. In fact, I have a little bit of a problem believing them.

So, Madam Speaker, the things that I am hearing this afternoon about the doom and gloom that is taking place within this province, I am sorry, but I just do not see that. I do not see that because that is not what I am experiencing on a day-to-day basis.

It is unfortunate that the members opposite see this as being, you know, such a negative place to be, when I see this being a very positive place to be, a very positive thing that is happening within our province and has happened for the last number of years.

That is why I believe that we have brought forward a very good budget, one that reflects the realities of what is taking place here today, things that are taking place within the province of Manitoba. So I find it interesting that they would take such a negative approach to what is taking place here.

Madam Speaker, this afternoon I made some references to some of the 1980s, and I am just going to put some of these back on the record. In fact, I was asked to do that, so I certainly want to oblige. I made the comment, I said, let us imagine if you will members opposite back in the mid-1980s during that dark tax-and-spend

period of Manitoba's history. We know that the NDP believes strongly in the role of government to influence people's lives day to day. Specifically, I remember the days in the 1980s when it was the idea of the NDP government to try to get a hold of all the farmland within the province. I think that there are possibly other members here who would remember that, that the NDP government was out, through their MACC corporation, making it impossible for farmers to be able to repay their debts and, with that, be able to take the properties back to the province.

Now, that was their way of solving problems. It would be ownership of government. Own everything within the province. I am sorry, I do not adhere to that kind of a philosophy. So they gathered around their caucus and decided that Manitobans drink too much coffee. What else could explain the province's high debt, high unemployment and struggling economy? So in their infinite wisdom they began a concerted effort to reduce Manitoba's caffeine levels. By the end of 1987, thanks to the creation of five new taxes and the raising of 16 existing taxes, Manitobans would no longer be able to afford to drink coffee.

I remember the days of the taxes, the taxes going up. It was increase taxes, spend more money, increase taxes. I happened to be on the school board during those days. Very interesting. Just tax—and yes, certainly, that reflected back on those who were paying taxes, because if you want to have more money to put back into whatever they wanted, education or health, certainly that money would have to come from somewhere.

Somehow I do not think that in the province of Manitoba we have found that money tree yet which just grows that dollar that we can just go pick it off. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) was talking about agriculture and the doom and gloom that is out there in agriculture. [interjection] The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is saying he was trying to talk about agriculture.

I happen to be very closely associated with agriculture. Are there concerns out there? Absolutely, there are concerns out there, and I

do not in any way negate that. There are some real concerns in agriculture and the fact that we want to keep the farms going, the family farms going, absolutely right, but I do ask the member for Dauphin, though, right today, as farmers are leaving the countryside or leaving their own farms, is there any land that remains idle, that is not being planted? It is all being seeded. Absolutely. Every acre is being seeded.

So what is the response for the member? Does he want everyone to stay there, regardless of whether they want to be on the farm or not? Thank goodness we live in a country where choices are still possible, where we can make some of those decisions on our own. That kind of a democratic free society is something that I would love to keep, and I want to keep. I will work in order to do that. [interjection] Yes, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) makes an important point here.

* (1740)

I guess the other one, if I can just refer back to the 1980s, and I just said that I wanted to retain that freedom, that those who want to be in agriculture can be in agriculture. I totally agree with that. If we go back to the 1980s, it became one of where the government was purchasing property, purchasing land, then imposing that on them. It was sort of like the tenant relationship to the government where they would have a stranglehold on them. That is something I do not ever want to see. I would never want to see that.

Madam Speaker, it concerns me that the members opposite would feel the way they do about many of the things that are taking place within our society, but further the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) also indicated that our government is doing absolutely nothing to assist agriculture. It was mentioned before that \$25 million has already gone out, which is available and which has been made available to those involved in agriculture. If they are corporations, they can get \$100,000. It is not a gift, it is a repayable loan.

If I talked to the people that I represent within my area, they would indicate very clearly that, yes, if they do get the money, that should

be paid back. There is no doubt about that. This is what I am hearing. So a corporation would receive up to \$100,000. A farmer who is not incorporated would receive up to \$50,000. So the money is made available to them at an interest rate which is repayable, but something that they can use and inject into their own economy, so that they can put that crop in this year. I would suggest to you that within southern Manitoba probably 40 percent of the crop is in place already. I would just like to mention, last night we got about three-quarters of an inch of rain or 6/10, 7/10 of an inch, and it is wonderful, so the crops are growing.

Madam Speaker, the doom and gloom that I hear day in, day out coming from members opposite, I am sorry, I do not share that. I told one gentleman one day: you can choose to live on the bright side of life or you can choose to live on the negative. I would like to choose the bright side. On the other hand if you choose the other, go ahead, that is certainly your privilege.

Madam Speaker, the latest provincial budget continues our tradition of sound fiscal management. Not only does it provide Manitobans with tax relief, but it also provides continued support for our valued programs, including health care, Education and Family Services, among others. This budget is designed to help keep the Manitoba economy vibrant, growing and competitive.

I would just like to refer to a little clipping I have here from the Winnipeg Free Press. This is of course responding to the budget and some of the comments that were made, but also made by our members opposite. So first of all it came from the Leader of the Opposition, and Mr. Doer said—and the comment they make about him is that summoning all the righteous indignation that only an opposition Leader can muster, and this was where he went to, and then of course goes on to say that the reactions of Doer and Gerrard might be dismissed as nothing more than politics.

So when I listened to the debate that has taken place within this House, and I listened to the opposition speaking, I am not sure whether in fact they are supporting this budget or whether in fact they are opposing the budget. I

guess the big question will come in about a week's time when we will find out as to exactly what the opinion is going to be, so they speak on the one side and on the other hand we are not so sure.

Anyway, the writer goes on to say: it goes without saying that this is a good time. Unemployment is low. Government revenues are robust and the forecast is calling for more of the same. Then again, despite the more aggressive spending of this budget, Premier Gary Filmon said yesterday his fiscal plan is consistent with his government's record of managing the economy, and that is absolutely right.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): There seem to be two debates going on here. I am not too sure which one Hansard is going to cover, so I do not know which one is going to be on the official record. I would just like that clarified.

Madam Speaker: I assume the honourable member for The Maples was up on a point of order. I am not sure how to interpret his remarks, but I think what he was asking the Speaker to do is to maintain order so that the person recognized to speak could be heard, which was the honourable member for Pembina. Indeed the honourable member for The Maples did have a point of order, and I would ask the other members to listen attentively to the honourable member for Pembina.

* * *

Mr. Dyck: I just want to thank the honourable member for The Maples for recognizing the importance of my address here this afternoon. I believe it is important that there be a—

An Honourable Member: I do not think that is quite what he said.

Mr. Dyck: I certainly interpreted it that way. Just to proceed, Madam Speaker, Manitoba's fifth straight balanced budget contains a number of tax incentives that will help individuals, families and businesses. We believe that hard-

working Manitobans deserve tax deductions, and we are pleased to provide across-the-board tax relief.

For example, Manitoba's personal income tax rate will be cut by three full percentage points by January 2000 to put more money into the hands of Manitobans. This is money that Manitobans can use to make purchases, pay personal debts or save it for the future. I would just like to refer to some other comments that just happened to have been made but made by the business community. Dan Kelly, Manitoba's spokesman for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Joe Barnsley, chairman of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce; and Graham Starmer, chairman of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce—all praised the government's plan to lower the 50 percent personal income tax to 47 percent by January 1 of next year and to reduce the 9 percent small business tax rate to 5 percent by the year 2002.

Manitoba Business Council president and chief executive officer, Jim Carr, also praised the tax cuts and the government's plans to reduce the accumulated debt by another \$75 million this year, and to increase spending on health and education programs.

Now, Madam Speaker, as I read this, of course, that just brings back the horror stories of the spending that the members opposite did for us for which we are paying debt on now. The \$500 million that we are paying every year on our debt is something that we could be using in order to fund the programs that need funding so badly. So I believe, from the comments that I have made, that certainly the business community is with us, they are supporting our budget. I believe at the end of the day that, yes, the members opposite will also support this budget because they will also recognize it is a good budget.

In addition, the small business income tax rate will be cut from 9 percent to 5 percent by the year 2002 to help small companies expand and create more jobs. This will help promote a competitive environment for small businesses and keep our economy growing. A Manitoba Equity Tax Credit will be introduced as a further

incentive to invest in Manitoba companies and create new jobs.

Small and medium-sized businesses will benefit by being able to obtain investment capital in the form of the Renaissance Capital Manitoba Ventures Fund. This builds on the province's successful tax credit for two labour-sponsored investment funds, the Crocus and the ENSIS Fund, which have encouraged Manitobans to invest well over \$100 million.

Madam Speaker, one of the communities within my area was, in fact, able to take part in the Crocus Fund. This fund allowed the local employees to become involved in the manufacturing firm, and it gives them that pride of ownership that they need in order to be able to continue also in their own living. They feel good about the work that they do. They are part of the company. They are part of the decision making, so it is a very positive experience for them.

The Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit will be extended to the year 2003 to spur on the growth of Manitoba's booming manufacturing sector. About 10,000 jobs have been created since this tax credit was introduced.

Madam Speaker, here I would just like to refer to some of the comments that were made, and this was from The Globe and Mail on April 30. I just want to quote David Roberts here. He said: "Fuelled by economic growth that has outpaced the Canadian economy for three years, Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government offered voters a pre-election budget yesterday which boasted a modest income tax break, hefty spending increases for health care, and continued debt reduction." The economic growth that has outpaced the Canadian economy for three years.

* (1750)

Again, this is something that we are proud of. We have been a part of a government that for the last years, a number of years, has been able to direct the activities of the province in a direction that is attracting people to the province of Manitoba.

Another important initiative is the \$75-million payment towards the province's debt. Our government is on track to pay off the province's debt within 27 years. As the debt decreases, fewer tax dollars will go toward interest costs. The province will spend \$34 million less on debt servicing in 1999-2000. Paying off the debts of the past is critical. By paying off the debt, we will be well positioned to meet the new challenges ahead.

Again, just a point on the debt repayment. When we look at the strategy of doing this within 27 years, I trust and I hope that we will keep that course and we will do that over those years so that, in fact, my grandchildren, my children can be the recipients of that. But, right now, they have the problem, they have that concern as well as we do, of having to service a debt and a stranglehold that is around our neck and certainly it is not something that I am proud of.

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) before indicated that you needed to spend dollars just to keep things going and I think a classic example of trying to spend yourself into prosperity is what happened in Ontario. That was the Rae approach there, the Bob Rae approach, that you spend your way into prosperity. It does not work, B.C. is trying it. It does not work, to spend more money, to do more things and then to try to eventually dig yourself out of a hole. I said unless you have a plan to repay it, and there is the plan. You have to have a plan. A strong economy is vital to support important social services and the many improvements now underway in our health system.

This budget provides an increase in health spending of \$194 million or 10 percent bringing the government's total spending on health care of Manitobans to \$2.1 billion. Each day our government spends \$5.8 million on health care. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to the following health care initiatives announced in the 1999-2000 budget.

First of all, \$123 million is to be used to build and upgrade health care facilities including those for long-term care. Eight hundred and fifty personal care homes will be added to the

system; \$15 million more for personal care home servicing bringing the total commitment to more than \$300 million. [interjection]

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says he has heard my speech. I do not think he has because every time we bring something like this up, they stand up and refute it. They have not heard it. That is why we are out here today to try to convince them, and I think at the end of the day they will vote for this. [interjection] I think so. Madam Speaker, \$20.5 million more for home care funding, a 10 percent increase—I am sorry, a 16 percent increase; \$2.8 million will be to create community-based health care centres and \$3 million more to expand palliative care services; \$400,000 will be used to expand specialized services for stroke patients; \$27.5 million for new equipment will help reduce the waiting list for CT scans; \$62 million to expand surgery capacity and other acute care facilities.

Well, I do not know what else the opposition needs in order to convince them that this is the right direction that we are going. But anyway, to make it on a more personal level, 20 personal care beds will be added in both Morden and in Winkler which is Tabor Home and Salem Home and again reflecting the growth and the needs of the community. This government has been very responsive in doing that, and I think that is something that you need to know.

This will be coupled together with the new Boundary Trails that is presently being built out there, so you know there are some concerns being expressed across the way here, but I think again that they are on their way to just coming in our direction.

The quality of our health care system is recognized far and wide. For example, the Eden Mental Health Centre and Trainex hosted two representatives of the Brazilian Health Care Centre. They came to observe how our community-based mental health system is put into place. The aim is to bring a more innovative and community-based approach to the services in Brazil. Their visit is a testament to the high quality health care services we are able to provide Manitobans and recognition that others would like to try to replicate that. Again I would like to re-emphasize that we have people coming

to this province from other countries looking as to how we do health out here, and they are coming to learn how in fact they can translate some of their experiences they have out here back into their own countries.

Madam Speaker, I see my time is moving on. I need to move on as well, and I would like to make a few comments about education. [interjection] Well, thank you, but I do need to talk about education. I notice the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) was talking about advisory councils, that they are only there for fundraisers.

Now, I do not know which advisory councils he has been meeting with, but I have met with a number of advisory councils throughout the province not only in my constituency and that certainly is not the message that I am getting. It certainly is not the message that I am getting. In fact, they are very responsive to the approach that we have taken in giving them authority as advisory councils. So, again, it is a little bit of that same picture where you can sit and look at doom and gloom and you can be negative about everything, and I guess if I would look for only the negative things in life, I may be able to find a few as well. That is true. But I would rather dwell on those things that are positive.

So the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), in the comments that he made regarding the whole area of advisory councils, I am sorry, I have to reject the comments that he made, because if he in fact is telling his own advisory councils that all they are doing is raising money, maybe that is all they think they should be doing. I do not know. Why not get them to really get involved and do the things that they can do. So, Madam Speaker, I cannot agree with the comments that he made.

Further on, school divisions will receive a 2.3 percent funding increase. Schools will also receive \$8 million more to add new learning technology. This information, technology grants, will increase from \$10 to \$40 per pupil. These are increases.

The members for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) have been saying that, no, there are no increases to funding. Again, I want to put on the record the fact that in 1992 we spent \$1,000,009,379 on education. In

1999, we are spending \$1,179,000,000 on education. That is a 19.8 percent increase, my mathematics determines. There are no more students today than there were in 1992.

An Honourable Member: Have you heard of inflation?

Mr. Dyck: The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) mentions: have you heard of the word "inflation." On my farm, if I get \$3 a bushel for my wheat, and I got that 10 years ago, and if I got \$3.50 this year, I would have gotten more for my wheat this year than I did 10 years ago, 50 cents more. That is absolutely right. That is exactly the same thing here. So, the member for Thompson, I would suggest to you that if someone is earning \$4 in 1992 and earns \$8 an hour today, that is an increase of \$4 an hour. Okay. Exactly my point. The member for Thompson agrees with my analogy here, and I am pleased to put that on the record, that he in fact has agreed with me that this is really, in reality, an increase. But I must move on.

There will be an increase of 5 percent in support of post-secondary education and additional funding for the in-school apprenticeship program as part of our plan to double apprenticeship training capacity by the year 2001, and \$47.6 million will be spent on school renovations and construction.

I had the opportunity on Friday to go to an awards banquet where we were in touch with a number of people who have been involved with the apprenticeship program. This was an awards banquet. The employers and those involved in the program were extremely appreciative of what we as a government had done in order to enhance this program. You know, I come back to the doom and gloom that appears to be out there, that it is all negative, nothing is taking place in education. There are many wonderful things taking place in education, and our teachers are doing a wonderful job in teaching our children. Our students are coming out and doing an excellent job.

So, Madam Speaker, I cannot agree with the comments that the members opposite are making. We will also continue our investment in vital programs such as speech and hearing therapy for our youth through pediatric therapy, children with disabilities increase their level of

independence, interact more successfully with other children and gain opportunities—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable

member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) will have nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

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