



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
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
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALLOWAY, 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	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	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, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 16, 1993

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent, and therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

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

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Liette Carr, Frank Henry, Todd Bone and others requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshammer) consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dolores Sandy, Wendy Rankin, Ileine Hanna and others requesting the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) consider holding public hearings on wide-open Sunday shopping throughout Manitoba before March 31, 1993, and requesting the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) to uphold the current law concerning Sunday shopping until public hearings are held and the Legislature approves changes to the law.

* * *

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of L. Alexander, S. Pruden, V. Pruden and others requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshammer) consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of D. Corbett, Jessie Keeper, Eddy Cobiness and others requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshammer) consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Matt Burnett, Denise Flett, Frances Thompson and others requesting the Family Services minister (Mr. Gilleshammer) consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to have the petition (Mr. Leonard Evans) read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

* (1005)

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have reviewed the petition (Mr. Dewar), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the United Nations has declared 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the theme, "Indigenous People: a new partnership"; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has totally discontinued funding to all friendship centres; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has stated that these cuts mirror the federal cuts; and

WHEREAS the elimination of all funding to friendship centres will result in the loss of many jobs as well as the services and programs provided, such as: assistance to the elderly, the homeless, youth programming, the socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, advocacy;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Family Services minister to

consider restoring funding for the friendship centres in Manitoba.

* * *

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS fisheries are a vital resource industry in rural and northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS there are over 800 commercial fishermen netting some 12 million pounds of fish each year on Lake Winnipeg alone; and

WHEREAS the high costs of supplies and shipping fish to market are putting ever more pressures on the commercial fishing industry in this province; and

WHEREAS the provincial government reduced the Northern Fishermen's Freight Subsidy Assistance Program for commercial fishing by over \$90,000 in 1991; and

WHEREAS this subsidy is vital to the survival of the commercial fishing industry; and

WHEREAS restoring the Freight Subsidy to the level of previous years would make fishing in northern Manitoba more competitive and help ensure the survival of the industry.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to consider restoring funding of the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance Program to the level it was at in 1990-91.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would like to draw attention to all members of the House to the public gallery, where we have with us today, from Stanley Knowles School, fifty Grade 4 students under the direction of Renee Leibl. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

I would like to draw attention to all members of the House that seated in the public gallery, from Cambridge Bay, Northwest Territories, and the Ebb and Flow School, we have thirty-eight Grades 9 to

12 students under the direction of Mr. Bill Peckham. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings).

I would also like to draw attention to all members of the House that we have eight visitors with us this morning from the MGEU Women's Committee, under the direction of Chairperson Louise Hodder.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Employment Enhancement Program Impact of Reductions

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been asking a number of questions about the long-term cost benefit of some of the spending decisions made by the provincial Conservative government.

In the budget tabled before this Chamber, there is a reduction of some 23 percent in the spending in the employment enhancement programs of the provincial government. This employment enhancement program goes for programs like employment centres, employment programs across the province. We are quite concerned about the impact of the spending cuts on the employment opportunities and the long-term economic benefits for the province.

My question is to the Premier. Do they have any studies to indicate that the spending decisions to cut some \$3 million out of the program is cost benefit to the Province of Manitoba in the long run? Do they have any studies to indicate that the closing of the human resource centre in Dauphin is cost effective? What studies do they have to show that this spending decision by the government will, in terms of all Manitobans, be in the best interests of our province?

*(1010)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Deputy Speaker, the programs that the member has referred to have now been integrated into the Department of Education and Training, into the Advanced Education and Skills Training part of this department.

The benefits of that change are that now those programs become part of a continuum of skills

training programs that are offered by this province, and individuals now have a greater ability for access and a greater knowledge of the kinds of programs that are available to them.

Mr. Doer: There is no continuum for the people in the Parkland region, where the centre has been closed down. There is no continuum for the numbers of people who will not be able to access programs in the centres and the human resource programs based on the reduction of 23 percent by this government.

I want to table a study that was conducted by the Policy and Planning Branch of the government in November of '92, which clearly states that the centres are cost effective, that they in fact produce for \$1 spent, \$16 of benefit to the province. They even talk about, in a three-month follow-up of data, that 35 percent of these people in centres are employed with an additional 15 percent enrolled in future training programs.

I want to know the long-term cost to the people of Manitoba with the cutback in the employment enhancement programs.

Is it not going to cost us more money and have greater numbers of people not being able to access employment and training in the province with the decisions made by the Conservative government?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitobans will still have access to those programs. We have been very careful to make sure that the services have been maintained in parts of Manitoba.

In the Parkland region, which was specifically referenced, we will make sure that through the services offered by Brandon, whether it is on an itinerant basis, will be available to the people of the Parkland region.

Also, those people will now have available to them the resources of the advanced education and skills training part of our department so that we will be able to look at the whole range of skills enhancement and skills training programs that will be available to those individuals.

Mr. Doer: Madam Deputy Speaker, obviously the government is not making any economic decisions in their budget on the basis of long-term benefit to the people of Manitoba and the long-term benefit to the economy.

The reports clearly say, without the human resource programs and the human resource centres

in their community, people currently on social assistance would be condemned to further dependence and lengthened stays on assistance.

It further says, the data shows a significantly higher proportion of HROP and HROC clients leave the social assistance caseload rolls due to the reasons attributable to the program participation.

* (1015)

Is this the policy of the provincial Conservative government, to have higher dependency, more people on welfare, rather than training and employment programs in the province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Deputy Speaker, again, I will tell the member that these particular programs were part of a reorganization. They have been brought into the Department of Education and Training.

The services now, we believe, will be much more efficiently offered because they are now part of a continuum of service, and it will allow those Manitobans to have a full view of the kinds of services and skills training that are available to Manitobans.

Human Resource Opportunity Centre Parkland Office Closure

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the same report that my Leader referred to that was conducted by the Policy and Planning Branch on November 5, 1992, refers to the work of the Human Resource Opportunity Centres, and I quote: There is a continued and growing need for proactive programming which assists the employment-disadvantaged Manitobans to enter or re-enter the labour force.

It also goes on to say that the fact that current demand exceeds program and centre capacity, human resource opportunity programs and Human Resource Opportunity Centres continue as relevant policy instruments designed to fight poverty and meet the equity objectives of government.

On the basis of those recommendations and statements in the government's own report that was conducted only a few months ago, I want to ask the Minister of Education, who is now responsible for employment enhancement programs, why the Parkland Human Resource Opportunity Centre was selected for complete closure rather than the treatment that was given to all of the others, which

we think was wrong anyway. It was the cutbacks, but at least—

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

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Deputy Speaker, as the member knows and Manitobans know, yes, very difficult decisions were made, but to make sure that there was a provision of service, there will still be service offered through Brandon.

As I have said to the member, these programs have just been integrated into the Department of Education and Training, and we are looking at how we can most efficiently service the needs of the people of the Parkland area.

Mr. Plohman: The Parkland has the third highest unemployment in the province. How can the minister rationalize this, Madam Deputy Speaker, considering that these are 50-cent dollars? The Canada Assistance Plan provides the other half of the dollars.

How can the minister justify the complete closure of this program in light of those facts?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Deputy Speaker, again, the answer does remain the same.

We had to look at where the services could be offered, how the services could be supported in a regional manner. In the Parkland area, the service will be provided from Brandon to meet the needs of the people of the Parkland area.

We have, as I said, only just integrated this particular program into the Department of Education and Training, and we are now looking, with the continuum of service, how to support the people of the Parkland area in the most efficient way.

Mr. Plohman: Madam Deputy Speaker, in view of the fact that there are 18 referral agencies, many from the Department of Family Services, in the Parkland region referring clients to the Human Resource Opportunity Centre, in view of the success rate that has taken place, there have been many examples where this has resulted in people being lifted from poverty and crime and into opportunities as productive citizens.

I want to ask the minister now: How much money, since she said the Brandon centre is now going to supply the services, is being allocated to the Dauphin and the Parkland region from the Brandon budget in this year's budget?

I am told there is—

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

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said to the member, these programs have just been integrated into the Department of Education and Training. We are now looking at the needs of the Parkland area in specific, with all of these services that we are able to provide in the training area because of this integration.

We are now looking at how we can best assist the people of the Parkland area through the whole range of programs that we offer through the Department of Education and Training.

Court of Queen's Bench Orderly Payment of Debts Program

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

We have recently learned that the Orderly Payment of Debts Program administered by the Court of Queen's Bench has been eradicated by this minister.

As the minister's own Estimates book last year said, the Orderly Payment of Debts Program is designed to assist persons who have become overwhelmed by debt. Through this program, debtors are able to pay their debts without being sued by their creditors.

Why has this minister ended this program, the only result of which can be to force more Manitobans into bankruptcy? Why has he ended this program which made eminent sense for people attempting to retire their debts in an orderly fashion?

* (1020)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable member speaks of eradication and uses language like that. He needs to understand that we are in a very difficult fiscal environment these days.

If he has been listening in this House and if he has been listening to what has been going on across the country, he will know that some difficult decisions have to be made.

This decision was not made easily either. We think that people who find themselves in these financial difficulties, though, can find assistance

elsewhere, and it does not need to be a service provided by government.

As I say, these decisions are not easy decisions, as the honourable member's question would suggest.

Mr. Edwards: As I read to the minister, the sole purpose of this program is to save lawsuits, expensive lawsuits to administer by the government, expensive for the people involved.

Why would the minister cut a program whose sole purpose was to help Manitobans also experiencing financial difficulty to retire their debts in an orderly fashion so that creditors can get paid, people do not have to sue, taking up the time of courts and judges? Why would he get rid of a program whose sole purpose was to allow people to pay their debts?

Mr. McCrae: I have already answered the honourable member in my previous answer, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Deputy Speaker, finally, for the same minister—the minister aspires to be a federal politician.

My question for the minister: Is the minister suggesting or is the minister in any way proposing that the only recourse left, the appropriate recourse for people in these circumstances, is the bankruptcy act? Why is he vacating his responsibilities—

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Deputy Speaker, I aspire to serve the people. That is what I have been doing, and that is what I propose to continue to do.

Child Care Centres Subsidized Space Reductions

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): The Minister of Family Services said in the House yesterday that no child care centre would lose more than one space.

Since Kings Park Day Care lost five subsidized spaces, Agassiz lost 14 subsidized spaces, Ryerson lost 20 subsidized spaces, Campus lost 15 subsidized spaces, will the Minister of Family Services explain the contradiction between what he said yesterday in the House and what is happening at child care centres across Manitoba?

Hon. Harold Gillshammer (Minister of Family Services): Madam Deputy Speaker, I can assure the member, the confusion is in his own mind.

We have indicated clearly that we had 10,000 subsidized spaces, and we are reducing that through attrition to 9,600. The member is wrong when he says that there are centres losing the numbers of spaces that he has indicated. We will manage the system so that centres will have a minimal impact from this decision.

The fact of the matter is, I think perhaps what centres are telling him is that they had eligibility for subsidized spaces for all of those spaces that they are licensed for. We have taken the average number of subsidized spaces that they have had over the last few months and reduced that by one.

Mr. Martindale: Will the Minister of Family Services now admit, since he would not earlier this week, that as many as 800 or 1,000 spaces may be lost, not the 400 that he announced, since a letter from his own Child Day Care office, dated April 8, says that spaces includes part-time enrollment as well as full time?

* (1025)

Mr. Gilleshammer: The arithmetic on this is really quite simple, and I will repeat it again for the member.

The number of subsidized spaces that we found ourselves with in recent times was 10,000 subsidized spaces. We are going to have that reduced to 9,600 through attrition. There will be the loss of some 400 subsidized spaces from what we have had in recent times, and we will manage the system so that no centre will be impacted to any great extent.

Mr. Martindale: The Minister of Family Services should at least have the—

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

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister explain why he is implementing a series of cutbacks which will force part-time employees particularly to either not find child care and drop out of the workforce, or not be able to take a job because they cannot find child care, or to leave children at home before and after school, a made-in-Manitoba, home-alone policy?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Deputy Speaker, what the member has to realize is that we have a budget that this year will print higher than last year's print in daycare, a budget that was nearing \$50 million. Our

commitment to daycare is very obvious when we spend those kinds of dollars.

If you compare the expenditures in daycare of Manitoba to other provinces such as Saskatchewan, we spend four times the number of dollars in this province than they do in Saskatchewan, four times as many dollars dedicated to child care, so our commitment is very strong.

What we are saying is that we cannot continue to see the system grow in terms of the call on public dollars the way it has in recent times. We have made some fundamental changes where we are asking people who access daycare and access subsidies to make a greater contribution, and we are putting a cap on the number of subsidized spaces in this coming budget.

Red River Community College Women's Programs

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, the women in Manitoba and Canada received a small bit of reasonably positive news this week with the information from Statistics Canada that there is a narrowing of the wage gap on average. However, most women still are in the pink-collar job ghetto. Most women still earn an average of two-thirds of what men earn as a wage, and certainly any changes in a positive nature that have come about for the women in Manitoba have not been as a result of any of the decisions made by this government.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Status of Women: Since many of these negative changes that the government has undertaken impact most severely on women in Manitoba and given the fact that one of the acknowledged best ways for women to be able to get out of the pink-collar job ghetto is an ability to access programs and training for nontraditional jobs, did the Minister responsible for the Status of Women talk with her colleagues, federally and provincially, and urge that the Red River Community College programs, the entire women's program, not be cut and that funds be found to enable women to continue to access those programs?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Deputy Speaker, I find it more than a little ironic that the member opposite, whose party, when in government, did not seem to have any care about

raising women into the upper echelons of management in the Province of Manitoba's public service, is now asking this question. When the New Democrats left office, they in September of the last year that they were in office—the statistics show that they had only 26 people who were women in the executive positions of the government of Manitoba.

In five years that number has gone up by more than 50 percent to 42—42 people who are women. As a percentage of the total positions in the executive level of the government of Manitoba, that number has almost doubled from 8.7 percent to 15.6 percent over that period of time. That is based on a real commitment to see women take increasing responsibility, not the kind of empty rhetoric that is put forward by the member for Wellington.

* (1030)

In addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, during the period of time when New Democrats were in office, the best they could do in terms of their own appointments to boards and commissions was to get somewhere just over 30 percent of their appointments to boards and commissions. We are all the way up to 43 percent, the target that has been set by women's groups.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Beauchesne is very clear that answers to questions should relate to the matter raised and be brief. The Premier can practise his budget speech all he wants, but he cannot hide the fact that this government is cutting women in the civil service, cutting child care spaces, has cut back in terms of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, just because the members opposite are getting their butts whipped in response to all of the questions—the opposition House leader cannot rise on a point of order. The House has worked well all week.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that points of order should be strictly relevant to the point of order being addressed. I thank you for your advice. I would also remind all honourable members that both

questions and answers should be as brief as possible—the clock is running—and answers as well.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of all the women in Manitoba, I object—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I remind the honourable member for Wellington, this is not a time for debate. Please pose your second question.

Women's Issues Child Care Accessibility

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, given that studies have shown that the single largest impediment to women's ability to access the workforce in an equal manner—

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

Ms. Barrett: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Status of Women why she has not spoken with her colleagues in cabinet, in particular the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), letting them know and educating them to the fact that the single largest impediment to women's ability to access equally the workforce in Canada and this province is affordable, accessible child care. Instead we have a child care system that is narrowing the access of women to jobs.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am certain all members would like to hear the response from the honourable Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchellson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Deputy Speaker, the statistics that we saw in the paper this week do indicate that women are moving in the right direction. Understandably, we have a long way to go.

We have indicated always that the key to women being able to achieve some of the nontraditional jobs and enter some of the nontraditional professions indeed is the education system, where women and young girls are encouraged to ensure that they maintain the maths and the science courses that will enable them in future life to enter those nontraditional fields and achieve to the same extent that men have in the past.

On the issue of child care, my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) has already indicated that in this province, we spend almost \$50 million a year. That is four times as much as her NDP cousins in the Province of Saskatchewan spend on child care for a population very similar to the province of Manitoba.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that we have made a commitment through our child care system and the enhancements that this government has made over the last five years and five budgets, and we will continue to ensure that we accomplish the best system possible for women in Manitoba.

Red River Community College Women's Programs

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, will the Minister responsible for the Status of Women now ask her cabinet colleagues to change their decision not to take the responsibility for the funding of the women's programs at Red River Community College since she has just stated that education is the way out of the pink-collar job ghetto? Will she now urge her cabinet colleagues, do her job as Minister responsible—

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

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleagues and I continually are looking and striving and trying to find ways to ensure that the women in Manitoba do have equal opportunity.

I do want to say, too, just as a follow-up to my Premier's first answer, that when the NDP government was in power, they never had any women in senior administration at the deputy minister level. We have now two women who have the most senior positions within government as a result of our Premier's and our government's decision to promote women within the civil service and try to encourage women throughout Manitoba to accept more senior roles, and encourage them to take the math and the science courses and ensure that they will have equal opportunity in post-secondary education as men have had in the past.

Provincial Sales Tax Broadening Impact on Retail Sales

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

One of the many criticisms, Madam Deputy Speaker, of the federal government's decision to introduce the goods and services tax was its timing. It was felt that introducing such a tax, as the country was slipping into recession, would deepen the recession. In fact, that has been borne out. That is why many economists call it the "made in Canada" recession.

I would like to ask the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism—[interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like the minister to be able to hear the question. I would like to ask the minister if he or his department has studied the Finance minister's (Mr. Manness) decision to withdraw another \$40 million from consumption in this province, and what the impact will be on retail sales in this province, given that February this year over February last year they were down nearly 7 percent.

* (1040)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, when the member talks about taxation issues, I want to remind him of the significance of taxation issues such as decisions of holding the line on personal income tax, and I know he is very interested in what this is capable of doing in the Manitoba economy, in terms of freezing personal income taxes over the last, what amounts to now, six budgets, but the Conference Board referred to four budgets. That in itself put some \$600 million of after-tax dollars in the hands of Manitobans to spend as they see fit. We certainly have confidence that they will spend that money in a prudent and economic fashion in terms of the good of Manitoba's economy. Those kinds of decisions go a long way in terms of stimulating Manitoba's economy.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Deputy Speaker, given the experience with the federal tax, surely the minister or the minister's department studied the impact of this decision to broaden the provincial tax. Surely they studied the impact of that on provincial retail. Now the evidence that is in right now is that it is already suffering. We are already hurting—

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

Mr. Alcock: What did his study show about the impact of this decision?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not have all of the statistics in front of me, but of what I recall in terms of retail sales in the last few months in Manitoba, going back to December and January and February, our retail growth has been amongst the best in all of Canada, in those months averaging anywhere from second best to third or fourth best. Certainly the retail sector is doing very well relative to the rest of Canada in the last few months, and I will gladly provide all of the details and statistics to the honourable member to show him just that.

I believe, in December, as an example, that our increase from December the year before was some 9 percent, significant growth in the retail sales tax sector, Madam Deputy Speaker, so there has been continual growth, and we have confidence that there will be.

I also want to remind the honourable member of the importance of holding the line on the overall tax. At 7 percent, we now have the second lowest retail sales tax in all of Canada, and I want to remind him of the significance of that. He can look in the blue budget book, and he will see the comparison to all the other provinces, with rates as high as 11, 12, 13 percent. Manitoba's 7 percent is the lowest in all of Canada. That is very important to all Manitobans, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Alcock: In information released on Wednesday, I would like to remind the minister that department store sales are down 7.3 percent in this province. Consumer bankruptcies are up 7.6 percent in this province. Now, surely, the minister has earlier access to that information than I do, and surely, when they are working up the budget, they have an opportunity to look at this and to determine the impact of a further \$40-million grab from the retail sector.

What have his studies shown about the impact of this decision on consumer bankruptcies and retail sales in this province?

Mr. Stefanson: I am sure the honourable member knows, when he refers to department store sales in the city of Winnipeg, that in terms of the total retail sales in all of Manitoba, they represent some 6 or 7 or 8 percent, not by any stretch of the imagination a large proportion of the retail sales in all of Manitoba.

I have already outlined for him what retail sales in total are doing in Manitoba. We are having reasonable growth, certainly relative to the rest of Canada, in that very important sector, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have also outlined for him the benefits of holding the line on personal income tax, putting \$600 million back into the economy of Manitoba by Manitobans, who know best how to spend that money, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have the highest growth in all of Canada, outside of the Atlantic provinces.

Our growth in personal disposable income in 1993-94 will be more than double the growth in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Even Alberta, which has no sales tax, our growth in personal disposable income will be double the rate in that province. But I do want to remind him, the importance of holding the line at 7 percent on all items in Manitoba, that that is the second lowest rate in all of Canada. When any consumer is buying any product, they will benefit by holding the line at 7 percent, unlike decisions we have seen in the province of British Columbia. We know what kind of government is there.

Agriculture Industry Safety Net Programs

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Actions or lack of actions by federal and provincial governments have caused hardships for many Canadian farmers. In light of the fact that we have a federal-provincial agreement that says producers will not be abandoned when the marketplace fails them, and that the Wheat Board has said that prices will remain at the same levels as last year, causing great hardship for Canadian farmers as they go into spring seeding, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture if he will now call on the federal government to put into place a third line of defence immediately.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Deputy Speaker, over the course of the last three or four years, there have been a lot of discussions between the provinces in western Canada and the federal government about having safety nets in place, and the second line of defence consists of GRIP and NISA, which work very well in the province of Manitoba and have generated millions of dollars of income for farmers in Manitoba. when there are low grain prices or there is a frost

like there was last year that really affected the constituency of Swan River.

The third line of defence has been on the table and discussed. About all we got out of that discussion is the federal government—at least the previous minister indicated that it was a federal responsibility. I have looked at the revenue incomes. Whether you look at the gross incomes or whether you look at realized net incomes, the province of Manitoba has improved rather dramatically in 1992 over '90 and '91, and '93 again looks like the realized net income will be reasonably good in the province of Manitoba, with many industries doing exceedingly well—the livestock sector, the PMU sector, the oilseed sector.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, although the member tries to paint a gloomy picture about rural Manitoba, I want to tell that member that anybody who travels through rural Manitoba, whether it is the Canadian Wheat Board or whether it is credit unions or whether it is the Minister of Agriculture, there is a sense of confidence out there, structural confidence in the future that things are improving.

Yes, we have all had to accept less and keep our expenses down. The farmers have done that for 100 years in this country, and they are doing it very well in '92 and '93.

Canadian Wheat Board Barley Marketing

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Deputy Speaker, surely the minister cannot be saying that he is happy with the situation in rural Manitoba and things are good out there. He is not listening to the people.

Although he has said he has not seen the Carter report, and this is another report that is going to have tremendous impact on the farmers, it is public knowledge that the recommendation is to change the method, weaken the powers of the Canadian Wheat Board and open up the border to the U.S.

Can the minister tell us today whether he has taken a position on that? Is he supporting the Wheat Board and keeping the barley sales under the Wheat Board, or is he supporting the dual system as recommended under the Carter report?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): I cannot believe that member. She says she has not

seen it; she knows it is not released but yet I am supposed to comment on it.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that member should at least have the courtesy of waiting to see what it says before she makes all these rash assumptions.

We have sold incredibly large amounts of grains and oilseeds and meats to the United States. Our sales to the United States over the last four years have gone from \$3 billion in this country to \$5 billion.

That is the largest growth anywhere, and we as a country have penetrated that market more than anywhere else.

When I look at that report, I want to be sure that we are continuing to penetrate that market to the best possible extent, and we are returning the maximum amount of net income to the farm gate of the farmers of Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: All major farm groups have seen the report. Other governments have the report. It is strange that this minister has not seen it.

Will the minister tell us, when he finally sees the report, how he is going to get the message out to farmers. Is he going to hold public hearings on this report? Is he going to listen to the farmers, or is he going to do the same thing that he did on the method of payment? When farmers were opposed to it, he is still supporting it.

Mr. Findlay: She is talking about a committee of 19 people who were on the review. Yes, the farm organizations were represented. Yes, they may have seen it, but it is not released until Monday or Tuesday. [interjection]

I have already given my position, to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman). I am interested in the farmers of Manitoba getting their maximum income and penetrating the best market we have in the world.

That member over there wants to continue to predict the gloom and doom of Manitoba farmers.

Historically over time the realized net income has averaged—[interjection] I listened while that member asked the question, and I would ask her to return the courtesy of listening for the answer. Thank you very much.

Realized net income in rural Manitoba farms has averaged \$360 million a year. Last year it was \$400 million. That is well above the average. This year

it is projected to be \$300 million, and constantly the market prices look a little stronger, so it is going to be around the average.

I remind the member that the farmers are doing reasonably well under the conditions we are in. We are in a recession. It is a worldwide recession, regardless of what anybody else says, and farmers have adjusted effectively.

I can tell the member that many segments in agriculture are doing very, very well.

* (1050)

Manufacturing Industry Employment Decline

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Just under the wire, but it is important.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). It is regarding the sad state of manufacturing in this province.

In March, manufacturing jobs increased in all of Canada by 3.0 percent over the previous March. However, in Manitoba, manufacturing jobs declined by 6.9 percent. In other words, we lost 4,000 jobs in our manufacturing sector from last year at this time, from 53,000 to 49,000.

Will the Minister of Finance now acknowledge that his financial and his economic policies have not created any manufacturing jobs, indeed have allowed a serious decline in manufacturing jobs in this province?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am so happy that the member for Brandon East made it under the wire, or made it just before the wire and got his question in. It would not be a Friday without a question from the member.

I remind the member, as I have on several other occasions in answers to virtually the same question, that Canada as a whole, between '86 and '92, experienced a 10.6 percent reduction in employment within the manufacturing sector; the province of Quebec had a fall-off of 11.5 percent; the province of Ontario, 12.9 percent; the province of Alberta is minus 2.1 percent; the province of B.C., minus 4.1 percent; the province of Newfoundland, minus 27.3 percent; and yes, the province of Manitoba during that period of time also experienced close to a 5.6 percent reduction in employment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this phenomenon does not pertain specifically to the province of Manitoba; it does not specifically apply to the nation of Canada.

It is a worldwide phenomenon and, of course, as a manufacturing province, we are part of the global manufacturing situation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Nonpolitical Statements

Hon. Gary Fillmon (Premier): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wonder if I could have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable First Minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Fillmon: Madam Deputy Speaker, today, Friday, April 16, corresponding to the 26th day of Nissan of the Hebrew calendar year 5753, marks the beginning of Holocaust Awareness Week.

It is sad to think that around the world people are gathered to recognize tragedy, one of the greatest tragedies of recorded history. The reality of the Holocaust and the effect it had on countless millions of lives is something that cannot and must not be swept aside or forgotten.

The Holocaust is an ugly example of human cruelty and hatred, the systematic, deliberate and senseless drive to exterminate an entire people—six million Jewish lives lost to the Holocaust. Five million more joined them as victims of the most systematic and barbaric extermination of a race in human history. One-third of the Jewish population of the world perished horribly. The sheer number of lives lost is staggering.

Holocaust Awareness Week serves to remind us of the dangers of hatred. So too does the Holocaust memorial on our Legislative Building grounds. I was proud to participate with the Jewish community in planning and implementing the Holocaust memorial, which stands on the southwest corner of our grounds, the first such monument in Canada erected on public turf.

Today the names of more than 3,700 of these innocent victims are recorded there, people who have surviving family, relatives or friends living in Manitoba. For most of these victims, this will be the only memorial that will bear their names. There were no names on the mass graves and crematoria

of the death camps. However, their memory lives on in the hearts of their loved ones and in the minds of all who come to this monument.

So during the Holocaust Awareness Week, Manitobans join people around the world in remembering all those who lost their lives, and regardless of each of our cultural backgrounds, I believe we can all recognize the hurt, the pain and the tragedy that hatred of others brings. That is only too painfully demonstrated by the Holocaust.

The tragedy is that around the world, hatred based on culture, heritage, religion or the colour of our skin is still flourishing. It is causing suffering, violence and death. Holocaust awareness serves to remind us that stopping this cycle of useless hatred does not begin in other parts of the world. It begins in each one of us around the world, in our hearts, in our minds, in our homes and in our communities.

I urge all Manitobans to do their part to end the cycle of hatred which begets tragedy, such as holocausts, by treating those who share our communities with respect and equality. Holocaust Awareness Week also serves to remind us that our freedoms and rights in Canada are not to be taken lightly.

The revolt of the Warsaw ghetto, 50 years ago, clearly demonstrate that these are liberties that people have fought to preserve, that people have given their very lives to defend.

It is painful to remember the injustices of the Holocaust. However, it would be more painful not to remember, for it is only through this effort that we can ever hope that the emotions which bred the Holocaust will ever truly be a part of our past with no place in our future.

The Holocaust Memorial Committee in Manitoba has worked very hard to bring forth many events recognizing Holocaust Awareness Week and the 50th anniversary of the revolt of the Warsaw ghetto.

It is my sincerest hope that all Manitobans will join in its observation. As freedom-loving people, it behooves us not only to remember but to do everything in our power, individually and collectively, to strive for a world of mutual harmony and understanding among all people.

I know all members of the House will want to join with our Jewish citizens and all people of good will everywhere in recognizing Holocaust Awareness

Week. It pays solemn tribute to the victims of this unparalleled attempt to destroy a people as well as to the indomitable spirit of a people to overcome tragedy and to survive.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased on behalf of members in our caucus to join with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in acknowledging that today marks the beginning of Holocaust Awareness Week.

It is a time for all of us to remind ourselves and all Manitobans of the significance of the Holocaust to our lives and to commemorate the six million Jews who perished. Nothing brings that reminder more stronger and clearly than the experiences of those who went through the Holocaust.

I want to today acknowledge in particular a constituent who has stood up over the years to speak about this tragedy, this shameful part of our history and acknowledge the work of Nina Rosner who has, in a documentary "Return to Buchach," clearly helped the whole of our community and the whole world to understand the significance of the Holocaust for all of our lives.

I also want, in these few moments, to acknowledge the ongoing work in our community, and particularly in the Jewish community, to fight against any other acts of genocide, any other tragic attacks on an entire people and note particularly the work of the Jewish youth association to draw our community's attention to the acts of genocide in the Bosnia-Herzegovina region.

Today is the start of a very important week that has been organized by the Holocaust Memorial Committee of the Winnipeg Jewish Council in conjunction with the Shareth Hapleita and the YMHA, Jewish Community Centre.

As has been acknowledged, this week commemorates a very special part of our history, the 50th anniversary of the foremost act of the history of the Jewish people, the revolt of the Warsaw ghetto. So today and throughout Holocaust Week, we ought to remind ourselves and all Manitobans of the continuing significance of the Holocaust for our lives, to rededicate our lives to ensuring that this shameful part of our history does not repeat itself and to pledging vigilance, not just today, not just all next week, but every day throughout the year to fight against any signs of racism, hatred or discrimination.

So today, on behalf of my colleagues, I join with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in thanking all those responsible for organizing Holocaust Awareness Week and begin this week by greeting all Manitobans in the name of peace with the one word that says it all, shalom.

* (1100)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I neglected to ask for leave of the House, which I assume I would have received, for the honourable member for St. Johns, just for the record.

Does the honourable member for the Maples have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like to join with the Premier and the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylysia-Leis) on this very, very tragic moment, and a very painful part of our history, the history of tragedy and ignorance which cost so much in human suffering, and it almost eliminated one race from this earth. It seems that we, as a human species have not learned from that mistake, and many things are happening today in the world which are not of the same significance, but they are also of the same pattern. It is so tragic that with so much technology advance, so many things are happening, but we have not learned that we should respect each other, try to understand each other and make sure that we do not hurt others.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, I can relate to this week in a more meaningful way, because I come from a minority in a country, in a part of the nation where many things are happening which are not acceptable in advance in a humanistic society as in the west. We are very fortunate in this country, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has said, that we are not to be afraid of saying what is right and what is wrong and speak our mind and fight for human rights. I think we should not take that privilege for granted, and we should continue to work because there are always chances that somebody, somewhere, still have the same ideas.

Let us continue to work together to make sure that we can make a better place for all of us, not only in this country but in the rest of the world, because it does not really help if one part of the world is going through hell while the other part is still enjoying, because, Mr. Speaker, things will not change unless we all work together.

So I join with the Premier and the members of this House in conveying our message to the Jewish community that our sympathies, our strength, is with them. We hope that we can all learn from this, a tragic mistake, and hopefully that mistake will never be repeated for any other culture in the world.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, on a somewhat different note I would like to draw attention of the House to the fact that today is Good Friday for the many Manitobans who are of the Orthodox faith. For many Ukrainian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, this weekend is Easter weekend, and it is a particularly important part of the year for many Manitobans. I know in our own case, we drove down yesterday. My family—in fact, I have the privilege of having my in-laws here from Greece. We will be celebrating Easter weekend with members of the Greek community. We had to drive through six inches of snow, which is not the normal situation for Easter in Greece but, when I look around the weather today, I am sure that will make up for it.

I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, that (Greek spoken). Happy Easter, Christ is risen. Thank you very much.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Dauphin have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members of the Legislature to join with me in congratulating the Dauphin Kings junior hockey team on capturing the Manitoba Junior Hockey League title on Wednesday, April 14, at the St. James Civic Centre by defeating the St. Boniface Saints in four straight games.

It is my pleasure to congratulate all 21 players who have formed a very closely knit unit this past year and have won and lost together and lately, of course, mostly won together. That is a credit to the captain, Pat Mullin; the coach, Lyle Stokoteln; and manager, Cam Alf; the trainer, equipment manager, scouts and all members of the executive of the Dauphin Kings. I want to congratulate all of them

for this tremendous accomplishment, the first in Dauphin in the last 10 years.

The organization has placed an emphasis on developing local talent, and this has paid off this year with the championship. I join with the community and the whole Parkland region in wishing the Dauphin Kings the best of success as they go on to the next step in junior hockey supremacy in taking on the winner of the Saskatchewan junior hockey league, either the Melville Millionaires or the Flin Flon Bombers. I wish them the best in that series and that step forward.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY BUDGET DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: On the adjourned debate, the seventh day of debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) in further amendment thereto.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I am pleased to rise today, Mr. Speaker, to add my comments on the most recent budget by this provincial government, but I thought I would start off by having a bit of a quiz.

I will read a direct quote from a document, and maybe members here can put the challenge out to them to see who made this statement. The quote is: Deficits are not the answer. They add to the future costs, squeezing out services and adding to the tax burdens.

An Honourable Member: Gary Filmon?

An Honourable Member: Roy Romanow?

Mr. Reid: No.

An Honourable Member: Grant Devine?

An Honourable Member: Bob Rae?

Mr. Reid: No.

An Honourable Member: Jack Reimer?

Mr. Reid: No, not even close.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Clayton Manness?

Mr. Reid: Clayton Manness, Minister of Finance. That was the correct answer. The member for

Selkirk wins the prize, 1992. It is nice to see that the Minister of Finance finds humour in his statements that he made in last year's budget, but I now draw to the Minister of Finance's attention and to the honourable members opposite some figures from the most recent budget, 1993-94 budget—[interjection] another failure, as the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) states.

In 1988-89, of course, there was a balanced budget in this province. We had \$58.7 million in the bank when we left office. [interjection] It is right here in the documents. The Auditor of the province has indicated that is the case. The government did not have the opportunity nor the time to modify the budget that was brought in by the Minister of Finance, prior to this current Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). So he implemented the budget that was brought down by the previous government. Therefore, we will take credit for the \$58.7 million that was left in the bank—a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

Since that time we have seen massively growing deficits in the Province of Manitoba. So when we read the statement that deficits are not the answer—and it was made by this Minister of Finance last year—how can this minister stand here and tell the people of Manitoba that he is doing something to answer the problem of deficit in this province?

I will quote from the current financial statistics in the current budget: For the financial year 1989-1990, the deficit was \$142.4 million for that year; for the next year, 1990-91, the deficit over doubled to \$358.9 million, a significant increase in the deficit position of this province.

Then for the years 1991-1992, the Minister of Finance brought down another budget, his fourth budget which showed a deficit of \$324.3 million. If that was not bad enough, this past financial year, as we have seen in the figures that have been released and quoted in this House during this budget debate, the deficit has over doubled from the previous year to \$762 million.

Yet the member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) in the comments that he has made, said that the government neglected to include \$100 million on top of that \$762 million, bringing the total deficit of this province for the year 1992-93 to \$862 million.

Now if one was to add up all of those deficit budgets that this Minister of Finance and this government has brought in, one would find that

figure is in the range of \$2 billion in deficit budget position; \$2 billion that this government has overspent in its position of operating the finances of this province.

* (1110)

If one was to take into consideration that the current interest rates—and I am not exactly sure what the world market interest rates would be—but if one was to take the domestic interest rates of this country in the range of approximately 8 percent, one would find on that \$2 billion of deficits adding to the debt of this province, Mr. Speaker, that we are incurring in this province, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and others in his cabinet and caucus like to say from time to time—have added \$156 million in yearly interest payments that the Province of Manitoba and the taxpayers of Manitoba have to pay on top of the deficit that this government has rung up during its term of office.

Now if one was to take that figure to 8.5 percent, we would find that there is \$166 million in extra interest payments that we have to make. So when they talk, let them not be hypocritical when they talk about who is contributing to the debt of this province and the interest rates that they are incurring for their mismanagement of the finances of this province.

The minister indicates during his Budget Address and in his document that there was a miscalculation. He underestimated the transfer payments from the federal government; he underestimated the revenues—just a small mistake, Mr. Speaker, just a \$200 million mistake.

Now he wants us to believe and he wants the taxpayers of the province to believe that he is going to reduce the deficit to such a position that he is going to have a balanced budget, I believe it is within two to three years. If it had not been for that \$200 million mistake that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) had made in his budget calculations from the previous year, we might be inclined to listen to him, to his estimates and his forecasts and maybe to believe him. But I find it very difficult, on top of that \$200-million mistake that he made during the current year, how we are going to see a balanced budget within that period of time.

He talks about reducing the predicted deficit, for this current year, of \$330.5 million. Well, if we are going to see more mistakes like the \$200 million that we have seen from this minister, then I believe we

are going to see a significantly higher debt in this province.

There is a perception in public that the current government, and I believe all Conservative governments in the country would like to encourage the general population to believe that they are better managers of the economy. But, if you look, in reality, this is not borne out by the mistakes that they have made in the management of the economies of this province, the increased joblessness in the province and the dire economic straits that we find ourselves in, forcing this government to take the actions that they have, so they say. We believe that some of the decisions that they made and the directions they made are not the proper directions and are not in the best interests of the people of the province of Manitoba.

In my comments today, I will deal with the impacts of the budget upon my own constituency, and the phone calls and the letters that I have had to my office over the course of the last week since the budget came down. I will also talk a bit about the Highways and Transportations budget and the recent comments that were made during a press release by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger). I will also talk about the minister's much touted fuel tax rebate that he has given to the railways and the impact that it is going to have.

First, I would like to talk about the impacts that this budget is having upon my constituents. Since the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) made his announcement about the funding for child care spaces in the province, I have received several phone calls by single parents in my constituency, very concerned single parents who are not going to be able to move their children from their subsidized spaces into the before and after school programs.

In my community of Transcona, we only have two before and after school programs. There is a great need for expansion in those programs as those who are unemployed or those who currently have employment or those that find themselves in circumstances beyond their control, require those type of services. Yet we see that this government is cutting back funding for those spaces.

One letter I have here says that a particular centre is in need of partial funding for 15 additional spaces because of children who will move from the kindergarten program into the Grade One program.

Yet this government, this Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) does not recognize that need within the community. These parents are going to have to look around for unlicensed spaces within the community, if they exist. There will be no control or no regulation over the operation of these unlicensed spaces, and the parents will have to potentially put their children at risk because the homes into which they are putting their children have not been given the thorough check required of all licensed spaces to ensure that they comply with the regulations of the province.

So it puts the parents—and I will quote from the letter that was sent to me: What alternatives are available to us in order to provide adequate child care for our children? My constituent, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that she called five home daycares that were operating near her home. None of them had spaces available at that time, and of the spaces that she called, the home daycares that were available in the community, there were no spaces available for the children coming out of that kindergarten program. So there are going to be 15 children from the families in that area who do not have spaces available to them.

Now, this woman has to make the decision, as she is a single parent, on whether or not she is going to put her child in an unlicensed daycare if they are available or into a babysitting service. If they are not available, she is going to have to seriously look at, unfortunately, removing herself from the workforce. In that situation, she would find herself being forced to apply for the social assistance program, something she desperately wants to avoid.

She wants to remain a productive member of our community and she wants to be able to provide, to the best of her ability, for her child. But she finds that she is up against a brick wall here and a very uncaring, unconcerned government. She is into a desperate situation here.

So I ask the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to seriously reconsider the decisions that he has made and the impact that it is going to have upon the families, particularly the families as I point out here. There are others that have called me, Mr. Speaker, on a similar problem.

As I indicated yesterday, and the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) might be interested in this, I received a letter from another constituent concerned about what this government

has done with the Pharmacare costs in this province and how the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has, through his department, taken and removed certain medications from the list, the Pharmacare list for the reimbursement of the necessary prescription drugs in our province.

This constituent indicated that she had phoned the Minister responsible for Seniors on March 5, 1993, just about a month ago, has indicated to me that when they called the office of the Minister responsible for Seniors, was going to indicate that the Pharmacare program had refused to pay for three prescription drugs that are necessary to allow the individual to live through a certain amount of pain that has impacted on her personal life as a result of a car accident, where there were injuries to the discs in the back and neck of the individual.

The individual, as I said, called the minister's office on March 5 and wanted to speak to the Minister responsible for Seniors. Well, the Minister responsible for Seniors never did return that phone call and, on March 9 or 10, as is indicated in the letter, a woman from the minister's office called back about the medication. But the individual who received the call, the individual from my community that received that call, wanted to speak directly to the minister. Of course, the minister could not take the time to speak to that constituent of mine about the concerns that my constituent had.

* (1120)

This individual, Mr. Speaker, is 72 years old and wanted very desperately to speak to the minister to relate her concerns to the minister. My constituent got angry when they could not speak to the minister, and it was always someone in the minister's office who was intervening in the process.

My constituent mentioned two or three times during the conversation that she wanted to talk to the minister because it would be too hard for that individual to try and get hold of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) because of the perceived time constraints on the Minister of Health and his department. Not once did the staff in the Minister of Seniors' office mention that she would speak to the minister about my constituent.

The prescription drugs that my constituent is required to assist her with her condition totals about \$225, something that Pharmacare has refused to pay. Now this is an individual who is 72 years old and is widowed. She has, of course, very limited

means of income. That is why she desperately wanted to have some of her costs recoverable from the Pharmacare program.

My constituent goes on to say that Mr. Orchard has put the cheaper medications on Pharmacare and took the most expensive ones off and says that she does not wish to take any medication but has no other choice, and yet she finds she is compelled to pay the extra costs that are affecting her.

It goes on to say that, and I will quote from the letter: Mr. Reid, I am a senior and 72 years old on low income trying to keep my head above water. As you have noticed in my writing, I have arthritis in both my hands and have had two operations on them years ago as my fingers used to get numb. I reinjured my back because of falling on an icy sidewalk almost four years ago, so I have trouble keeping my home clean and vacuuming, and shovelling the snow. I cannot afford to pay someone to shovel the snow as they would want to be paid for five hours. I worked hard all my life and paid taxes, et cetera, and now no one cares, but keep on raising taxes on my home. I do not get enough of pensions to live on, so do not pay income tax now and cannot deduct my medication on income tax.

What bugs me is that the minister, Mr. Orchard, has \$6 million to give away to a consultant from the U.S.A. to come and tell him how to run the hospitals when the U.S.A. has a crummy health care system themselves. Why do they not fix their medicare system first in the U.S.A? He does not have money to pay people here for the medication. What a laugh.

So my constituent, Mr. Speaker, is 72 years old and a senior on fixed income, a widow, and realizes that the decisions that this government has made are seriously impacting upon her quality of life and are doing nothing to assist her in maintaining that quality of life.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the letter. It says: Sorry for the long letter, Mr. Reid, but I do hope you give Mr. Orchard and the Tories an earful.

It says: What a—expletive deleted—government.

So you can see that people are being impacted, and it is the people that are least able to assist themselves and defend themselves, the poor, the disabled and the sick in our communities that are being picked on by this government.

My colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has raised questions in this House, and, I must admit, they are very, very serious questions. They have serious ramifications for us in this province.

When we look at the untendered contract that was awarded to APM and associates, Connie Curran, in effect, and her colleagues for \$4 million of tax-free money. It is like winning a lottery for them. There is no doubt about that.

On top of that, it is our understanding that this American-based consulting firm is going to receive another up to \$800,000 in expenses. The question was asked the other day by my colleague the member for Kildonan what the per diem was going to be for these consultants coming to this province, something that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) refused to answer.

Now it appears by the answers that were given by the Minister of Health during the course of all the questions that were asked by my colleague that there is a hidden agenda or a secret agenda on health care reform in this province. Even though the Minister of Health has put forward his health care reform document, he does not seem to be complying or sticking to that document in any way.

They say that there will be potential savings for the Province of Manitoba by having this consultant come here, but on the backs of whom are those savings going to take place? That is the question that I asked. Is it the woman, like the quotes from the letter that I just read out, the 72-year-old widowed woman, that is going to be paying for those extra costs and the reduced care in this province? Or is it the professionals that are employed in the workforce that provide those necessary and essential services for us that are going to be paying those costs? The province says it is not aware of any cost. There is no data on the costs of any of the departments of Health and the programs they have.

The minister has broken his word from the May 1992 health action plan that he tabled when he said there would be no user fees in this province. I have indicated in my comments in the letter from this constituent of mine, this 72-year-old woman, that she is now paying those user fees that this government said that they would not implement.

The government will not tell us how many bed cuts there are going to be for the hospitals of this province. Are they going to eliminate hospitals in

this province, Mr. Speaker? That is one of the questions we are having to ask.

Are they going to replace those hospital beds and those necessary essential services in the hospitals with the community-based care like they say they are going to do, because I have not seen any of that community-based care in my community?

I talked with the residents of my community who rely on home care services and those who provide the services in my community and those who have been employed there for some time. There has been no increase in community-based care.

Yet we see \$4 million in an untendered contract given away to an American health consultant to come into this province to tell us how to Americanize our health care system. Tax-free money, Mr. Speaker.

Yet we see, when we look at the American health care system, that their administrative costs are 8.5 percent of their overall expenditures. When we compare that to what we have here in Canada, our administrative costs are only 2.5 percent.

So how can we call in an American consultant that cannot even manage their own health care systems in their country, telling us how we are going to chop our programs when we are at least 6 percent below them in administrative costs?

Maybe they should be going back to their own country, improving their system first, before we decide to hire them to come into this country and tell us how to run our health care system.

Why can we not consult with the people who are employed in the health care system in our province already and let them tell us how to improve it? The people who work the system know those jobs better than anybody else in this province, better than anyone in this Chamber.

If I was in the government's position today, what I would like to do is have a consulting group, a working group, come together to tell government how best to run the health care system in this province, not to bring in outside consultants who have never worked in the system in the province and do not know the daily problems that we have here.

We need to have the experts, the professionals in the health care of our province, tell us where we can make those improvements, and that is where I think we should be heading, not the direction that this government is heading now.

We see the government cutting back on the medical coverage that they have, and they provide to those who are disabled in our communities. Cutting back, forcing people now to go out and buy their own crutches, as if they can afford to buy that, forcing these people now to go out and buy colostomy bags. Is this something that we are doing to help these people?

I mean, we have to be serious with what is happening. These are the people who are least able to defend themselves in our society and provide for themselves, and yet it is those types of people, the disadvantaged, the disabled and the poor, who are being targeted by this budget.

I have to shake my head, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the impacts that it is having and the people who are being impacted.

Now I realize that the government is, by their own comments that they have made in their budget document, in serious financial condition. They would like to say that they would like to be fair to everybody in the province by spreading the pain, but the only people who I see being seriously impacted by this budget are the people who are least able to defend themselves, the sick and the disabled, the elderly. So I do not see how we are spreading the pain here.

Now we have another program that this government likes to talk about. They like to, as we have seen in past budgets where they give \$7 million in tax breaks to corporations for training.

* (1730)

I have asked questions of this Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) here over the course of the last year, year and a half, two years nearly. I asked him and his department to provide some kind of training programs for the employees of CN Rail, residents of my own community and others who live in the surrounding community who are employed at the railway jobs, who are finding themselves either unemployed or in a position of potentially being unemployed, as we have seen with the recent announcement for another 700 job cuts this year, to provide them with the necessary skills to give them that portable ticket, that portable skills ticket, to allow them to go out and seek other employment.

After a year and a half of waiting and having meetings with the Department of Labour, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) has the gall to stand

up in this House and to tell the residents of my community and those who are employed in CN Rail, that it is now a federal government responsibility, that he is not going to take any initiative to assist those people to achieve the necessary level of education and training to provide them with those portable skills so they can move into those other jobs that may be available after they get laid off from the railways. That was the statement that he made in this House here, and I can assure the Minister of Labour that those comments will be taken back to those who are employed within the railway industry who are going to find themselves laid off.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we find that this government has cut back, as we have seen the demonstrations on the steps of this Legislature over the course of the last two or three weeks, on the Foster Family Association providing the necessary support services for the foster families of our communities. Now, if the government thought that there was a necessity to trim some of the spending, it might have been wiser for them then to consult with these different groups that provide this counselling service, and to say it is necessary for us to cut back 5 percent or 10 percent in the funding that we provide for you. We know that will be a tough decision, but that is something we feel that we have to make. Instead of that, they chop all the funding for these agencies and impact them directly.

There have to be other ways to make the decisions that they have done. They talk about the friendship centres around the province, where they have eliminated the funding to the friendship centres because they call them advocacy groups, which is a total misinterpretation of the work and the efforts that these agencies provide to the people of the province.

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

The government does not realize that these agencies provide crisis counselling; and, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) has pointed out in this House on several opportunities during Question Period and during his debate, these friendship centres provide that crisis counselling.

Now, the people who are requiring this service, who reside in the community of Flin Flon, will have to travel some two hours to The Pas to receive any kind of crisis-counselling service. How does a spouse, whether it be a man or a woman, and/or

children who find themselves in an abusive situation—how do they find within their means in a crisis situation the ability to drive that two hours to The Pas after they have been subject to physical, emotional or sexual abuse? How is that helping those people? I fail to recognize or realize how this government's decision to cut back the funding is going to help these people.

On top of that, this government has cut back, eliminated the student social allowance program. I have a young woman in my community, she is a single parent who, immediately after that announcement was made by this government, called my office and told me that she is currently going to school. She had a high school education, and she was going to school to upgrade her skills to allow her to move into the workforce. She is a single parent with a very young child who is trying to upgrade and make a better life for herself and her child.

Now this government has taken away and removed that funding for that individual and others like her in the province. So now she has to make a very serious choice. Does she remove herself from that education program because she has no family to go back to? Her father is dead and her mother is disabled and unemployed. Does that individual then have to quit her education and training opportunities and go back and stay at home with her young child and put herself and her child on the social assistance welfare rolls of this province? How is that helping this individual to become a better person, to become a more productive member of our society?

Now again, if there had been a need to cut some of the budget, the government could have gone along and said, well, we have to seriously look at cutting back maybe 5 or 10 percent. People might have understood that. The government has said often enough that we are in difficult financial times but, when you totally eliminate programs like that that are meant to help people, these programs that you have eliminated will not help the people by the decisions that you have made.

I want to move on now, Mr. Acting Speaker, to talk a bit about the Highways and Transportation budget and the decisions that were made by this government to reduce the locomotive fuel tax by 3.5 cents a litre.

We have said for a long time, and I listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) give his explanation to some questions yesterday, when he said that they had reduced the fuel tax on various modes of transportation in this province that it was to help the transportation sectors.

Now, that may be a good move. That may be a positive sign for us in this province. Time will tell whether that is the right move.

The Minister of Finance also said during the answer to questions that were put to him that we had, as a government, when we were in office raised the taxes up and up to the 1992 level when we were in government and that revenues were climbing but, at the same time, the Minister of Finance forgets to tell everyone that the revenues of the railways and the transportation modes were climbing and that they were in an extremely high-profit picture.

I know that for a fact because I have seen the financial statements for the railways of this country. I know they were making money. In fact I think it was seven out of the 10 years prior to this government coming to office that railways were in a profitable position. So they could afford to pay those taxes, Mr. Acting Speaker, even though they did not like to pay them. I am sure they are no different from a lot of Canadians that would like to minimize their taxes and, in a sense like that, that would be the appropriate goal for them to go after.

Then I see this government come along. Last year, they reduced the fuel tax by one cent a litre and it cost the provincial treasury \$1.4 million, I believe it was, something that the province could not afford to do because it was costing us revenue from this province that we desperately needed to operate the programs of this province.

Now this government has come along and reduced the fuel tax by 3.5 cents a litre, which is costing us another \$3 million per year of revenue that we desperately need to run the programs.

What we have said to this government over a period of time now is, if you are going to reduce the fuel taxes for the transportation modes of this province, whether they be trucking, railways, airlines, whatever, that we tie job protection to that fuel tax reduction or elimination, as the railways were looking for, something that this government did not do.

When I have talked to the employees of the airlines, I have talked to the employees of the railways, I have talked to employees in trucking, not one of them agreed with this government's position to give fuel tax rebates to the modes of transportation without tying some sort of job protection to it, something that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and this government fail to recognize.

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

I tell the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that if CP Rail, as the announcement came out yesterday, said they were going to bring 165 new jobs to this province, something that had been rumoured for at least a month before the decision was made and announced, that is a positive announcement. We would like to see jobs coming to this province.

At the same time, CP Rail, in an earlier announcement this year, said they were going to move some 300 jobs to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, from the Weston yard motor power shops.

What this government did not know, and I seriously think they got snookered on this, is that the CP Rail shop in Moose Jaw is not capable of handling the locomotive complement that was going to be transferred to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

So the question I ask: Is that a ploy on the part of that railway in particular to encourage this government to give a tax rebate or a tax exemption or a tax reduction? Was that a ploy on their part? Time will tell if it was.

On top of that, the question I have for the Minister of Finance, (Mr. Manness) now that he has given that 3-1/2 cent a litre fuel tax rebate, has CN Rail come to the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) or to the Minister of Finance and said, we are going to rescind our decision to eliminate 700 jobs in the province of Manitoba this year?

I do not hear any answers from the members opposite. I take it then by that that there is no decision and that there will be no job elimination announcement coming out saying that we are going to rescind that decision by CN Rail.

* (1140)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance):
Oh, the old heavy union blackmail bit.

Mr. Reid: Heavy union blackmail bit, the Minister of Finance says.

Now, the Minister of Finance gives a rebate to the railways of 3-1/2 cents, so what is he going to do? He is going to say, well, Mr. President of the Railway, we are going to give you this tax rebate and we trust you that you are going to do the right thing to help us in this province. Yes, that is exactly what they are going to do. They are going to run those unit trains through this province and they are going to not create any more employment. In fact, we are going to continue to lose those 700 jobs that were announced this year already in this province, many of them in my own community of Transcona.

Now, is this Minister of Finance going to give another tax incentive, another fuel tax rebate next year with no job security, no job protection, no job creation or incentive attached to it? Tremendous negotiator—he is sure doing a lot to help us in this province.

On top of not getting any job assurances or protections in this province, he is giving away the revenue, the necessary revenue that we need in this province to run the great programs that we rely on. I hope I am wrong when I say that the railways will not rescind their decision. I would like to see those jobs remain in this province, because our history, our base of our province is built on transportation. That is our foundation in Manitoba and, yet, we are continuing to see that erode.

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

We have lost 5,000 jobs since this government came to office, 5,000 jobs in transportation. I personally believe that is going to continue to happen, that we are going to continue to lose jobs despite the fuel tax rebate reduction that this government has given, because they have no assurances of employment levels in this province, something that I think they should concentrate on.

The government has said in the announcement by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that he has maintained his provincial Highways construction program for this year, for the current year, as it was from last year.

Yet I see here, Mr. Acting Speaker, in actual fact the Minister of Highways and Transportation has used money from a federal-provincial joint venture program to improve the highways of our province.

They have used that federal money to cover up the reduction in the monies that this province had put into the capital works programs for Highways, some \$10 million reduction in the capital program for this province.

So this government is trying to use smoke and mirrors to fool the people of the province when they say they are maintaining their provincial budget, their commitment to highways in this province. On top of that, the only money that they put into programs, the federal-provincial programs, are for highways in the southern part of the province.

Now, it is great for a person like me and maybe other members of this Chamber here that maybe live in and around the community of the city of Winnipeg. Where is the commitment to northern Manitoba? They have reduced \$10 million from the provincial capital programs expenditure for highways. Why did they not take that \$10 million, instead of reducing it, and reinvest it into highways in the northern part of the province of Manitoba?

We have heard questions in this Chamber here today about Highways 391 and 394, 395, I think it is, that desperately require some kind of capital investment in the highways program. Instead they have cut back the funding to highways in this province. [interjection] That is right. There are many communities in the northern part of the province that have no roads.

I read a quote from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association: The provincial government's announced 1993 Highways capital program of \$110.6 million represents a substantial slash of the \$27.4 million or a 19.85 percent cut over last year's budget, not the 5 percent that was claimed by the government, end of quote.

Another quote from the same document, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association says: The provincial government took the money and substituted its financial responsibilities with the federal contribution.

Even the people who rely on that money for their employment, job creation program and revenues in the province of Manitoba, wealth for the province of Manitoba, realize what this government has done.

It goes on to say that even the hard-pressed Saskatchewan government added a full federal contribution to its 1993 Highways capital budget without further slashing its spending base. It goes

on to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that in the process the government hurts the working man and woman now laid off or on welfare, families that rely on construction-related work to pay the bills.

We need a public works program in this province, something this government is philosophically opposed to and that even the construction industry says we should be moving towards, usually their own supporters.

I hope this government realizes the folly of the decisions that they have made with respect to the budget in this province and that they go back and reconsider the decisions they have made and make some internal adjustments within their department to recognize the needs of the province of Manitoba and to reinstate some of the programs that I have mentioned here that have been seriously impacting upon the lives of the families of the province of Manitoba, the sick, the disabled and the poor in the province of Manitoba.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity to add my comments on the budget here today.

Committee Changes

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The honourable member for Gimli, with committee changes.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections be amended as follows: The member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) for the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings); the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for the member for Morris (Mr. Manness); the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the motion of the honourable member for Gimli. [agreed]

* * *

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Acting Speaker, I will begin my comments by indicating indeed what a great pleasure it is for me to stand here today and speak in support of the sixth budget that this government has brought down in the last five years and say that I am extremely proud to be a Manitoban.

I am extremely proud to be a member of the Progressive Conservative government in the province of Manitoba under the leadership of our Premier Gary Filmon and our Finance minister (Mr. Manness) for the time and effort that has gone into trying to bring in a budget that could be as fair as possible in some very difficult economic times, not only in our province but indeed right across the country and throughout the world.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to start my comments by saying that I was born and raised here in the city of Winnipeg to a very hard-working family where my father, after his service in the Second World War, got a job at the post office in the city of Winnipeg and worked until his retirement at age 65 in that very same job, starting off sorting mail and ending up as a supervisor in the mail distribution area.

My mother stayed at home and raised her three children, and, I must say, I believe she did a fairly decent job—we are all working, productive members of society—and also had a major impact on the first and formative years of instilling some of her values into my children, which I will treasure always.

As I started to say, my father did work at the same job for all of his working years, and it was in the days, Mr. Acting Speaker, when people did not have credit cards. My father never owned a credit card throughout his lifetime. He believed that you worked and you saved your money and, when you could afford to buy something or purchase something, you purchased it and, if you could not afford it, you did not buy it.

I think those are the values that he instilled in me. That is why today I philosophically believe with the direction of the Conservative Party and why I became an active, working member of that party and chose to run for elected office to see whether in fact I could help to make a difference.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to start my comments by quoting one of Peter Warren's comments that was made on Tuesday, March 16, 1993. He said, and I quote: While there must be some sympathy for the handful of social agencies who lost their funding in the big provincial slashback yesterday, let us be absolutely clear about some of the other groups and the basic reason for Clayton Manness having to wield a tomahawk. The provincial Conservatives were left with a garbage bag of a budget from hell by Howard Pawley's New Democrats.

That is the end of the quote.

* (1150)

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Who said that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: For the member for The Maples' information, that was Peter Warren on March 16, 1993.

I know that when we took office as government in 1988, that is exactly what we were faced with after six very short years—I guess they might be very long in the minds of many Manitobans—and mismanagement by a government led by Howard Pawley.

I know that some of the members over on the opposite side of the House in the NDP ranks were not a part of that government so do not have to accept the responsibility, but there are several in the front benches in the official opposition, Mr. Acting Speaker, that were part of the decisions that were made during those six years when the public debt grew from \$100 million to \$550 million, yearly deficits of \$500 million, when inflation was in the double digits and times were good. We know and we have seen the legacy left by that NDP government. Just a couple of examples—and I know the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) knows very well about the \$30 million that he squandered and the decision that he made to build a bridge to nowhere north of Selkirk. That happened to be a priority of that administration.

We also do know and have heard many times—and I saw first-hand when we were in opposition the money that was squandered on the sands of Saudi Arabia with the MTX fiasco. Those were dollars that could not be spent here in Manitoba by Manitobans for some of the very vital services that we could have enjoyed, or indeed to reduce taxes and reduce the burden on the average Manitoban out there who works so very hard to contribute in a very positive manner.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in 1988—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. Could I have those honourable members wanting to carry on a conversation do it outside in the halls or in the loge so that we can hear the honourable Minister of Culture?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Speaker, I appreciate your calling those members to order who have chosen for some reason or other not to listen to my comments. I believe they are important comments

and comments that need to be put on the record. We need all Manitobans to know what we were faced with in 1988 when we came to government and some of the very tough decisions that had to be made as a result of the legacy that was left by the former administration.

If I can just talk about what has happened over the last couple of decades in Manitoba. During the 1970s, Mr. Acting Speaker, we saw unprecedented growth in incomes where people were earning 13 percent a year on average more than—those were really good times. In the 1980s, that decreased but still grew at 7.9 percent per year. Those were major years of good times, and people were experiencing better ways of life and better livings.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know today throughout the '90s that the anticipated growth in income is going to be around 3 percent, and that is a third of what the growth was back in the 1970s. When you look at where government gets its revenue from, we look at personal income taxes, we look at corporate taxes and we have to look at consumption taxes. We are not going to have the major increases in those taxes. Because of our decision through the last five budgets not to increase those taxes and trying to leave some money in the pockets of Manitobans, we are not going to have the dollars and the increases in revenues that we saw in the '70s and the '80s.

Reality has come home, and we do now need to look at how we can try to better manage and try to manage the finances and the tax dollars which ultimately come from Manitobans to best deliver the programs and the services, especially on the human services side of government, that Manitobans have come to expect. We are no longer going to see major increases in government departmental spending, and I know back in 1988 every department of government did receive an increase in their budget.

There were different amounts. Some departments experienced greater increases than others, but indeed we were all looking at increases in our budgets and we were able to implement new programs that would enhance the quality of life and the lifestyles for Manitobans, sometimes not looking back to some of the programs that had been in place for 10, 20, 30 years and reassessing and re-evaluating whether they were still priorities today.

We have to face reality today. We have to face the fact that there are not going to be major increases in revenue because we have made a conscious decision to try not to increase taxes to any great degree. We are going to have to look at ways to manage better and spend more wisely so that we can indeed protect the human services that Manitobans have been accustomed to receiving.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, that leads us to our 1993 budget where we have basically again not raised personal income taxes. We have not raised the sales tax, and we have not raised corporate taxes to any great degree.

There have been some minor tax increases that have been made to try to generate a little more revenue, but we have tried to spread those revenue-generating taxes fairly and evenly so that all Manitobans share in the pain of coming to grips with the decisions that we have made.

As a result of the budgets and the measures that this government has undertaken over the last number of years, I just want to quote from a Winnipeg Free Press article that indicates that tax breaks will fatten the wallets of Manitobans, and I quote: Most Manitobans will bring home fatter pay cheques for the next two years without having to put the squeeze on their boss, the Conference Board of Canada reports.

When taxes, benefits and inflation are deducted from salaries, the average worker's take-home pay will increase by \$215.44 this year, and \$363.68 next year, thanks to federal tax relief and a provincial government that held the line on taxes, board analyst, Paul Darby, said.

I go on further to quote: It is like getting more bang for the buck. Pay cheques will actually go further this year, in part because the recession has driven prices down but also because the tax load has been lightened.

* (1200)

Mr. Acting Speaker, that means several millions of dollars more in Manitobans' pockets so that they can make the decisions on where they want to spend their hard-earned money rather than having government take that money out of their pockets and try to make those priority decisions for Manitobans.

That is what I believe should happen. I believe that Manitobans should have the opportunity to

make the decisions on where they spend their hard-earned dollars, and it should not be government that is making those decisions for them.

What has happened as a result of governments that have year after year after year increased taxes, taken dollars away from Manitobans and made those decisions for them? It is a situation in which I believe Manitobans are supportive of the decisions that have been made by this government to ensure that they have more control over their future and their destiny and their children's and their grandchildren's future.

I have listened intently to a lot of the comments that have been made by opposition members of the House on what they call concrete suggestions on how they would have handled the budget differently.

I know that it is extremely easy, when you are in opposition, to make recommendations and indicate what you would do, but indeed we see right across the country that when NDP governments and Liberal governments are in power in other provinces, they are making many of the decisions that we are making today, or have made to date. They will continue to because they know that the well is dry, Mr. Acting Speaker. We want to try to maintain the kinds of services that Canadians have come to expect. We cannot keep spending and keep taxing in the manner that we have in the past.

We see what is happening in B.C.—I suppose one of the provinces that has not been hit quite as badly by the recession as some of the others. They still seem to feel able to continue to tax and spend more. Mr. Acting Speaker, we know that they are going in a completely different direction from anyone else right across this country or any other government right across this country.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

What the NDP in this Legislature in opposition talks about and what the NDP government in power in British Columbia does are, in fact, two different things. We all know, as I said earlier, that it is fine to sit in opposition when you do not have to make any decisions on behalf of Manitobans and say that you would have done things differently, but we do know in reality what those in the New Democratic Party do when they are in government.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to relate personally an incident. I have a sister-in-law who lives in British Columbia. She has had a relationship with a friend

for many, many years now who has been a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party, and family get-togethers, whether they be in Winnipeg or in Vancouver, have at many times been rather delicate, I must say, because philosophically we have very differing points of view. We have had many arguments and many very heated political discussions. Of course, his views have been completely different from our views.

I want to relate just in the last year—and he is a teacher by profession—I had a phone call from my sister-in-law to tell me that finally her friend had seen the light. They went through a pretty exercised time, I guess, in B.C. with the teachers, and he ended up on strike and walked the picket line for a few weeks in opposition, of course, to the Harcourt government in B.C. As a result of those activities, he tore up his New Democratic card and sent it in to the party with a scathing letter saying that all is not well and I do not believe in the policies of the New Democratic Party anymore. I guess we celebrated somewhat when my sister-in-law said, and I quote: Red is dead.

Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to hear when those who think differently than I do philosophically and politically sometimes come to see the light and realize that the New Democratic Party is not always the be-all and the end-all.

Obviously what we are seeing happening in B.C. is not what those who traditionally vote and support the New Democratic Party believe should be happening. So I take some delight in that small victory, and I am glad that slowly but surely people are coming to their senses and realizing that what the New Democratic Party in opposition says is not necessarily what they do when they become government.

Mr. Speaker, we see right across the country from budgets that have been brought down that there are difficult choices and difficult decisions being made, but I think that in some provinces we are seeing some terribly draconian measures.

I hate to be terribly critical or condemning of other governments of other political stripes that are having to make the difficult choices and the difficult decisions. I do have to say that where New Democratic governments who have raised provincial sales taxes as their answer to fighting the unique or not so unique problems, I suppose, that they have in their provinces are certainly somewhat

more regressive than the decisions that we have made. We have not raised the provincial tax here in Manitoba in this budget, and it is interesting when we hear criticism from the opposition that we are harmonizing the GST that we see articles that come from newspapers in B.C. that talk about the B.C. government extending the provincial sales tax to other items and the same criticism is coming to their cousins in British Columbia.

So, Mr. Speaker, the decisions we have made are not decisions that are unique only to Progressive Conservative governments but, indeed, they are decisions that NDP governments that are in power are making right across this country, and I make no excuses for the kinds of decisions that we have made to try and generate revenue while holding the line on spending also. For every dollar that we have raised in taxes in Manitoba we have cut a dollar in expenditures in our budget. I think that is a fairly balanced and a very sensible way to try to deal with the issue of reducing our deficit while trying to maintain services as best we can.

* (1210)

We do know that there have been some difficult choices and some difficult decisions made in this budgetary process, and none of us take any great delight in some of the decisions that have had to be made but, if we are to continue to try to provide the very valuable services that Manitobans have become accustomed to in health care, in education and in family services, Mr. Speaker, those tough decisions have to be made.

I would believe those kinds of decisions are going to be made again in next year's budget so that indeed we can ensure that some of the universal services that Manitobans have been accustomed to will continue for many, many years to come and that our children and our grandchildren will not be burdened with the debt and the interest on the debt coming out of their pockets, that they will not be able to have a health care system or education or the social safety net that we have in place today.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not talk about what some of the Liberal governments across the country are doing also. You know, New Brunswick, when we look at comparison across the country, would probably have one of the toughest budgets that has ever been brought down.

Their 11 percent sales tax, not seven percent, but 11 percent sales tax will be applied to more items,

somewhat like what the province of B.C. is doing, somewhat like we have done within our budget this year.

The prescription drug program for the old and for the poor will be slashed by millions, Mr. Speaker. If you look at a comparison of New Brunswick and Manitoba, I guess if we go back to 1987, provincial income tax has gone down in Manitoba while it has increased in New Brunswick. In 1987, the income tax was \$58 in New Brunswick compared to \$54 in Manitoba; in 1993, \$62 in New Brunswick compared to \$52 in Manitoba.

It appears to me that we, on behalf of Manitobans, are moving in the right direction and the Liberal Government in New Brunswick is moving in the wrong direction.

Newfoundland also is experiencing and has made decisions that will impact in a greater way than any decisions that we have made in Manitoba. The personal income tax level in Manitoba is at 52 percent. In Newfoundland it is 69 percent. In Manitoba, we as Manitobans have enjoyed a decrease of 2 percent while Newfoundland has gone up by 9 percent.

So the decisions that they have made have taxed their citizens in a much greater way under a Liberal administration, yet, we hear that the Liberals in the province of Manitoba cannot support our budget, Mr. Speaker, because of the draconian measures that we have undertaken. Again I say, and I believe it is worth repeating, that the Liberals and the NDP when they are in opposition can be critical, but when they become government, have to face reality and look at the tough decisions that are being made around us and throughout our country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about one of the highlights of my last month or so as Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. I had the opportunity to meet with the municipal heritage advisory councils, councils that were set up as a result of the new Heritage Resources Act. Volunteers from throughout the community who come together have established, at the local level, committees to enhance the heritage in their own communities, to work closely with municipal governments.

Mr. Speaker, I am just looking for a paper here. I had the opportunity to meet with them, oh, a month or so ago, and they held, for the first time ever, their first annual meeting in Portage la Prairie. I guess it

was just after the new member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) was elected in the by-election, because he was there and he brought greetings on behalf of the province. We have a group of volunteers who commit their time and also committed their own money, some \$2,840, to register for their first annual conference.

Mr. Speaker, they applied to my department for a \$1,000 hospitality grant, which is not unusual for a small community organization, and we granted that \$1,000 to them. Their total budget was \$4,161.98; those were the total revenues that were generated and of that over half of the dollars that were generated came out of those volunteer pockets. They paid their own way, they paid their registration fee to come together as a community, a heritage community organization, to discuss and debate issues that were of concern.

Mr. Speaker, when all was said and done, after the conference was over, they spent \$4,131.67, so in fact they had a small surplus of \$30.31. They came in to see me just to update me on what a positive conference they had held, and when I looked at their financial statement I commended them and I said, well, you know it is really nice in my department to see a financial statement that has a surplus. They said to me, yes, we did have a surplus, and with that they handed me an envelope with a cheque made out to the Minister of Finance for \$30.31.

What they said was, you were good enough to help us with a small hospitality grant. We felt, as community leaders and as volunteers in the community, that we know how difficult it is for governments today to have to make decisions and to have to spend money, and we believe that if we had a surplus left over, that that surplus really should go back to the Province of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would call those people who belong to that volunteer community, to those municipal heritage organizations throughout the province, leaders within our community, because they understand the difficulties. They were not prepared to just keep that money, but they felt that it belonged back to the taxpayers and to the people of Manitoba so that we could spend it in ways that we saw fit to enhance the community.

Now, it is only \$30, but I was extremely pleased to see that we had volunteers within our community who were willing to pay their own way and did not

want to be any extra burden on the people of Manitoba than they had to be. I tell you that it was the first time ever that—and you know in the Department of Culture we are basically a granting department. We produce and distribute throughout Manitoba many, many cheques throughout the year, and it is the first time ever that a community organization has come to me and given me a cheque for a surplus that they felt really did belong in the provincial coffers. So that was one of the highlights of my—Mr. Speaker, can I ask you how much time I have? [interjection] Thank you. I will never forget that moment in my office.

* (1220)

Mr. Speaker, I did want to talk briefly about the decision to shut down the Queen's Printer operations in my department because it is an issue that has been raised in this House, and there has been some criticism of that decision that was made and also some criticism about whether we treated our employees in a fair manner. There is not any decision that is made within government that does reduce the number of positions that is not a difficult decision when you are dealing with human lives, but I think this government has treated the employees, in circumstances where we have downsized, in a very humane and sensitive manner.

I want to tell you that of the 39 positions that were deleted in the Queen's Printer, I believe there are only seven employees to date, in a very short period of time, who have not found employment elsewhere or have taken early retirement.

I just want to show you and read through very quickly some of the positions that have been filled by workers in the Queen's Printer. We have two driver examiners in the Department of Highways. Of course we have administrative secretaries who have found work in other departments. We have a building service worker, a storekeeper, a postal clerk, a trades helper, two Employment Standards officers—pardon me, that is not two. That is one Employment Standards officer, a lab assistant, a clerk of the court, a purchasing agent. So we have been able to assist many of the employees, and that is just to name a few.

Many of the employees within our Queen's Printer were redeployed into other areas within government, and we are still working with the seven who are still having some difficulty finding placement. So contrary to what some of media

reports have said, we have been extremely sensitive to those people who have found that their jobs have been deleted.

Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon us as government to ensure that we use the taxpayers' money of Manitoba in the best manner possible. When we hear members of the opposition saying that we have made reductions in some of the very sensitive areas, on the social services side, the health care side, the education side of government, I think it is incumbent that we look at better and more efficient ways to try to deliver some of the services that we need within government.

One of them was the Queen's Printer service. As a result of the decision to downsize at the Queen's Printer and contract out some of the business, we have to date saved over a million of taxpayers' dollars. I believe that Manitobans expect no less of their government than to try to find more efficient and effective ways of delivering those kinds of services so that that money can be spent on education, on family services and on health care in our province.

I make absolutely no excuses, Mr. Speaker, for the kinds of decisions that we have made to try to ensure that we can protect the vital services, even at a decreased amount than what has been spent in the past, because we have said many, many times that not necessarily does it take more money to have better service. We know as a result of many of the decisions that have been made in this budgetary process that we have tried to preserve wherever possible the kinds of services that Manitobans have come to expect while looking at areas where we could find efficiencies in management and efficiencies in trying to deliver government services to the people of Manitoba.

We know from the comments that I have had from my constituents and many of the people that I have talked to over the last couple of weeks since our budget has been introduced that they believe we have been fair. Some people that I talked to really believe that we did not go quite far enough, that there could have been a larger decrease in the deficit.

We tried to be fair. We tried to take into account some sense of maintaining wherever possible the social safety net, our health care and our education. I think we have done a good job of that.

I would be remiss if I did not, just at the end of my comments, indicate that I am extremely pleased

with the health reform initiatives that are ongoing. I am extremely pleased that in my community, the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg, we have, as a result of health reform, 60 new beds at Concordia Hospital for extended treatment and 240 new personal care home beds that will be up and running for the seniors in Manitoba and in our community. That is part of health care reform.

We hear the opposition many times just being critical and saying that nothing is happening in the community. I will tell you that in the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg, and I would hope that the member—I did not hear the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) make a comment about the 240 new personal care home beds and the extension of beds at Concordia Hospital as a positive initiative undertaken by this government to try to enhance our communities, his community and mine.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today saying that I support this budget wholeheartedly and hope that some members opposite will see the light and support us also.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my comments on the record about this budget that is a very difficult budget for many people in this province. Before I begin that, I want to just comment on volunteers in Manitoba. The Minister of Multiculturalism (Mrs. Mitchelson) just spoke about a group of volunteers that has done a tremendous job by paying their own way and paying money back to the government.

I recognize that this group has—I want to pay tribute, they are a good group of people; they were able to do that. But I think the minister is overlooking the fact that there are many volunteers in this province who cannot afford it, but they have things to offer. It should not only be rich people who can volunteer their services. There should be the ability for those who are not so wealthy to attend conferences and participate in groups and offer their information and their knowledge towards different organizations.

Many of these poor people cannot afford to go to conferences and have suffered in many ways under the cuts of this budget. So I do not think that we should be looking at volunteers and saying that they should pay their own way, that government should not have to offer them supports. There are many knowledgeable people who do not have the fortune to have the resources, but they have an awful lot of knowledge that we should be able to—and they should be able to share and participate. Because they do not have money does not mean that they should not be able to participate. Those who can, fine, but we have to leave that ability there for those people who do not have the resources with them to offer their services.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at the budget, one of my colleagues talked about spring, a time of growth, and compared this budget to spring. Unfortunately, when we look at this budget, I do not see very much hope, as we do when we think about spring.

I had the opportunity yesterday to speak to a group of students who wanted to know about what the government's role was in education and what their hope was in this province. As I talked to those students, I told them what I thought.

I believe that it is government's responsibility to give every person in Manitoba the opportunity to get an education at the elementary and public school level but also provide the opportunity that they can get a post-secondary education, but their responsibility for education is ongoing.

People change their careers many times, and government has the responsibility to make that education available to everybody.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) will have 38 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 16, 1993

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