



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature**

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 8, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister responsible for Fitness and Amateur Sport): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement to make, and I have 12 copies to distribute to the House.

On Saturday, March 2, 1991, on national television, millions of viewers across our country witnessed the closing ceremonies of the 1991 Canada Winter Games from Prince Edward Island. The closing ceremonies were the culmination of two weeks of intense competition between all Canadian provinces and territories in what is regarded as our national olympics.

The Canada Games provides a focus for the growth and development of amateur sport at the provincial level and provides an opportunity for high calibre national competition for a maximum number of participants who have undergone special selection and training. In many instances, the Canada Games have served as a stepping stone to the Olympics for many Canadian athletes.

It is at these games, Mr. Speaker, that the Centennial Cup is awarded to the most improved team. At the closing ceremonies, the Centennial Cup was awarded to the Province of Manitoba. The 1991 games at Prince Edward Island represented our province's best ever medal showing in winter games competition. For the record, Team Manitoba won a total of 40 medals including nine gold, 12 silver, and 19 bronze.

I would ask the House, Mr. Speaker, to join me in congratulating the 305 athletes, coaches, managers and officials who represented our province at the winter games and the provincial sport associations who played such a vital role in the development and preparation of Team Manitoba for their accomplishment on behalf of our province at these games. Thank you.

* (1005)

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add some remarks to wish the Manitoba team well today in their game against Ontario so that they can enter into the competition and also recognize the co-operation it takes in the community to bring tournaments such as this to our province. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my caucus would certainly like to join with the minister in congratulating the coaches, the team members and the officials who put on such a dedicated effort and in fact brought back a cup, which represents significant improvement, but I would also like to thank the parents. I think any of us who have in fact worked with amateur athletes and had to drive our daughters to rinks at quarter to six in the morning, so they could be at patch, understand what it is like to be the parent of an amateur athlete, and without that kind of support from parents, our young athletes would not have been there, and they would not have performed as well. So all those who participated in the support certainly deserve our congratulations, but so too do the parents of this province who support those young athletes.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I have An Action Plan in response to the Government Policy on the Status of Women in Manitoba, Phase II, to table today, and I also have a ministerial statement—copies for the House.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I rise in the House today to mark this day, March 8, as International Women's Day.

Each year on this day, women and men around the world celebrate the efforts and conviction of women who struggle for equal rights for all people.

At an international congress in Copenhagen in 1910, women from 17 countries came together to work for equal rights and world peace. The most notable outcome of this gathering was the conception of International Women's Day. This day was to be set aside to commemorate the struggles of women in issues such as decent working conditions and the right to vote. The date of March

8 was chosen as it was on this date, in New York, in 1908, that women in the garment industry held a mass demonstration in support of these issues.

Eighty-one years later it is difficult for us to imagine a world in which these rights are not guaranteed, and yet in many countries they have yet to be won.

As Canadians, the celebration of International Women's Day allows us an opportunity to recognize and reflect upon the enormous achievements that women have made both in Canada and globally.

During the demonstration of 1908, women chanted, and I quote, "We want bread and roses." The rose became the symbol of International Women's Day. In 1912, James Oppenheim wrote the poem "Bread and Roses" in honour of International Women's Day celebration. Today, as we reflect upon both achievements and challenges, many of his words continue to ring true. I will quote from the second stanza: "As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men, for they are women's children and we fight along with them;"

* (1010)

Those words remind us that although International Women's Day is a time when the struggles of women are remembered, these are issues for us all.

This year we have a special celebration planned for International Women's Day. Given that this year marks the 75th anniversary since the first of Manitoba women were enfranchised, we are pleased to present the play "The Fighting Days" by Wendy Lill. I would like to invite all members of the House to attend a performance of The Fighting Days. Two performances will be held, one at 4 p.m. and one at 6:30 p.m., in the rotunda. I am sure that you will find this play both enlightening and entertaining.

Please join in the celebration of International Women's Day; to all that has been achieved and to all that is yet to be done, to the day when all citizens of the world will live equally and peacefully. Thank you.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our caucus, I too rise in acknowledgment of today being the International Women's Day. I think it is important to realize that while it was the celebration of some of Manitoba women getting the franchise and suffrage, the aboriginal women and

aboriginal men in Manitoba were not given the right to vote until the late '50s or 1960 so some of us are celebrating a little longer than others.

I would like to reflect not only on the achievements that women in Manitoba, Canada and the world have made over the last years, but also on many of the areas that we still have deep concern that we, as Manitobans and members of the world, should reflect on.

Women are still and increasingly making up the face of poverty. Fifty-six percent of the women in Canada are in poverty and they range in age from teen-age single mothers through an ever increasing number of senior citizen women who are in poverty.

Women are still finding inequalities in the workplace. We are still making only 67 percent of the salary and the wages that men make. We continue to be one of the poorest of the industrialized nations in this regard. There has been across the country and in North America not enough movement on equal pay for work of equal value.

Across North America as well, including the city, the province, the country and the rest of the industrialized nations, we are facing cutbacks in services that women use most often: social services, child care, schools, job training programs, and social assistance programs. We are having concerns about equal access to all phases and all kinds of health care across the city, the province and the nation.

We have to deal with a growing problem of pornography in all of its phases, not only the rapid increase in triple-X videos that are available, but also more insidious forms of pornography such as the continued lack of control that we as a society have over the exploitation of women in the sale of commercial products in the advertising that takes place in our electronic and print media. We need to work very much on all that.

We also have an enormous problem with violence against women that takes all forms. It ranges from the massacre of 14 women here a little over a year ago by Marc Lepine through to the domestic violence that we are all aware of that happens in our homes. Women are not safe. They are not safe from physical, mental, psychological, sexual or financial abuse.

Now I think that we also recognize that we are not all negative situations. The first step is to recognize that there is a problem. I think that we are beginning

as a society, both men and women, to begin to recognize that and we are rising to speak on these issues and bring forth solutions.

Finally, we in the NDP caucus will every day continue to speak out on these issues in a constructive manner. We urge our society to put services for people, not toys for war, first. Thank you.

Mrs. Carstairs: I thank the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) for having a ministerial statement today on International Women's Day. I regret that my caucus will not be able to attend the performance this evening, because we will all be in Brandon at the opening of our annual general meeting.

However, I want to say today to this minister that in this Chamber she has a very, very special responsibility. She has the responsibility of ensuring that services to people, particularly female people, are protected during a recession, because it is in recessionary times when a government looks at fiscal cutbacks that they look towards the elimination of social programs that will impact most severely upon the female population of this province.

When there are not education programs, when there are not social programs, when there are not adequate health care programs, it is women who suffer the most. She must take that message, along with her new colleague also on the distaff side, to the cabinet table to ensure that next year when we celebrate this year we do not celebrate more tragedy, both economic and, for too many women, also physical.

* (1015)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report for the year 1989-90 for the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the third quarter report for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission ending December 31, 1990.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this morning from the

Assiniboine Community College 30 political science students. They are under the direction of Laurie Murray. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Education System Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

We were, of course, like most Manitobans, absolutely shocked at the funding levels announced to our education system in the province of Manitoba some four or five weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. The impact is well known to members of this Chamber on the students, the teachers, the parents, the communities.

My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) has told school divisions like the Winnipeg School Division No.1 that the "cupboards are bare."

I would ask the Premier: Which corporations have received the \$7 million in tax breaks that were in the last October budget, and how does that \$7 million to those corporations fit with the "cupboards are bare" and the criteria that he established allegedly in the Speech from the Throne yesterday?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition is very familiar with difficult choices that have to be made by governments. I am sure that he is also familiar with the different attitude perhaps that sometimes people such as New Democratic politicians take when they are in government and the commitment to responsibility sometimes that they undertake because they are faced with choices and priorities and so on.

I, of course, remind him of an announcement made by the New Democratic Minister of Education in this Chamber in January of 1985, when at that time that Minister of Education announced a 2 percent funding increase to the public school system of Manitoba, exactly the same announcement that has been made by this Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). Mr. Speaker, I say, unlike these circumstances in which we are faced

with a zero-percent increase in funding overall for this province, that Minister of Education walked away from the cabinet table with only 2 percent for public schools when their revenues were increasing that year by 6.7 percent overall.

When it comes to fairness, I will stack our concerns and our approach up against New Democrats anytime, but I will not do it with the hypocrisy that is being put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, 53 percent over a period of time where inflation was 43 percent—we will check the numbers, but I asked a very specific question. The record is clear. We will look at the tax increase across the Manitoba province with this government's increase to education compared to the New Democratic increase any day of the week. I was hoping the Premier would start off with a new approach to the question.

The Premier said yesterday we would make decisions on what the government would like to provide versus what they would need to provide. I asked him a very simple question: Which corporations are getting the \$7 million, and how does that fit with his public commitment for the "cupboards are bare" for the Winnipeg School Division, and why does he not take that money which he has not allocated to corporations yet and move that into special needs kids who are obviously higher on the priority list than corporations for tax breaks in last year's budget?

* (1020)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have perhaps changed his approach and checked the numbers before he asked the questions in the Legislature. Instead of asking the questions, leaving himself open to these kinds of responses, and then saying, well, I will go back and check the numbers.

There are no tax breaks to corporations in this province, Mr. Speaker. What this government has done is invested in education and training, and I might say that is an initiative that is supported by people throughout society.

I refer him to to an article about the difficulties of the deficit, the difficulties with budgeting in a time when your revenues are absolutely flat, in which a whole broad cross-section of people are interviewed. This is Wednesday, March 6, Winnipeg Free Press, and it is entitled Deficit cutting—"Start

with us." It evaluates how people look upon grants, how people look upon priority decisions.

Even labour, through the interview with Susan Hart-Kulbaba, the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, says they turn thumbs down on grants but favour assistance in training workers. That is precisely the option that is offered by the opportunity that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has put forward, that for every investment in training by industry and business to improve the human resource capital of this province, a very needed initiative, that investment in training, the dollars spent are offset against the payroll tax. That pernicious tax that destroyed jobs, tens of thousands of jobs under the NDP is now being used to invest in education and training, something that is supported right across the community even by labour who are his friends.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier should check his pejorative language. We always believed that business and labour and all partners in our society should be treated equally, not this even labour kind of rhetoric, displaying the bias of the Premier about working people in this province, which we see everyday in his announcements.

I would ask the Premier: Will he take a leadership position consistent with his Speech from the Throne and take the money that he is giving to corporations and put it into the Winnipeg School Division No. 1? That \$7 million, will he take that money for the special needs, 50 percent of which are located in the one school division? Does he not believe that is more important in terms of the priorities of this province? Rather than giving corporate tax breaks, will he put it to the kids that really need it for training to invest in our future?

Mr. Filmon: I repeat, for the edification of the Leader of the Opposition, in difficult times, in times when we are faced with very, very severe constraints in our income, Mr. Speaker, last year we transferred over increases to the public school system in the range of 4.5 percent, at a time when our own revenues were growing by less than 2.5 percent. At that time, the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) said, we are projecting ahead—in the budget that was tabled last year, projected ahead a year saying, these are difficult times, please, please, try and live within some more constrained income. We are going to, at a time when our revenues are down under 2.5 percent, give you 4.5 percent, but we are trying to let you know that difficult times are ahead.

Now, when our revenues are increasing at zero, we are transferring 2 percent increase to the public school system. I might say that his colleague, the Minister of Education of the NDP in 1985, transferred the same 2 percent increase at a time when their revenues were increasing at 6.7 percent. That is a shame, Mr. Speaker. That is the kind of hypocrisy we will not enter into because we are attempting to do all we can to preserve the public school system in Manitoba.

Economic Growth Government Initiatives

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have a new question for the Premier.

The Premier last year stated clearly in the budget, his Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) tabled in this Chamber, that Manitoba would do better and would be stronger than other provinces in Canada. Unfortunately, the predictions now from the Conference Board of Canada say this government and this province will be last out.

We also see today that there are 10,000 more people unemployed from February last year to February this year.

* (1025)

My question to the Premier is: The assumptions in last year's budget he reiterated they cut and pasted into this year's Speech from the Throne, will he come up with a new strategy to deal with the realities of daily layoffs in the Manitoba economy? Will he come up with a consensus approach dealing with our economy, whether it is in this Legislature or with business and labour, to start tackling the problems facing working people and the thousands of layoffs they are experiencing in this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the budget to read what it said specifically. He can check the facts again after. The fact is that budget referred to our growth rate in 1990 that said we would be well above the national average, and indeed we were second or third best, almost double the national average in growth in 1990. No question about it.

The fact of the matter is that we are facing, as economic forecasters are predicting, another massive loss of income in the farm sector. The failure of the GATT round talks spell disaster for our farm community. That represents a very large portion of our gross income as a province—our

gross provincial product. Under those circumstances we are facing difficult times, and we are asking the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the other opposition members to help us through these difficult times, not to try and make cheap political gain by jumping all over it, but by saying, look, how are we going to manage to preserve the foundation of this economy?

We are not going to do it, as the Leader of the Opposition wants us to do, which is by spending money on short-term make-work jobs, such as the NDP did during the 1980s. That was a time when he was criticizing that New Democratic government, saying that the only thing that would be left of that investment would be those green and white signs. I remember him ridiculing that program. Today he is advocating that we should be putting money into short-term make-work projects to stimulate on a short term, no long-term view, Mr. Speaker. The long term is that we have got to keep the deficit down and keep taxes down so that the economy can recover and grow strong again.

All-Party Committee

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I imagine those words are cold comfort to the people who are getting laid off on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. You know, you point your finger at the former government, then you point it at the federal government, but you never look in the mirror of the fact that you are No. 10 in terms of the predictions. You are running the worst government in Canada in terms of economic performance for 1991, in terms of all the economic forecast.

My question for the Premier is: We have suggested an all-party committee to deal with the recession that we are collectively experiencing, the layoffs, et cetera. We have suggested that if you are not willing to admit that there is a problem, and the Speech from the Throne says we can do nothing, you have surrendered, at least give us the opportunity to work with you to try to do something about it. I would ask the Premier today to take the high road and agree to an all-party committee to deal with our recession and the thousands of people that are being laid off?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, on the high road I would have no company from the Leader of the Opposition, because he has demonstrated what he is prepared to do. Whenever we work hard to bring in new business, new

investment and new jobs here, he tries to take cheap political points by criticizing them.

Less than three weeks ago we had two announcements within the space of a week: one a transfer of a head office from Toronto to Winnipeg, MacLeod Stedman, bringing with it something like 120 jobs; the second the establishment of a new manufacturing facility, Western Glove Works. The total was almost 300 new jobs, and he went on the air and ridiculed them as being Mc-jobs, that is what he said. We are not interested in Mc-jobs. He wanted to try and make his eight-second clip, his normal glib response, be the No. 1 headline on those good positive stories. That is why we do not have any confidence that we will get sincere co-operation. We will get nothing but political grandstanding and the kinds of answers that Manitobans do not want to hear. They want to hear that we are keeping taxes down, that we are creating a strong foundation for economic growth so that there will be investment and job creation, regardless of whether he considers them Mc-jobs. There will be strong and long-term jobs in this province by following the procedure, by following the policy that we have set.

* (1030)

Mr. Doer: Well, as the minister responsible for the Core Area Agreement that negotiated the last agreement that put Western Glove into its new Logan site and all the other jobs, you could hardly criticize this party who established the infrastructure for those jobs as being negative. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier does not understand the difference between a part-time job in our economy and a full-time job—it had nothing to do with the announcements, I would ask the Premier to be accurate. We are happy to hear any announcement of this government. We are happy to hear any announcement about full-time jobs in our economy, because we have lost 10,000 full-time jobs in the last 12 months according to Statistics Canada, and we are predicted to be last in the country.

So I would ask the Premier to call an economic summit of business, labour and government; do not just deal with one sector. Call an all-party committee together; that is something the Economic Council has recommended nationally. Call an all-party committee together to deal with this issue.

Do not surrender like you have in the Speech from the Throne and say, we cannot do anything about

the recession. Do not surrender to being the last province out of the recession. Let us make Manitoba the first province out of the recession, and let us do it together, and ask the Premier to do it today.

Mr. Fillmon: This is the ultimate all-party committee of the Legislature. He may not have been here long enough to understand that this is his opportunity to put on the table his ideas and his solutions, Mr. Speaker, in full view of the public of Manitoba to judge whether or not there are things that could be done that are not being done today. We will listen to the representations of each and every one of the opposition members, and we will find out whether or not they are sincere or whether or not they are here to grandstand and make the cheap eight-second clip that he so glibly puts forward.

We are here to listen, we are here to learn, and we are here to have the co-operative support of the opposition parties every day of this session. We will be ready to hear their representations.

Education System Program Cuts

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

In his announcement about public schools education, he said there would be a 1 percent increase in operating revenues. For most school divisions, as the minister is well aware, unless they have an increased enrollment they are going to receive less money this year than they received last year. At the same time, the minister is saying to them: do not cut special needs programming, do not cut core programming, do not put any students at risk.

Can the minister stand up in the House today and give one piece of advice to the school divisions of this province, one program, one initiative that he thinks fits in the need column but does not fit in the like column?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, indeed I am pleased to respond to this question.

It is evidence that we have an insufficient amount of money to be able to fund school divisions where we would like to fund them, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that we have given as much as we can to our school divisions this year.

We also indicated in the announcement that in an overall sense that if a school division had a declining enrollment, there was a guarantee that school division would not receive less money on the base formula than was received last year.

There are categorical grants that may affect the amount of money a particular school division would receive. We made it very clear at that time that in an operating sense school divisions would receive something like 1 percent or less but, more importantly, it is a partnership approach where all the partners in education have to share some of the burden in this kind of a painful time.

Indeed we called upon school divisions to set very clearly and very carefully their priorities and that essential programs such as special needs and the core programs for schools must be protected. Indeed most school divisions, as I have gone across this province, have taken up that challenge and indeed have indicated that they can meet that challenge by setting clearer priorities within their own jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, it is an indication that we can work together for more effective and efficient delivery of education in this province.

Instructor-Pupil Ratio

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there is no partnership and, more important, there is no leadership. This minister cannot give us a single example, not one, of where he could recommend to a school division that a cut could be made.

Is it acceptable to this minister for classes which are already in English 300 the size of 38 students per teacher that they go to 46-to-one teacher-pupil ratios next year?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Liberal Party does not understand is there are varying priorities across this province, that indeed each school division has different priorities because of the fact that the demographics of that particular school division may indeed be different and, for that reason, it is important for that situation to be faced differently by differing school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about pupil-teacher ratios, let us talk about it. I would be happy to engage in a discussion about pupil-teacher ratios and indicate that across Canada, Manitoba has one of the lowest

pupil-teacher ratios. Yes, indeed, there are large classrooms in this province. We do have situations in this province where we need to have very low pupil-teacher ratios because of the special needs that we provide. Let it not be said that we do not have a low pupil-teacher ratio in comparison to other jurisdictions in this province. I would be happy to debate the pupil-teacher ratio in this province with the Leader from the third party anytime.

ESL Programs Continuation

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that one place where we are going to have zero pupil-teacher ratio is in Adult as a Second Language, unless the Minister of Citizenship signs in writing her intention that the Winnipeg School Division will have money to fund 2,000 students and 45 teachers which she refuses to do. Now, can the Minister of Citizenship tell this House why it is possible to tell the City of Winnipeg how much money they will get? Why it is possible to tell the public school system what it will get, but it is not possible to sign a Letter of Intent guaranteeing that 2,000 adult immigrants to this province will in fact continue their instruction so layoff notices can be rescinded for those teachers?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): I am pleased to respond to the question from the Leader of the Second Opposition. In fact, we have made our commitment that we want ESL programming to continue in School Division No. 1 until the end of June.

* (1040)

We indicated verbally to the media, to the board and to the superintendent of Winnipeg School Division No. 1, to the Winnipeg Teachers' Association, to the teachers, all groups and organizations that I have met with in the last week, Mr. Speaker, to indicate to them our commitment. We do not necessarily just want a short-term fix to this program. The Leader of the Second Opposition in her questioning obviously does not understand that there is a considerable amount of money that comes from the federal government for ESL programming in the province of Manitoba. We as a province are committed to maintain our traditional funding for ESL programming, but we have no indication from the federal government to date what

their funding is going to be. I prefer to have a long-term solution, not just a quick fix, and I would anticipate that very shortly we will have that long-term solution.

Education System Program Cuts

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Education. I heard the Justice minister state publicly that it was wrong for the federal government to pass its revenue shortfalls onto the provinces when there is no other justification for it, other than the federal government's financial problems. Is this minister in the same cabinet? Why did his government do to school boards exactly what the Mulroney government has done to provincial governments, off-load its problems onto school boards forcing tax increases at the local level—Tory tax increases I might add—and programs to be cut to our children?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Education critic for the NDP did not listen to the responses that were given by the Premier a short time ago, but let me reiterate the response. Indeed, when revenues for this province are zero, are flat, this government was still able to support public school education by 2 percent in this province, as the Premier indicated, unlike the NDP minister in 1985. I quote from a news release when that minister said: our decision to increase funding again this year at 2 percent is a clear indication that education continues to be a priority of the government at a time where there has been little growth in government revenue. At that time, growth in government revenue was 6.7 percent. Mr. Speaker, today growth in government revenue is zero percent.

Mr. Chomlak: What the minister fails to note, and I am afraid fails to understand, is inflation is at 6 percent. The GST is impacting at 2 percent on school board budgets, and you fund special needs at 26 percent in Winnipeg School Division No. 1—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. This is not a time for debate.

Special Needs Programs

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): What steps will this government take to ensure that special needs students in this city, and throughout this province,

will not have to suffer the effects of these Tory government cutbacks?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, a 2 percent increase in education funding at a time when provincial revenues are zero percent is indeed not a cutback, but an increase and unfortunately that individual does not understand that.

Mr. Speaker, let me also indicate that last year for the first time in this province we finally ventured into a written policy on special education, and that does not say that we do not have difficulties in special education. Indeed, that is the last place that I would like to see school divisions cut their programming, because indeed school divisions have to set their priorities. If we as a society of parents feel that special education is a very important program, then it is up to school divisions to respond in that way. It is their responsibility to manage those kinds of situations.

Funding

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, it was that Tory government that allowed the special needs legislation to lapse in this province. I heard the word partnership in the throne speech three or four times. Will this minister listen to the students, like he did not do this morning? Will this minister listen to the teachers? Will this minister listen to trustees, and will—

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

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to the individual across the way there is no one who cares about education more than I do. I am a product of the public school system. I have three young children in the public school system. I have worked in the public school system, unlike the member opposite. No one cares about the public school system more than I do.

Let me also indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I have met with not only the school leaders, the principals, the superintendents, the school teachers, the trustees, I have also met with students. For the first time in this province a Minister of Education has met with the student leaders in our city—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are having great difficulty in hearing the remarks of the honourable minister.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me also indicate that I attended a school board meeting with Winnipeg No. 1 the other day, and according to the chairman of the school division that was the first time a Minister of Education has met with the school board in their school board office. Let not the member opposite tell me that we do not have a partnership, because indeed we do have a very important partnership in education in this province.

ESL Programs Departmental Change

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Over the past few years, teachers and trustees in the Winnipeg School Division have developed a range of graded programs and educational standards for the teaching of English as a second language.

Could the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) explain to the House the educational reasons for moving ESL to a department, Culture, Heritage, Recreation and Citizenship, which deals with the community primarily through a competitive granting system? What are the educational reasons for moving this program?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be the minister appointed responsible for Citizenship in this province.

Citizenship includes multiculturalism, new immigrants who come to our province to live and to work, and it also includes services for new immigrants, which one major service to the new immigrants is to integrate them into our Manitoba society as English as a second language. I am pleased that we are able to co-ordinate all of those things under one jurisdiction so that in fact we can provide comprehensive services to new immigrants to our province.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I understand then there are no educational reasons for moving this program.

My second supplemental is that the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) has known since 1989 that federal funding will be withdrawn from language programs.

Could the Minister of Education explain, what were the administrative, what were the managerial reasons for waiting so long to inform the Winnipeg School Division of the department's decision to alter this program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, last year the federal government removed \$1.1 million of funding through the CILT program to ESL programming in the Province of Manitoba. There had to be money taken from other training areas and money reallocated to ESL because we as a province consider ESL to be a main priority for the new immigrants in Manitoba.

I have met with the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and we are working very actively to ensure that those students who are presently enrolled, and those who are requiring ESL training are going to have the ability to access that type of programming.

I have met with the Winnipeg Teachers' Association. I have met with the teachers and with community people who are receiving ESL programming. We understand and we recognize that these are very valuable and very needed programs. We as a provincial government have made our commitment clear. We are working very actively with officials from the federal government to try to get some sense of what proportion of the \$30 million that has been announced by the federal government will come to Manitoba for ESL programming.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that it took 18 months for an issue of such priority for the government.

Continuation

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My final question is indeed to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship who has said that she supports this program and who well knows that you do not provide education on a rent-a-month basis. When is she prepared to give a binding commitment to the trustees of Winnipeg School Division No. 1 that this program will be continued?

* (1050)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg School Division No. 1, the citizens of Manitoba and the new immigrants who so desperately require ESL training have got this government's firm commitment for continuation of that program in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 until the end of June. The end of June is not a permanent solution, and we are working very actively so that we can give the commitment to a long-term funding solution to provide the services that are needed by new

immigrants for ESL training in the province of Manitoba.

City of Winnipeg Ward Boundary Review

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, the statutory nature of the Boundaries Commission will serve the city well. It will take it out of the hands of the body politic when you appoint the Chief Justice of Manitoba, the president of the University of Winnipeg, and the chief returning officer of the City of Winnipeg, a body that will in membership change from time to time but will not be appointed on the basis of political decisions. Excellent words, Mr. Speaker, wise words, the words of the Minister of Urban Affairs when he was in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Urban Affairs. Why was his first act as a minister to gut the independent commission and give its authority to a politically appointed group of loyal members of the Progressive Conservative Party?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, when the day care is in order across the way, I would be pleased to respond to the question.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with those words. I still believe in those words. Those words are in fact as true today as they were then, but unfortunately, the member for Crescentwood does not understand the whole problem, does not understand that we are not dealing specifically with the population changes in boundaries. We are dealing with government policy. Government policy is that the size of the City Council of the City of Winnipeg should be reduced, and it should be reduced somewhere between, say, 12 and 15 people, should look at the political structure within the City of Winnipeg, should look at community committees, should look at boundary configurations and things of that nature. That is what the commission is doing under Section 671 of the act.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, the commission has the mandate to draw the boundaries. That is precisely the mandate of the commission in the act.

Will the minister confirm now that it is his intention to allow a politically appointed group to do the work that the City of Winnipeg has given to an independent commission? Will he withdraw that portion of the mandate now and restore some integrity to a process that he has discredited?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, the member for Crescentwood still does not seem to understand.

An Honourable Member: Well, he has never been there.

Mr. Ernst: Well, perhaps because he has never been there, he does not understand, or perhaps he is having difficulty understanding how The City of Winnipeg Act operates. The fact of the matter is we are dealing with structural change to the City of Winnipeg—the political structure of the City of Winnipeg. That is government policy. That was the first announcement made by my Premier (Mr. Filmon) during the election campaign of 1990. We said we are going to do these things, and that commission is out there on our behalf seeking public opinion to do those things.

Electoral Divisions Act Politicization

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, my last supplementary is to the Premier.

Is it the policy of the government to amend The Electoral Divisions Act and politicize the provincial process as well? If not, could the Premier explain to the House what the difference is?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Urban Affairs has already explained that we are making a policy decision that has been agreed to by the Liberal Party. Essentially, the same commitment that we made during the election campaign was made by the Liberal Party. That was to reduce the size of council. The Liberal Party did not support the reduction of City Council prior to the last election campaign. In fact, they voted against it, but they came to their senses and supported it during the 1990 election campaign, and we were pleased.

We were pleased to be able to carry that through, and we felt some comfort knowing that the Liberals also supported the policy. We are now implementing it. It is not being politicized. It is being implemented because that is a policy decision; a policy decision that the Liberals would make were they in government; a policy decision that we have made in government. The minister has explained very well the difference between that and drawing boundaries, Mr. Speaker.

ACCESS Program Continuation

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education.

Last year the ACCESS program, which offers many aboriginal, inner city and northern people their only opportunity for a post-secondary education, graduated more students than ever before but still has not been assured funding for this year. Will the minister tell this House why the province, after only one meeting, refused to continue any negotiations with the University of Manitoba to continue the program as promised?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Once again, Mr. Speaker, for the information of the member opposite, I think he should understand and know that last year, when there was a shortfall in government revenues to support ACCESS programs, this government moved in to uphold those programs by putting \$2.6 million additional into ACCESS programs so that indeed we could maintain those important programs.

We cannot do it alone. We have indicated very clearly that we will continue our negotiations with the federal government to ensure that they live up to their commitment in supporting those programs in the spirit that was intended in the beginning. This afternoon I will be meeting with the Honourable Jake Epp to continue those discussions so that we can surely preserve those programs for the future for this province.

Mr. Hlckes: Will the Minister guarantee that the province will do everything it can to ensure that ACCESS students can be admitted to this vital program and continue their education?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my previous response, I cannot give that guarantee, because we simply cannot afford to uphold those programs alone. We require the partnership of the federal government to ensure that those opportunities are given to the people of this province, and indeed we are working very diligently toward arriving at a solution, along with our federal counterparts, to ensure that students who are in the ACCESS programs will be able to complete their programs and indeed that new students coming into those programs will be able to be admitted.

Funding Notification

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister indicate when the ACCESS program can expect to receive notification of their funding, since they cannot recruit any students until then, and the deadline for applications is April 1?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): I would have loved to have given you that response and given the students who are waiting for admittance to those programs some news some time ago, but indeed that has not been possible. As I indicated, we are still working with our federal counterparts to ensure that we can arrive at some kind of an arrangement or an agreement to ensure that continued success and the continuation of the ACCESS programs for the students of this province.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance. I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that under Rule 27 the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the funding crisis in the public school system caused by the funding allocations announced January 22, 1991, that is leading to a significant reduction in the quality of education, special needs education and other public schools programs.

Mr. Speaker: Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the honourable member for Kildonan will have five minutes to state his case for urgency of debate on this matter. A spokesperson for each of the other parties will also have five minutes to address the position of their party respecting the urgency of debate on this matter.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, why is this debate necessary? It is necessary because this government has by its ill-conceived actions and its lack of resolve created a crisis in the public education system. Every delay here and every hour delay simply exacerbates the crisis.

I am aware of the threshold that we have to meet in order to qualify for debate, namely, when the

ordinary opportunities provided by the rules do not permit a subject to be brought on early enough and when the public interest demands that the discussion take place immediately. I will deal with the latter threshold first.

As we speak, school boards in this province, in towns, villages and communities across this province, are setting their budget. The Winnipeg School Division will set its budget by March 15. The Seven Oaks School Division, which is largely in my political constituency, will set its budget by March 11. Most, if not all of the budgets, will be set in the next weeks and days.

The effect of these budgets will be job losses, program cuts and increased taxes at the local level. Mr. Speaker, what greater public interest is there than our children's future and the level of our taxation? Governments have fallen for far less than that.

* (1100)

As we speak, White Horse Plains School Division may be forced to cut 28 teacher aides. As we speak, Frontier School Division must deal with special needs funding at 18 percent from this provincial government.

As we speak, the inner city literacy program for 150 needy youngsters will probably be cut. As we speak, approximately 70 ESL teachers and 2,000 students are awaiting formal notification that the program will continue to the end of March, never mind next year. As we speak, 15 special needs education teachers, 50 teachers aides and 13 teachers await word from Winnipeg School Division No.1 whether they will have jobs.

As we speak, the budget of the Child Guidance Clinic will be cut; as we speak, the Dauphin-Ochre River School Division has seen their funding drop 3 percent since last year—and I might add with an inflation rate of 6 percent.

As we speak, hundreds of graduate students from the University of Manitoba, University of Brandon, University of Winnipeg, teacher graduates, must decide whether they will leave the province to find teacher jobs, after having trained here, largely at public expense, for the last four years.

As we speak, it is not too late for this government to back down from its promise to give millions of tax breaks to companies, rather than large companies, and at least admit which companies are getting these tax breaks, Mr. Speaker.

As we speak, we have a dropout rate, according to the minister, of three in 10. Three in 10 students drop out according to this minister and programs are being cut, the very programs that would keep these students in the education system. As we speak, special needs funding in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has probably fallen below last year's disastrous level of 26 percent funding from this government and from a minister who committed at least 50 percent funding.

These are real people, real concerns, real programs in crisis. We are not dealing with esoteric statutory stuff. We are dealing with real people, real human needs, and by the time that this provincial government presents its budget, when we normally have an opportunity to debate matters of this kind, most of these decisions will be a fait accompli, the zero percent funding level when inflation is 6 percent.

A lack of funding model that has been promised for three years—we do not even know what the funding model is next year, and this government has been promising a funding model for three years—and this government is giving millions to private schools while the public school system suffers.

I ask the Liberal Party at this time to join us in supporting us. Do not support the corporate tax breaks like you did last session, do not support the giveaway, at a time of budget restraint, to private schools, Mr. Speaker, do not support it. I ask the Liberal Party to join with us to implore and to ask this government to reset its priorities and reset its choices. This crisis clearly qualifies as a matter of public interest. What is more urgent, what is more important than our children and their future, and the effect this government's actions will have to rob our children of the future, the right to a higher quality education?

Mr. Speaker, as regards the other threshold, I can simply indicate that we cannot normally debate this during the Throne Speech Debate, for frankly the Throne Speech Debate said nothing in effect about education. All they said is they will study more and restate old principles, and if there is anything that indicates the urgency of this crisis it is the fact that probably for the first time in history the children of Manitoba had to march on the Legislature in order to get their needs obtained.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus will support the resolution proposed for an emergency debate on education, and we will do so because it is our No.1 priority because the children of this province are our No.1 priority. It is the earliest opportunity to present such a debate, and while under normal circumstances it is clear that such a debate could have taken place within the context of the Speech from the Throne reply and also the budget, we still do not know when the budget for this government will come down, but much more importantly we do know that hourly, right now, throughout this province budgets of school divisions are being set, and they are being set on the miserly rate of response of this government to the needs of our children.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) talks about pupil-teacher ratios. First of all, for many people in this room I am sure they do not understand that pupil-teacher ratios do not just count teachers and the students. It includes the librarians, the principals, the vice-principals, and it includes counsellors.

In many classrooms in this province there are not ratios of 16 to one, there are ratios of 35 to one and 37 to one, and one, a 42 to one that I heard of the other day to teach English 300—42 kids in a class to teach English 300.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a time of great economic stress. This is a time when people look to their institutions to ensure themselves of service. They look to their health care system, they look to their social agencies, and they look to the education system.

Hopefully this is a time when young people, who are all too often choosing to leave school in Grade 10 or Grade 11, will remain in that school in order to complete their education, in order that our ratio of students going on to post-secondary education will not remain the worst in the nation at 14.7 percent.

That will not happen, Mr. Speaker, if we do not have the money to adequately fund the public school education system in this province. The public school education system in this province has been in the vanguard in many areas, not the least of which is special needs. It explains to a great degree why our pupil-teacher ratio is so low, because many of those children require individualized instruction or the use of a teacher aide.

The minister, thank God, is not suggesting that we cut special needs education, but he is also not suggesting we cut core programming, and he is also not suggesting we put students at risk.

This debate would not be necessary, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) could tell the people of this province what areas he expects school trustees to cut. The other day he made a statement that they could look at home economics and industrial arts, except he mandates the programs. They are required programs.

That is why we require an emergency debate at this point in time, because the information which this minister gives out to school divisions shows no leadership, shows no guidance, shows no initiative, and shows no creativity. There is an absolute absence of leadership. More importantly, there is a lack of partnership, of participating with those most affected by education.

Mr. Speaker, we must have this debate today in order to make this minister understand that he is failing the children of the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the call for an emergency debate, setting aside the ordinary business of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it must have been quite a scene this morning in the Clerk's office between the two opposition parties in their rush to file their motion. I wonder how it occurred, in what time, and who won the race to the Clerk's desk. I wonder if there were not some dispute, or how it was that the Clerk would accept one motion before the other.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter, and yet you have to rule as to whether or not there are opportunities to debate this important issue in the near future. We just happen to be at the beginning of the throne speech period, and might I remind members of the House that the throne speech, of course, allows every member 40 minutes to make their representation on this important issue compared to 10 minutes in emergency debate.

Let me also remind the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) that he can speak today, and if he chooses not to speak today he can designate a member of his bench to talk about this very important issue today.

There is plenty of opportunity for members, particularly of the official opposition, to address this important question today. If the members opposite

choose not to address this important issue today or in the course of the Throne Speech Debate, I will promise him that Interim Supply will be introduced right after the Throne Speech Debate, at which time they will have another opportunity at 40-minute lengths to make representation.

* (1110)

Mr. Speaker, the budget will be presented in the month of April, at which time members opposite will also have an opportunity to provide representation on this important issue, and, of course, shortly thereafter if the members so choose and if their wish is that Education Estimates be held shortly after the budget, obviously we would listen to that request on their part.

The point I am trying to make is when you are at the beginning of a session, there can be no greater number of opportunities that will be coming forward over the next several weeks than at this point in time in the session.

Let me say before I sit down, I find it passing strange that the oppositions are not calling for an emergency debate dealing with the provincial financial crisis, the basis of lower increases than expected or hoped for by many of the school divisions. I find it passing strange that the members would not want to deal with the core problem, and that is the financial situation of the province.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, the howls from the opposition benches calling for a debate in many respects are empty. I look forward though to see how it is over the ensuing debate on the throne speech that members opposite bring forward their views on education, and how it is that they will try and demand from government what greater priorities and lesser priorities should be in place so as to support increased funding of education.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is in order.

There are two conditions to be satisfied for this matter to proceed. First, the honourable member for Kildonan, in accordance with subrule 27(1), did provide the required notice of this matter of urgent public importance.

As to the second condition, as I and many other Speakers have ruled in the past, there must be evidence that the ordinary opportunities for debate

will not allow the matter in question to be considered soon enough, and the matter raised must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the issue is not debated this day. These requirements are reinforced by Citations 389 and 390 of the 6th Edition of Beauchesne.

In my opinion, the honourable member does have other opportunities available to him to debate this matter. This is day two of a new legislative session — we have before us up to eight days of debate on the Speech from the Throne — indeed, that will be virtually the only business before the House for the next period of time, and the member for Kildonan and any other member wishing to debate the funding of public schools may do so during the Throne Speech Debate. Shortly following that the House will be debating the budget, and again the honourable members will have an opportunity to debate questions relating to financing of schools.

Further, I am not satisfied that the public interest will suffer if the issue is not debated today.

Therefore, I must rule the motion of the honourable member for Kildonan out of order, because there are other opportunities for debate and because the public interest will not, in my opinion, suffer if the issue is not debated today.

House Business

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, before you call the throne speech motion, I would like to announce some standing committee dates.

March 19: At 10 a.m., the 1988 and 1989 Annual Reports of the Manitoba Telephone System. That is to be considered in the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources, Room 255, and we will call that same committee dealing with Manitoba Telephone System in the evening, 8 to 10 p.m. in the same committee room, same date, March 19.

March 20: At 8 p.m., again in Room 255, the 1988 and 1989 Annual Reports of Manitoba Mineral Resources.

March 21: Starting at 10 a.m., again the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources, the Annual Report of MPIC; that same committee sitting in the evening also from 8 to 10 p.m. in the same committee room considering MPIC.

April 2: 10 a.m., the Standing Committee on Economic Development dealing with the 1989

Annual Report of CEDF. We will call the morning meeting to deal with CEDF. We will have that same committee sit in the same room in the evening dealing with the Annual Report of the Manitoba Development Corporation.

April 3: In the evening, we will have the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources deal with the 1990 Annual Report of Manitoba Hydro.

April 4: At 10 a.m., we will have the Standing Committee of Public Accounts deal with all those annual reports not yet completed at the last sitting of the Public Accounts Committee, including the 1990 report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislature.

April 4: In the evening, again, calling the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources to deal with the 1990 Annual Report of Manitoba Hydro.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Mr. Speaker: Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): I move, seconded by Mr. Sveinson (La Verendrye), that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor as follows:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address us at the opening of the present session.

* (1120)

Motion presented.

Mrs. Render: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying how nice it is to have you back as Speaker of this Assembly. I know that you will continue to bring wisdom and patience to this Chamber in your role as Speaker. I know too that my colleague the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) will also serve this House well in the capacity as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations and thanks to the Leader of my party. I know, indeed all Manitobans know, that they have an excellent Leader in the Honourable Gary

Filmon. I wish to thank the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for the honour of allowing me to move this motion today.

I would also like to congratulate the newest members of the cabinet, and I speak of course of the honourable member for Assiniboia, Mrs. Linda McIntosh, and the honourable member for Kirkfield Park, Mr. Stefanson. I wish them well in their portfolios. I also congratulate other members of Executive Council who have seen changes in their areas of responsibility.

As we have heard in the throne speech, the second session of the Thirty-fifth Legislature will be an active one. Mr. Speaker, this is only my second time being a part of the Throne Speech Debate, but I already sense that this will be a lively debate.

On a more personal note, I would like to say that I have enjoyed the opportunity over the past few months to get to know my constituents better and to work with them on a variety of subjects. During this time, I have attended numerous seniors events, worked with the executive of the Winnipeg Canoe Club, the St. Vital School Board and the Save Our Seine group, the latter being an environmental group specifically concerned with the quality and quantity of water in the Seine River.

What I most enjoyed was the fact that although there were people in all these groups who belonged to all political parties, we were able to put aside our differences, to get on with the business of working together for the good of the community.

During the break, and I am not really too sure that I would call it a break, because I really never found myself twiddling my thumbs, I was also heavily involved with the all-party task force on the Constitution, which was established by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). Being a part of that task force was an excellent learning experience for me, and I feel very privileged that I was given that opportunity.

As Manitobans, as Canadians, we are facing some fundamental questions about the kind of Canada that we want to see for the future and, of course, Manitoba's place within a renewed Confederation. We are all aware that public confidence in our national leadership has been shaken by such events as the Meech Lake Accord and the standoff at Oka. Indeed the very word, politician, does not always carry with it the most positive connotation.

Therefore, I was very gratified to see that so many Manitobans responded to the Premier's call to come

forward and speak to the broad and flexible constitutional mandate that the Premier had indicated in his news release.

Some presenters were very specific in what they saw as faults and how they wanted them corrected. Others spoke more generally and often from the heart, but above all it came across loud and clear that Manitobans cared about their province and their country. Manitobans were pleased that our Premier (Mr. Filmon) had once again taken the initiative in going to the people to listen to their views.

Some commented on the wisdom of the Premier in recommending an all-party task force. I too believe in that approach, because I know that we must rebuild co-operation, trust and a sense of common purpose across this country.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

The hard work coming forth with the report is yet to come, but I am proud to be a part of a government that is taking the lead in bringing forth solutions to some of the more thorny constitutional questions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that Manitoba's Constitutional Task Force can help to ensure that Manitoba is ready for a national debate, a debate that may be one of the most critical in the history of our country.

There are other challenges as well that face this province. We all know that these are very difficult times, and they are creating very real pressures on Manitoba's finances. Reduced revenues created by the slower economy combined with cuts in transfer payments from the federal government and debt servicing costs from the previous administration leave this government with very little flexibility.

However, my government is committed to following the path of fiscal responsibility, and indeed to ensure that you and members sitting opposite, the media and Manitobans were aware of the exact nature of our fiscal position. My government took the unprecedented step towards openness in our budgetary process.

On January 21, 1991, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) outlined the severe fiscal challenge that is before this province. I see a similarity in this open approach with the route that was followed with the Meech Lake Accord and now with the all-party Constitutional Task Force. By that I mean what can be and should be a co-operative approach.

With Meech Lake, we, and by that I mean the three political parties, showed that we can put aside our differences and work together for the common good of our province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I sincerely hope that this will be the case as we enter this session. I realize that it is the nature of the political process that the opposition parties criticize and accuse the government of not doing enough or of doing the wrong thing. However, I would hope that in these very difficult financial times that this will be constructive criticism. We all know how easy it is to find fault, and we all know how difficult it is to come up with a workable solution.

However, what stands this province in good stead is that my government has a plan to deal with these economically tough times. Thus, the picture is not totally gloomy. Thanks to the foresight and resolve of this government, we are able to bring forward a plan founded on sound economic principles. We know that Manitoba has a strong base of diversified, knowledge-based industries that will provide the foundation for our future economic growth, but right now that economic growth exists only as a potential. It will not become a reality without an active effort on our part to make it so.

The first step was taken by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in late January when he laid out in very clear terms what Manitoba's financial position was, and I would like to summarize what he said. One of his first points was that Manitoba taxpayers had been hit by round after round of increased taxes by the federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as school boards.

We are very near the limit of our ability to bear any further tax increases. What many people do not seem to be able to grasp is that even if we hold our spending increases in 1991-92 to no more than 3 percent, our deficit will approach \$500 million before any transfers from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and if spending increases by even 5 percent, we will have the highest recorded deficit ever incurred in the history of this province.

Over the past decade, interest costs on the debt have taken an ever-increasing share of our tax dollars. It is too late to point fingers at the administration which allowed our spending to get so out of control, but what I would like to point out, and I think this figure is a most telling one, is that just 10 years ago only \$1 out of every \$5 of personal income

tax went to pay our interest costs, now it is one out of every two and the debt is still climbing. What this means is that every dollar that goes to servicing that debt is a dollar that is not available to programs in Health, Education, Family Services, Highways and so on.

Although it is difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel at this particular moment in time, my government, as I said earlier, has a well-conceived plan to follow so that we will reach the light at the end of the tunnel. This government has a fiscal strategy which, if followed, should see this province emerge at the end of this challenge with its finances intact.

As you are all aware, there are two conflicting forces at work. We want to keep the deficit as low as possible so that we do not fall into the trap of spiralling debt cost that has the federal government in its clutches, but on the other hand, we want to protect jobs and services as much as possible. Now how do we accomplish this?

There are three key thrusts that this government is taking. First, through internal reform, we will move to a results-base government. In other words, we will find new and better ways to deliver services to Manitobans so that every tax dollar is used to its greatest effect.

Secondly, we will identify and maintain priority programs and this will happen in part through a revised estimates process.

Finally, in our wage negotiations with the public sector, we will try and get the message across that the only way we can preserve jobs and services is by keeping salary increases down.

* (1130)

These three steps are absolutely vital because in most areas of government wages make up over half of our costs.

With government revenues virtually stagnant, it is essential that all honourable members in this House work co-operatively to implement solutions for the good of Manitobans. I know that this is not an easy challenge and perhaps I am being naive as a newcomer to politics, but I hope that we can all remain focused on our goal of building a stronger Manitoba. My government has already started this process.

I remember taping a Provincial Affairs telecast some months ago in which I focused on many of the

positive steps this government has already taken, and I would like to outline a couple of those for you now.

This government is continuing the process of making Manitoba more competitive by holding the line on personal income taxes, as well as by providing tax relief to businesses to help stimulate investment and job creation. Competitive taxes are essential to help achieve the enormous economic and financial potential of our province.

With that in mind, this government has provided \$30 million in retail sales tax relief to our consumers, this as a result of our government's decision to apply the provincial tax alongside the GST, rather than layered on top.

We have also extended the small business tax holiday program to December 1991. This means a continuation of tax reduction for new small businesses for the first five years. While holding the line on taxes, despite a difficult fiscal environment, my government is also determined to protect vital social services as demonstrated by spending increases above the rate of inflation. This government cares about people.

Our priorities are clear, we remain committed to finding the resources to protect the vital services that Manitobans have come to depend upon, and the spending plans tabled in our most recent budget reflect this government's commitment with those goals. In the 1990-91 budget, of the new money available to the government, 40.5 percent went to health, 18.2 percent went to education and 15.2 percent went to family services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has taken initiatives in other areas as well. We have made the Justice system more accessible to Manitobans. Under the direction of Justice Minister, Jim McCrae, the government introduced a new Family Violence Court, the first of its kind in Canada. A small group of judges and Crown attorneys were appointed to provide a comprehensive response to all cases of family violence. The Family Violence Court enables specific judges and Crown attorneys to concentrate their efforts, training and resources on these special issues, the dynamics involved in violence against children, spouses and the elderly.

The court also allows judges and Crown attorneys to assist in co-ordinating the work of social agencies with the criminal justice system and the swift handling of these cases is a top priority for our

government. By cutting the time it takes to hear these cases we reduce the terrible anxiety suffered by victims.

The Justice minister also announced a special review into the administration of justice as it relates to family violence. This review is being conducted by Dorothy Pedlar, a Winnipeg lawyer with extensive experience and knowledge in dealing with domestic violence and family law. Thus, over the past two years we have made much progress in protecting our children and families. As a former social worker with Children's Aid Society of Eastern Manitoba and Care Services, the Department of Welfare, I personally am pleased with these initiatives which will help to fight child abuse, stabilize the shelter system province-wide and decentralize our Family Court. This government is laying the foundation that will lead to a safer environment for women and families.

On another theme, this government has again shown itself to be pro-active. On January 24, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson announced that the Manitoba Association of Community Arts Councils would receive two provincial grants to assist with the activities in the 1990-91 season.

As a member of numerous historical societies, and as a budding author with a book presently at the publisher, I am always alert to what the government is doing to promote culture and heritage activities.

Early this year the same minister also announced that two non-profit organizations in the Interlake region received their final payments from the Community Places Program to improve their community facilities. There is also a Community Places grant to the Manitoba Immigration Council on Mayfair Avenue in February of this year. The Women's Health Clinic recently received its final payment of a Community Places grant, and just yesterday a colleague of mine attended the opening of the Murdoch MacKay Collegiate in Transcona, its infant care facility, which was also funded in part by the Community Places Program.

Now these are only a few examples, but they show that this government remains committed to providing assistance to community-based programs and resource centres that in turn enrich Manitobans in other than monetary ways, and in difficult financial times these community centres take on an extra importance.

On a more sombre note, I was pleased, as I am sure all of you were, when the honourable Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship) announced a new home video classification system to assist parents in making informed decisions when buying or renting videos for themselves and their families.

Turning to another facet, just a couple of weeks ago Industry, Trade and Tourism minister, Eric Stefanson, announced that the department's Manufacturing Adaptation Program is providing a \$30,000 repayable loan to WMC Industries Limited, a potato handling equipment manufacturer. This company itself plans to invest another \$305,000 in its facility that will feature advance production equipment, making it highly competitive in markets across western Canada and the central United States. This program assists new and existing businesses in adapting new production technology to their operations in order to increase their productivity, quality, competitiveness and exports.

Just as an aside, last week I was in buying a piece of computer equipment from a company which deals in computers, and as I was leaving the store the owner of the company said to me: Tell the Premier that this is one company that is doing well in Manitoba. Nice to hear.

Then there is health care, often uppermost in many people's minds. Our record is good. I do not want to take away from what the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) might wish to say, so I will only touch on a few things.

In the mental health field alone there have been many innovations. For instance, there have been six special projects initiated with \$900,000 in funds to cover them. Taking just the first four in the list they are: the mobile crisis team in Winnipeg which provides 24-hour service to acute and chronically mentally ill people; the psychogeriatric project, central region, providing care for distressed seniors; acute treatment and consultation team in Winnipeg providing early effective treatment for children and adolescents encountering mental health problems; and a youth suicide information resource in Winnipeg assisting people in the community to identify early warning signs of suicidal intentions in young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there has also been an emphasis given to recruiting and retaining psychiatrists, and in addition, the mental health

division was restructured and given a mandate to work with all sectors of the Manitoba health system to improve services.

There were also numerous grants given to support community agency programs such as the Salvation Army and its crisis stabilization unit; the Sara Riel organization which provides residential care for psychiatrically disturbed people while developing their community living skills; Alzheimer's Society; the Eden Residential Care Services; the YMHA Jewish Community Centre of Winnipeg; and the North Y, just to name a few.

With reference to community health, there was a widely acclaimed public education campaign on AIDS, as well as an AIDS Advisory Committee appointed, plus many AIDS initiatives and HIV studies.

There were initiatives in the workplace and grants to various organizations to promote fitness, wellness and smoking reduction. There were grants for dental care, speech and hearing and rehab training and to the continuing care program. Senior citizens were also targeted with monies going toward providing new and improved facilities both in Winnipeg and in the rural areas.

Jocelyn House—and many of you might have seen the program that was on TV just a week or so ago—which happens to be in my constituency, received a grant to enhance the quality of care and surroundings, and I believe that Jocelyn House is one of only two or perhaps three hospices of its type in Canada.

There have also been a number of task forces struck to look at a variety of issues, everything from the supply and use of extended treatment beds to reviewing the co-ordination and integration of health services for seniors and, of course, the most recent one, to fight the war on drugs, chaired by my colleague, the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), and composed of three other members of this government, the members for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) and Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay).

As I said earlier, I have just touched on but a few of the happenings in the health care field, but even with this brief overview I believe Manitobans can be proud of our health care record.

* (1140)

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, and referring back to the throne speech, whether we are

talking about agriculture, economical renewal, attracting investment, developing markets, training our youth, protecting the environment, discussing our social priorities, health care or national renewal, my government is prepared to meet the challenges on its home front as well as to take the initiative to establish Manitobans' own agenda for national reform.

Thank you.

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is nice to be back in the House, and I must say it is a pleasure to be here as a member of the Filmon team with such a positive agenda. I would like to thank my Leader, the Premier of Manitoba, the Honourable Gary Filmon, for asking me to speak today. I would also like, at this time, to take the opportunity of congratulating my colleagues, Mr. Eric Stefanson and Mrs. Linda McIntosh, on their appointments to cabinet, and I know they will do well in their new duties.

I would also like to thank the people of La Verendrye for their constant and warm support. I pledge never to forget that it was they who elected me, and it is the people of La Verendrye I am -(inaudible)- Manitobans. They are hard-working people who believe in a dollar's pay for a dollar's work. They do not believe in a free lunch, and they are people with honest to goodness values. My constituents are the kind of people who take the initiative and really go for it. Why just this past weekend I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Can-Am Snowmobile Trail, a trail linking Roseau, Minnesota, and Rennie, Manitoba.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Not only will this new trail serve to strengthen the bonds of international good will, but it will serve as a tourism vehicle for our area and all of Manitoba. This trail was locally driven here and in the United States, funded through private sources and opened for the benefit and use of all Manitobans and all Americans alike.

I have had the privilege over the past few months of attending many events within my constituency, and I am happy to report that the people of La Verendrye are very aware of the key issues in this province. They know that our economy is in need of help. By the same token, they also know that help must not come in the form of the irresponsible overspending of the early mid-1980s. They know that is not the solution.

We have learned that paying the debt for past government spending has robbed us of more and more of our tax dollars. Just 10 years ago, \$1 out of every \$5 of personal income tax went to pay the interest costs. Now it is almost one out of every two, and the debt is still climbing. In next year's budget we will spend over \$600 million on the interest payments on those past debts. As all honourable members have heard the Finance minister say, if the interest costs were a department, it would be the third largest in government. It is the second largest program expenditure in government. Manitobans are now starting to understand the severity of the situation and that in itself is no small feat.

I would just like to read you an excerpt from the Lac du Bonnet Leader that I picked up this morning. I will just read part of it because it is quite a long one. It says, Mr. Speaker, governments, unions, taxpayers all to blame. Unfortunately, or maybe unfortunately, there is no one political party to blame for the current economic mess Canadians find themselves in today. At the federal level, the Liberals have amassed a massive debt before the Tories took power. Then, once in power, instead of listening to his advisors, Mr. Wilson kept on spending with a carefree abandon until his last few budgets when the economic crunch finally started to hit home.

Provincially, the New Democrats had just as much to do with it, in fact even more so—our rising provincial debt. Now as the saying goes, the chickens have come home to roost. It is time to face the music.

It should be painfully obvious to everyone now that governments must try to balance the budget. They can no longer spend beyond their means because far too much of taxpayers' dollars is going to service a debt rather than support critical programs like health care and education.

It is not only governments to blame. It is also powerful unions. It is also you and I, the taxpaying public, who must take some of the responsibility. We have let governments run rampant with our money. We have on occasion voted in the political party which made the biggest promises. Promises which we now and future generations have to pay for.

Therefore, it should not come as a big surprise that we now find we have an educational system we can no longer afford. Yes, there is going to have to be cutbacks and, yes, we are going to have to hold

the line on wages and programs and, yes, the paying public will have to pay more, but the paying public has reached the point of saturation.

When it comes to government programs and spending, we have had enough. Most of us do not mind paying a little more, but we demand better value for our money and more responsible spending from our government, your school boards and all others who have their fingers in the public purse.

I thought it was a very interesting -(interjection)- I will. I would like to go on and say we try and give Manitobans the facts and some members opposite turn around and insist on being part of the problem by raising fear and panic, making ridiculous statements in the media.

Clearly Manitobans are looking to our government to provide leadership in a time of economic uncertainty. Manitobans are looking to government for solutions. The people of Manitoba are looking to government to control its spending while at the same time protecting the essential services of health care, education and services to family. These are the commitments that my government has made to Manitobans in the past and in the throne speech and they are commitments that I applaud.

I believe that Manitobans have come to look to the Filmon government to make these tough choices, not to shy away from difficult decision. Manitobans are not looking for lip service. I believe we were elected for more than just the easy decisions.

Our Premier (Mr. Filmon) calls them as he sees them. A cornerstone of our government is honesty. We have not taken the coward's way out and tried to tell Manitobans everything is okay. We have been very open with the people of Manitoba and they are responding.

The days are gone when Manitoba can act in isolation or governments, pardon me, can act in isolation. The people elected government, and the people have a right to know why decisions are made the way they are.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the principles that got me involved in politics. I saw how our country and our province were being run and I did not like it. I felt that I could make a difference. I wanted to make our province a better place for my family and yours, and for generations to come. I believe that one person could make a difference, and through the support of my family, friends and neighbours I made the decision to seek public office.

I felt I had something to offer in the common-sense, practical approach to problem solving I have always used in my home and work life. I could see those shared ideals in the Filmon approach to management. I was happy to see that I was not alone in refusing to believe debt was just something you had to accept and live with. As a member of this government, I am proud of our record of fiscal responsibility.

I am reminded of my experiences as a school board trustee. Each year as a school board trustee we would look forward to the increased provincial funding we came to expect. We would look forward to spending that money on additional programs or expansions in programs. In turn, the teachers would eye that same funding increase and read it as an increase in salary. You know, it was not that long ago, Mr. Speaker, that school boards did not worry about either funding or how to spend it, we knew there was lots and we knew we could spend it, and if we ran short we would raise our special levy a bit and blame it on the province for underfunding, after all, the voters never really blamed us, we only raised their levy a little bit.

* (1150)

Today though school boards are realizing more and more that they are partners with government and as partners we must share in the responsibility that comes with elected office. I know that when government and school boards work together we can accomplish great things. We must all work together to get our fiscal house in order so that we can pull Manitobans out from this tremendous burden of past debt. I am hopeful that all members of this Chamber will join us in the formulation and the introduction of those solutions.

Our government made its commitment to Manitobans clear in the last budget. Mr. Speaker, our top two priorities were indicated by their level of support in that budget. Health and education and training were the two top with a combined total of over 50 percent of all expenditures going to these areas. I wish I could say that family services were our next largest expenditure area, but unfortunately our debt costs were the third largest expenditure.

There are those in this Chamber who have said that the debt should not be such a high priority. Mr. Speaker, if these walls could talk, I am sure they would tell us they have heard that line more than just a few times. This debt we face is almost like a

cancer, only it eats away at our money, money that this government would like to spend on health, education and family services. This year we are spending over \$500 million on interest costs. That is money that we cannot spend on any of our essential services because of that debt. Next year that figure will grow to over \$600 million.

Mr. Speaker, I am disgusted when I think that since 1980 we, the government of Manitoba and the people of Manitoba, have spent over \$3.5 billion on interest payments. That is \$3.5 billion—\$3,500 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba, money that could have been spent on schools, hospitals, personal care homes, day cares. The list is endless.

I am proud that our government is not going to sit idly by and watch the debt and interest costs grow. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that our debt situation is like a cancer, and it can be treated. Just as cancer can be beaten, so can our interest cost spiral be beaten. I cannot sit on the sidelines and watch this province and its taxpayers bear these costs and pay such a high price any longer.

The time has come for action, and this government has made a commitment to Manitobans to take decisive action. This government has demonstrated in the past that it is here to protect Manitobans and to work for Manitobans. We are one of the few provinces that sent a delegation to the GATT talks and the only province to have a Premier attend those talks. We have acted to strengthen the rural economy, most recently through the Sustainable Communities Program, where we are assisting rural and northern communities to direct their future development.

This program provides a process through which people representing a broad spectrum of community interests can get together in a round table setting to take a realistic look at their community, draw up a plan for its future based on past and present trends and develop a plan of action. This government made a commitment to agriculture through the GRIP. We strengthened our commitment to abused women and children by increasing the support to wife abuse shelters. We took concrete steps to get input from Manitobans on the serious problems of alcohol, drug and substance abuse through a series of public meetings throughout the province.

I am proud to have been a part of that process, Mr. Speaker, and I am happy to serve my

constituents in that regard. I am proud to be a member of this government, a government that recognizes the challenges before it and moves to take action to meet that challenge head on.

My question to all members of this Assembly is: Are you going to remain part of the problem or shall we all become part of that solution?

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address this House, and I am certainly looking forward to the debates that will occur in the days, weeks and months ahead. It is my pleasure—no, indeed it is my duty—to second the motion of the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to, and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Friday, March 8, 1991

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