



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLVI No. 14 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 10, 1996

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 10, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dan Klippenstein, Gerhard Friesen, Gord Blatz and others requesting that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) consider reversing his decision and retaining a system of orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Home Care Services

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Florence Lamoureux, Dianne Johannson, Esther Revet and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Kim Morrison, Jaime Carrasco, Collette Aubin and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Irv Riskin, Debby Paradoski, Dianne Riskin and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of D. Gorrell, D. Courage, S. Kelly and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. George Hikes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Sylvia Fediuk, Sandy

Schechter, Augustine Ziffle and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Bill Bilawka, Karen Advent, Grace Kusie and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Stacey Pinnock, Maureen Pinnock, Beryl Juzda and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jared Winters, Troy Scott, Mona Chappellaz and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Donna Green, Louise McQuade, Vicki Cook and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Carolyn Buffie, Jennifer Cote, and Yvonne Chartrand requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Bruce Tynes, Carri McCormick, Janice Tynes and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Judy Drabik, Raymond Sharp, Iva Sharp and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Kim Marcyniuk, Trudy Walski, Janice Goodman and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1335)

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Paul Kolmatiski, Leo Wnuk, Darren Kryschuk and others requesting that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) consider reversing his decision and retain a system for the orderly marketing of hogs under Manitoba Pork.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Rick Vaags, Bill Vaags, Michel Gauthier and others requesting that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Karl Kynach, Ron Froese, Harvey Harms and others requesting that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Home Care Services

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Carl Porteous, Mary Thiessen, Doug Blaschuk and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Eleanor Brownlee, Judy Chirsky, Brenda Dozenko and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of E. Rae Hatherly, R. Hamilton, J. Fedorn and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Vicki Holmes, Rosalie Mazur, Pat McCormack-Speatznr and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Louise Gaba, Jaroslaw Gaba, Pauline Mirus and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Retention of Hogs Single-Desk Selling

Madam 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. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

* (1340)

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

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS the provincial government announced its intention to move to an open marketing system for hogs in Manitoba without consulting producers as it promised during the last election; and

WHEREAS a majority of hog producers support single-desk selling under Manitoba Pork, the marketing board; and

WHEREAS the hog industry in Manitoba has doubled under an orderly marketing system; and

WHEREAS processors who will contribute to Manitoba's value-added industry have publicly expressed their preference for orderly marketing because it is easier to deal with one agent rather than 2,300 producers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Agriculture consider reversing his decision and retain a system for orderly marketing of hogs in Manitoba under Manitoba Pork.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT many LPNs have been eliminated from most acute care facilities in Manitoba, including St. Boniface, Seven Oaks, and most recently HSC; and,

THAT the LPNs of this province are valuable members of the health care system, providing professional, competent, skilled and cost-effective services; and

THAT staffing cuts will only result in declining quality of health care and potentially tragic outcomes; and

THAT it will not be long before the negative results of this shortcut effort are realized, including higher costs and poorer services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to recognize the value of LPNs and to consider reversing the decision to cut LPNs in Manitoba.

* (1345)

Home Care Services

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to non-government organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care Program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front line providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to non-government organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care Program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front line providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Gregory Dewar). It

complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to non-government organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care Program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front line providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1350)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and,

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and,

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to non-government organizations mainly private, for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user pay system of home care; and,

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care Program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and,

THAT thousands of caring front line providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and,

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Public Schools Finance Board for the year ended June 30, 1995. As well, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Collective Agreement Board for the school year 1994-95.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon twenty-three Grades 9 and 10 students from Fairholme Colony School and Baker Colony School under the direction of Mrs. Maendel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan).

We also have sixteen Grade 9 students from Faith Academy under the direction of Mrs. Jodi Daly. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

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

* (1355)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hog Industry Marketing System

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the hog industry employs a number of people in this province including over 2,000 producers that are involved in this industry. To borrow a term from the Manitoba seniors letter last week, many of those producers feel quite betrayed by the action of the government to proceed, in their opinion, with the unilateral action on the marketing system that we had in Manitoba. Many people feel they were given the word of the government during the last election campaign, and they have been betrayed in that word that they received.

I would like to ask the Premier specifically, did he ever give his word to pork producers here in the province of Manitoba that he would not change the marketing system for pork unless the majority of pork producers had voted for the change?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, we have never talked about votes of the producers because the fact of the matter is that Manitoba Pork was set up by the Legislature as a sole marketing entity and, indeed, that power is given to a group and can indeed be altered or changed by the government. Indeed, we are looking at this as an opportunity for expansion of hog production, a major expansion that has the opportunity to create some 8,000 jobs. We double hog—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I think the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) wants to answer the question.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I asked the Premier whether he gave his word, and I want to table a letter that is signed by Mr. Darwin Firman, a pork producer who met with the Premier approximately four or five days before the last election campaign and was told by the Premier himself that there would be no changes to Manitoba Pork unless the majority of producers ask for a change.

I would like the Premier to consider his words, and ask the Premier today: Will he, in the spirit of honesty, keep his word and not proceed with the changes in the marketing system for pork producers here in Manitoba unless a majority of pork producers ask for those changes?

Mr. Filmon: We have always said that governments have to act in the best interests of the people of the province. The fact of the matter is we have an opportunity to add tremendous value to the production in our agricultural community in this province in a way that will create an additional 8,000 jobs for this province. That is not an opportunity that can be denied by a group that wants to have a monopoly situation on the production and marketing of hogs in this province.

This will require investments of major proportions, investments in processing that will create 500 to a thousand jobs for each new unit of processing, \$40-million, \$50-million investments. Those cannot be controlled by one private interest group. We need to have investments in the million-dollar range to create major production facilities in this province, and they need to be bankable. They need to be able to take pork production agreements for sale to the bankers to be bankable so that they can have that kind of investment.

What we are talking about are jobs. We are talking about thousands of jobs, and this government will continue to act in the best interests of all Manitobans.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the only private interests we see affecting this government is the McMaster family on their proposal on We Care and home care, not the majority of pork producers here in the province of Manitoba.

I have asked the Premier a couple of specific questions about something as fundamental as his word. I have asked him on two occasions to talk about the commitment he gave in the election campaign to pork producers, not the rhetoric he is giving us now in the Chamber a year later.

I would like to ask the Premier, why did he give his word to producers and farmers in Manitoba that they would not change the marketing system unless the

majority of the producers desired so? Why did he break his word after the election campaign?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member knows full well that we had a report that was produced by an independent commission that outlined the alternatives that were available to government. Government has said that government makes the final decision, that this is not a matter that will be set to referendum, and that is not a commitment that I would ever have made.

* (1400)

Hog Industry Marketing System

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, in light of the fact that the Premier and many of the Conservative candidates in the last election gave their word that they would not change Manitoba Pork unless the majority of producers asked for this change, in light of the fact that feed processors and many of the large packers have said that the system is working very well, will the Premier agree today that what they have done is wrong, and will he tell producers that he will give them the opportunity to have a say, give them the opportunity to have a referendum on this issue before they make the change from single-desk selling to dual marketing of hogs in this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I repeat, the issue here is jobs and economic opportunity for all Manitobans. The issue here is an opportunity for 8,000 additional jobs in pork processing, in transportation, in production, in support services to the farm economy. Those are opportunities that all Manitobans should be given.

Ms. Wowchuk: I beg to differ with the minister. This is a matter of honesty.

I would like to ask the Premier, since they insist on moving into this system on open marketing against the will of the producers, will he agree to provide an ongoing evaluation of the open marketing system to ensure that it is in fact accomplishing what they want and not hurting the producers of this province?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, Manitoba Pork will continue to be in operation for the benefit of those who

choose to utilize that system. In fact, Manitoba Pork will be strengthened by the opportunity to receive a checkoff on all hogs that are produced in this province which will give them even greater revenues to be able to support and promote Manitoba pork worldwide for the opportunities that exist.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since this is a dramatic change against the will of the producers, will the minister, the Premier, give his word that there will be an evaluation system that will involve the producers and this time that they will listen to the producers if the system is not working in the best interests of pork producers in Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, what we are interested in is not providing monopolies that give privilege to certain people in this province. The fact of the matter is that what we are attempting to do is benefit the entire society and the entire economy of Manitoba, and that means that we have to have a system that works in the best interests of all Manitobans and their economy, and that is exactly what we will be providing.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker, there is no need for a contingency plan during the strike, no need to force people from their homes into institutions, no need to have a contingency plan in place, no need for coalitions like the coalition that was formed today to fight privatization of home care if the government would only listen to what the public has to say about the privatization, if the government would only listen to the recommendations of the Price Waterhouse report that said we had the best home care plan in all of North America.

My question to the Minister of Health is, will the minister stop this in its tracks, feel no need to have a contingency plan, do the right thing, stop the privatization plan right now, go back to the table, talk to the public, prevent the strike, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if I listen to the advice of the honourable member, I would allow our health care system to

deteriorate further and further. Manitobans expect much more from us than that. They expect us to have an eye to the future so that we can pass something on to future generations, something that honourable members opposite have attempted to take away from future generations.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister explain how the public of Manitoba can have any confidence in a privatized system or any contingency system during a potential strike when this government, this Department of Health and this minister have seriously botched every major health initiative, including the doctors' strike, the hospital fiasco, the Pharmacare fiasco where they cannot get any of that right, Madam Speaker? How can we have any confidence in the welfare provided by this minister?

Mr. McCrae: In the face of the serious efforts on the part of honourable members opposite and their friends to convince Manitobans that there are all of these issues in front of us and all of these problems, in the face of that, Madam Speaker, what I offer and what my colleagues offer is to put the patient, put the client ahead of all other considerations.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response, so perhaps the minister can now explain to members on this side of the House why his own Centre for Health Policy Evaluation in its most recent bulletin was saying that we should not be going to a private system because it costs 33 cents on the dollar in the U.S. system to go to a private system in administration costs and this government will be giving 33 cents on the dollar to profit companies and taking away from health care.

Will he at least listen to his own health policy evaluation division if he will not listen to the public, the opposition or anyone in this province, Madam Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member would like to have people believe that we are moving towards the American system of health care where millions and millions of people get no care whatsoever. I mean, the honourable member should wake up and smell the coffee. This is not an American system. We have a one-payer system in our country which distinguishes our system from the American system and from any other systems in the world and makes ours one of the best in the world. What we want to do is keep it that way, and I remind the honourable member that health

care was one of the key measures that the United Nations used when it judged Canada four years out of five as the best country in the world.

Hog Industry Marketing System

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, my question is for the First Minister.

During the 1995 election your government made the promise to consult with Manitoba hog producers before making any changes to the marketing system, yet your government has moved steadily ahead with changes to the way hogs are marketed in Manitoba even in the face of strong opposition from hog producers.

Can the First Minister tell this House why this government has unilaterally decided to abolish the single-desk hog marketing system in Manitoba when 76 percent of the hog producers are opposed to the move? I will table the survey.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, Manitoba Pork is not being abolished. Manitoba Pork in fact will have greater revenues with which to engage in promotion and marketing of Manitoba Pork worldwide to take advantage of markets that continue to expand and opportunities that continue to increase for the sale of Manitoba pork worldwide. Those are things that are in the best interests of all Manitobans and particularly our economy. I cannot believe that the member opposite would not be in favour of the creation of additional thousands of jobs in Manitoba.

Levy Collection

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Your government announced last month its intention of clearing up the backlog of \$300,000 in levies owed to Manitoba Pork.

Can the minister tell the House what percentage of this money to date has been paid to Manitoba Pork?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Marketing System—Implementation

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): My final question is to the First Minister.

The producers have indicated they would like to see a delay in the implementation. Is the government prepared to do so?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my recollection is that the initial announcement the minister made last fall was that implementation would take place on January 1. That was delayed as a result of many discussions and many other procedures that were in place. I think that the minister did respond adequately and properly to the requests of Manitoba Pork on that matter.

* (1410)

Teaching Profession Post-Secondary Education

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education.

I attended many of the hearings in Winnipeg responding to the minister's document *Enhancing Accountability*. One of the most poignant presentations came from an experienced teacher in St. James who talked about his disruptive students, students who ran out of class, the student whose, for example, mother had been shot in her face and the child had never uttered a word since, about the autistic students that he had in his class, about the child who had been raped when she was 11. He concluded by saying: I want to state that I felt neither overqualified nor overpaid in these situations; I felt underqualified.

I want to ask the Minister of Education, why does she propose in her document that Manitoba's teachers should have less post-secondary education, less training, for an increasingly demanding job?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I proposed no such thing in that document.

Ms. Friesen: How could the approach of *Enhancing Accountability* which suggests that teachers have four years of education or less, how does that fit with

Renewing Education: New Directions which suggests that teachers must possess knowledge of their disciplines, have an in-depth integrating and probing mastery of foundational topics, have an understanding of economics in the global and local context, an understanding of personal financial management, labour market needs, career preparation, the national economy, fiscal responsibility—

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

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, fortunately it also says teachers should have a sense of humour.

I want to ask the minister, which of these is the department reading from?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not know if I am going to get time to address all the points the member has put on the record. What I will say, Madam Speaker, is the document *Enhancing Accountability* is a discussion document. There are only five proposals in it, those five being a series of variations on the dispute resolution mechanism currently in the collective bargaining. The rest of the paper simply lists—and the member knows this, she knows it very well—questions, concerns, comments that have been raised by people about education over the last decade. They propose no answers to those questions; they simply raise the questions for discussion.

She knows the point she raised in her first question was to deal with those teachers who do things such as get a degree in business accounting to run their summer store, she knows specific examples, should that be credited as credit for their teaching in the schools? It is not meant to apply to teachers who go and get relevant education that assists them in the classroom. She knows that. Talk about putting red herrings forward, Madam Speaker, I think we are hearing one right now.

Enhancing Accountability Report Accuracy

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, does the Minister of Education then take full responsibility, indeed, accountability for the research and writing of this document *Enhancing Accountability*, a document which

is not only full of inaccuracies but is demeaning to thousands of teachers across this province?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any inaccuracies in the document. I am aware of two instances where members opposite have raised questions about statements in the document which have then been checked and verified. I say that this is a government document which identifies the historical background on the collective bargaining dispute resolution mechanism in Manitoba and lists all the questions and concerns that have been raised by trustees over the decade for discussion proposing no answers except five possible models and inviting suggestions for other models on the dispute resolution mechanism. The rest of the points are there for discussion. They raise questions that have been raised over the decade. The member knows that and is trying to make an issue where none exists.

Manitoba Hydro Reorganization

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro.

For reasons of ideology and helping his friends in government, this government has broken the Manitoba Telephone System into four divisions making it easier to sell off parts or all of MTS. Having the second lowest local rates in North America is not a reason to keep MTS, according to this government. Similarly, this government is upset that Manitoba Hydro has the lowest residential rates in North America and now plans to break it up as well.

Will the minister tell the House who the consultants were that recommended dividing Manitoba Hydro up, and were bigger ideas involved in any of the discussions?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, it always helps a member, I think, when they come to this House to have a sense of history. The member for St. James perhaps should be reminded on this occasion that Manitoba Hydro has gone through internal restructurings in 1981, in 1985, in '86-87 and

years when her party was in power, so for a corporation to deal with internal restructuring to meet the needs of the future is not an unheard of thing.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the minister.

Will he tell the House what the plans are, having received it now from Manitoba Hydro, for dividing up Manitoba Hydro? Will the minister table the report?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the member for St. James spoke about the operation of Manitoba Hydro. I can tell her, on this side of this House, we are very proud of Manitoba Hydro in terms of its ranking in the country. It is virtually top or second in its category in all the variety of ratings. It is an extremely efficient and competitive entity and one of the reasons is because Manitoba Hydro over the last number of years has had a very good board of directors and a very, very good president in administration, and they have done internally a very significant review of their operation. I have to tell the honourable member that this current internal reorganization is very much being driven by the administration of Manitoba Hydro because they are far more foresighted, have far much more foresight than the member for St. James and her colleagues.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, is the minister denying that the chair of the board of Hydro clearly articulated at the PUB hearings that an external consultant was being hired to aid Hydro in this reconstruction? Who is it, and how many employees are going to be cut under this plan?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, let not the member for St. James or her colleagues get into another fearmongering campaign about the future of this utility. If the member for St. James would take some time and study the electrical industry in North America—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the minister's response.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, if the member for St. James, as critic, and her colleagues would take some time to study the changes that are going on today in the North American electrical industry, she would appreciate that Manitoba Hydro has to undergo some change internally in order to meet that. I can tell her again that this change

is very much driven by the administration in Manitoba Hydro who is far more farsighted in their view of Hydro and electricity in Manitoba Hydro than her colleagues.

I am pleased to inform the member that, yes, they have used some outside consultation. One of the groups they consulted was the electrical utility industry group management consultants, as well as Ernst & Young. I would be pleased to provide her, or have Manitoba Hydro's chief executive officer give her, a full briefing on what they are doing. If she would ask, I would be more than pleased to provide it.

Barb Biggar

Manitoba Telephone System Contract

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, yesterday we learned that while this government is cutting hospitals, Pharmacare and privatizing home care, it is also going to be putting on a series of ads co-ordinated by one Barb Biggar at the cost of several hundred thousand dollars. The same Ms. Biggar has also—we had this confirmed by the Minister responsible for MTS—a contract for communications with MTS, and of course, this comes at a time when many thousands of Manitobans have been speaking out in favour of keeping our publicly owned telephone system in public hands.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) if he can indicate just how much more money Barb Biggar is going to be getting on this contract, the contract with MTS.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Telephone System, through its board and management, makes decisions of the nature that the member is raising the question on as to who to hire to do certain functions and what they are paid. If the member wants to know, I will find out and get back to him.

Manitoba Telephone System Privatization

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Since the minister is going to be providing that information later, I would like to ask the minister if the contract will have anything to do with the proposed privatization that the minister has been floating, and in fact, whether there will be, on the other hand, any provision put aside for the members of the

public, the owners of MTS, to have input on the final decision regarding the future of MTS?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, I think the member is aware that the telecommunication industry is under an awful lot of technology change. We have gone from less than 10 percent of the revenue in competition to now 70 percent of the revenue in competition. We have a technology explosion that is going to cost more money in the future, require more investment on behalf of somebody to keep MTS at the forefront of the industry where it currently is.

Madam Speaker, we are going through that analysis as to how to recapitalize MTS in the future, and when that report is in the public will be made aware.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I asked the minister and I will ask him again, will the public of Manitoba have a say over the future of MTS, or will they be doing what they are doing on home care and with the hog producers and refuse to allow the public of Manitoba to have a say over their phone company?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, there is ongoing discussion around what I have just mentioned to the member and discussion will definitely continue around MTS and how it can continue to provide its services in the most cost-effective manner and keep the strength of the corporation as strong as possible in the process of delivering that information and that discussion through various processes will definitely occur.

* (1420)

National Securities Commission Proposal

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Securities Commission.

The federal government has been actively promoting the idea that there should be one securities licensing body in the country. I understand that the Maritime provinces have agreed to this proposal, that Ontario is in serious negotiation on this proposal.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for the commission, what is Manitoba's position on having one single securities licensing body in regard to the function of the current commission and the potential impacts?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, since that issue was raised in the Speech from the Throne in Ottawa in February, we have been endeavouring to gather information with respect to what proposal, if any, is floating out there beyond the 1994 proposed Memorandum of Understanding. In 1994, when the federal government floated this issue, there were a number of concerns related to Manitoba, none of which apparently as yet seem to be addressed. However, we are in an information-gathering mode at this point to try and find out exactly what is being proposed and then we will have to address the issue accordingly.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, my second question is also for the same minister.

Will the minister tell the House what the impacts of such a change might be upon such vital institutions as the grain exchange or the Manitoba commodities exchange, both of which attract and maintain large offices, head offices, here in Winnipeg and are a very vital part of our economy? What is the government's estimation of the impact such a federal move might be on those two important bodies?

Mr. Ernst: As I indicated, Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, there are a number of concerns that are raised by this entire issue of a proposed national securities commission. Those are a couple of the issues that caused us some considerable concern, and until we find out exactly what is being proposed and how issues such as that would be dealt with, then we have made no decision with respect to whether we support or do not support that proposal.

Proposal—Government Position

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm to the House that there are meetings planned in Ottawa shortly, I believe within the week, to consider and discuss this matter with the federal government?

Will the minister be representing Manitoba at that meeting? What position will he be advancing on behalf of Manitobans at that meeting?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): For the information of the member opposite, the meeting is today and at that meeting representing the Province of Manitoba are my deputy minister, as well as the chair of the Manitoba Securities Commission. They are there, Madam Speaker, to present our list of concerns and to learn from the federal government and from the Province of Ontario who have been the only ones carrying on bilateral discussions, as far as we are aware up to this point, to find out what proposals they have to make.

Treaty Land Entitlements Mathias Colomb First Nation

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister about a meeting that he had this morning with the representatives of Mathias Colomb First Nation and ask him to report to the Assembly as to whether any real progress was made in that meeting, specifically in regard to the band's issue of treaty land entitlement firstly and then, secondly, as TLE pertains to the rest of the bands in Manitoba.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, the member asks two questions. I will deal with the latter one first.

With respect to the overall treaty land entitlement situation, there has been a series of discussions going on intensely over the last week between the three parties involved, and I am hopeful that we will have some very positive news in the near future. I am not in a position today to give a full report to the House, as I am sure the member can appreciate.

With respect specifically to the Mathias Colomb First Nation and their particular issue in a Repap cutting area, we wrote to their chief last week and invited him to a meeting this morning that was held not with myself but with my deputy minister, as well as officials with the Department of Natural Resources. We have suggested very strongly to them that they get on with selecting their particular land that they are interested in and working it through the process in that general area.

Part of the problem here has been that they have wanted Repap to stop their cutting in a rather large area because they had not yet made their specific selection. I understand from the report I had back during the noon hour that they were in agreement with this type of process. They still had some work to do on their specific selection, and I understand we should be meeting again in the next few weeks. Hopefully, this will lead to them getting on with their selection, and we certainly are very willing to get on with the process of actual selection of land.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, I commend the minister for, on the bigger question of treaty land entitlement, saying that there is progress being made and he is not at liberty to say in the Chamber as to when that issue might be settled, but I want to also advise the minister that he knows full well that currently in Winnipeg there are meetings going on between a federal negotiator and the representatives from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

What I would ask the minister then, as a follow-up to my first one, is what kind of time frame is he looking at in terms of when the issue at Pukatawagan might be finally resolved.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, if I may for a moment—the member asks a very good question, I think, about time frames, and one of the problems to date in this whole process, I would hope he would agree, has been quite frankly all of us, including the bands, the provincial governments, federal government, when it comes to specific selections, have been debating a lot of theory and criteria. One of the things we have suggested in the last while is we get on with specifics, because my experience has been when you look at specific pieces of land, it is much easier to work the problem and be able to resolve it rather than dealing with theory and criteria.

On that basis I can assure him that we have made, in my opinion at least, very significant progress in the last while, and I hope that within a very short period to have a very positive announcement, along with my colleagues, of the treaty land entitlement committee as well as our federal colleagues with respect specifically to the Mathias Colomb Band. They have selected a portion of their land. Some of that we have already agreed to; others we are working through the process. They have indicated a willingness to select specifically in the area where they are in dispute with Repap, and I am not trying to say

there still will not be problems, but I think those problems work themselves through when we get on to specific selections.

That is the kind of initiative that we have been talking about and I think has had a good response from everyone involved. I am hoping very shortly that we can have an overall positive announcement. Mathias Colomb still has a lot to work out. I do not want to give the impression otherwise, but at least we will be working on specific problems rather than theory.

Hog Industry Land Usage

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

This year this government embarked on a move to destroy the single-desk selling advantage for Manitoba hogs. My question to the Premier is, when will his government be acting on the sustainability recommendations, specifically those relating to the establishment of the livestock operations renewal panel which municipal councils and hog producers could call upon when considering land uses?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Waste Disposal

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, to the Premier again: When will his government introduce guidelines relating to waste disposal which will specifically examine how much hog sewage can be stored in lagoons, and what the maximum limit will be on the disposal of effluent?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Marketing System

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, will the Premier show some courage and come out to rural

Manitoba with a ballot box and let producers vote on the single-desk selling advantage of Manitoba Pork?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my response is the same as it was to the similar question asked both by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Pharmacare Income Statement—Student Loans

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

Yesterday, I asked him whether it was meanness or incompetence that led to the government including student loans in the calculation of income under the new Pharmacare program, and apparently he admitted then outside the House that it was in fact incompetence, perhaps because he was in such a hurry to get rid of universality in Pharmacare.

My question to the minister is: How much will this bungle cost Manitobans in order to correct this mistake, this second bungle by the minister, on the Pharmacare changes?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, in an overhaul of a program of the nature just undertaken, there are pamphlets and information pieces that go out, and indeed in the one the honourable member brought to our attention yesterday, there was a word that was wrong that led people to the impression that student loans were considered income, which anybody can figure out that a loan is not income, and so obviously a mistake was made in the printing.

There will be subsequent reprints of the document because Manitobans will continue to need to be informed about how to access the Pharmacare program, and in subsequent printings that error will be corrected.

Mr. Mackintosh: My supplementary to the minister since he did not answer the question is, how much will this mistake cost Manitobans?

Mr. McCrae: I do not think there is any cost attached to the correction of the problem. There will be a cost attached to subsequent printings which would have been undertaken in any event.

Enhancing Accountability Report Written Submissions

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Education has ordered that all the written submissions to Enhancing Accountability and the hearings that were held across the province, that all those submissions be held in confidence and that citizens of Manitoba be required to go to Freedom of Information and pay the fee, wait the time, to learn what their fellow citizens said elsewhere in Manitoba.

I wonder if the minister could give us some explanation of why this requirement for such secrecy.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that the member frequently just goes to Freedom of Information without coming to me first to get us to do her research for her—saves her caucus staff some time, I guess—notwithstanding that, the written submissions are certainly available.

The only things that we have said are not available, and in my opinion would never be available from me in my 16 years as an elected official, are private letters that come to me which have always been treated by me as confidential. Something addressed to me I never reveal without that third party's permission, and that is how Freedom of Information works.

Any written submission that is in a formal presentation is certainly available without FOI, but if she is talking about people, and she knows I have received many written documents that were sent to me as personal correspondence, without those people authorizing the release of those, I would never breach their implied confidentiality to me.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Pork

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on each member's desk there is a fridge magnet from Manitoba Pork. I would tell all members to keep

these because they could become collector's items at the rate this government is going to destroy Manitoba Pork.

I would like to say, Madam Speaker, that I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the delegates at Manitoba Pork who are having their annual meeting in Winnipeg and facing very serious challenges because of the actions that this government has taken.

When I tabled my petition, I heard one of the members across the way call me a dragon. I will have to tell him that if I have to be a dragon I will continue to be a dragon and fight for the producers of Manitoba if that is what it takes.

I did not make any promises during the election. I said that I will stand up for Manitoba Pork, and I will continue to, not like the other members across the way who, at many public meetings—we know that their candidates said that there would not be any changes to Manitoba Pork unless it was what the producers wanted. The public, the producers of Manitoba, have been misled.

The pork industry is a very important industry in this province, and we want to see it survive. We want to see the producers in this province survive. But what this government is doing is moving towards vertical integration. All members, I am sure, saw Country Canada where we saw what this system in North Carolina did, what it did to the people of the area, what it did to the water supply in the area and what it did for the producers who got caught up in the system and ended up losing very much.

I would just like to say that what the government is doing is wrong. They should be listening to producers. Producers should have the opportunity to have a say if there is going to be a change in their industry, and we will continue to fight on that. Thank you.

Government's Economic Strategy

Mr. David Newman (Riel): Madam Speaker, this government's economic strategy is about jobs. We have long recognized two key facts: firstly, that the strength of our economy depends on keeping Manitobans employed and, secondly, that our role as a government is to make Manitoba a fertile environment which is ripe for investment and job creation.

Creating an environment which is attractive to business and investment is a strategy which is working, and we can find evidence of this from a variety of recent sources. For instance, recently the Conference Board of Canada provided statistics and projections supporting the topic that Manitoba was steamrolling ahead. We posted growth of 5.4 percent in the manufacturing sector last year. We are expecting to expand another 8.4 percent this year. We also posted 6.8 percent growth in mining and 15.4 percent in construction. This kind of growth creates jobs. In fact, this led to the creation of about 10,000 new jobs last year.

Many people point to Winnipeg as an ideal location for business. Linda Rankin, for example, the president and CEO of the Women's Television Network and Winnipeg 2000 publication written by proud, young Manitoba entrepreneurs—and I urge all honourable members to read it—she lists several reasons for locating her business here rather than in Toronto. These are significantly lower business costs, friendly and supportive municipal and provincial government, available skilled resources, lower housing costs and a supportive business community among other things.

This is not the only story but one of many. This morning's Free Press reports that the Winnipeg office's vacancy rate is the second lowest of all of Canada's major centres. This is attributed to the growth of small business. We have consistently stressed the importance of small business to Manitoba's economy and have diligently worked to provide an environment where small business will flourish. Evidently this is working.

Our efforts as a government to provide an environment which is friendly to business and provides jobs for Manitobans is indeed bringing about results. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Seasonal Camping Permit Rates

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, yesterday our Natural Resources critic raised the outrage of many seasonal campers over the ridiculous increase of up to 100 percent in seasonal camping fees brought in by this government. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) had the nerve to stand up and say this is because of the services that are being provided. There is no improvement in services.

In my constituency, people who use Paint Lake, including a senior who phoned me who has used it for 22 years, will not be able to afford to have a seasonal camping permit this year. There is no increase in the bare-bones services that exist at Paint Lake. What is happening is that the government is engaged in a revenue grab from the seasonal campers.

Madam Speaker, the minister also said yesterday he thought that people would not mind the 100 percent increase. Well, have I got news for the minister and this government. Now, the news I have to indicate came from a public meeting of over a week ago which was attended by seasonal campers in my constituency. I cannot repeat all of the comments because 90 percent of them would be considered unparliamentary, but they are all of the nature of, give us a break, let us get serious, do not increase the fees by a hundred percent. If you are going to look at any increases, look at reasonable increases.

Landlords are allowed a cost increase of what—1 percent. The cost of living is 2.7 percent. Even if you go back to the last increase that took place in 1989, even if you calculate the inflation rate, it is still significantly less than a hundred percent.

Madam Speaker, what is particularly infuriating is the fact that this government brought in these changes with a two-week notice, and in fact because of the differences in the timing of applications, many people had a three-day period in which to decide whether they were going to renew their camping permits in Thompson or look at other options in southern Manitoba.

I also want to indicate, Madam Speaker, I do not think it is any accident that most of the big increases have been in northern Manitoba. Northern Manitobans are sick and tired of being punished by this government, and seasonal campers say to the Minister of Natural Resources, (Mr. Driedger), get serious, do not increase our fees by a hundred percent.

Working for Value Rural Task Force

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today.

Over the last seven weeks throughout February and March, I had the pleasure of being the co-chair for the

Working for Value rural task force, and I would like to say that it was a real pleasure to travel around Manitoba. We visited some 26 different communities and had a chance to talk and to have discussion with the people in rural Manitoba.

I would like to thank in particular those people who helped us in terms of logistics of putting on the task force, some of the staff members who travelled with us, and to them we owe a deep gratitude for all the help that they gave us. But, more particularly, Madam Speaker, I would like to give thanks to those people who participated, who took time out of their busy daily activities to come and spend some time at the task force, and particularly in participating in the discussion groups because it was in the discussion groups that we were able to find out from the various communities some of the strengths that they had, some of the opportunities, and, yes, they also pointed out some of the constraints that were in their way whether it be from government or otherwise.

We really appreciate those comments that were made. We indicated to the people at that time that we take their comments very seriously. We have. We will be doing a preliminary report at the rural forum in Brandon with a final report this fall.

So I would like to again thank everybody who participated in these rural task force meetings. That is all I have. Thanks.

* (1430)

Immigrants

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Cultural diversity is one of Manitoba's greatest strengths. Unfortunately, the Conservative government does not feel the same way as the New Democratic Party. This fact is reflected in the 1996-97 provincial budget. The Conservative government cut over \$1 million from Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. In fact, there was a decrease of \$96,700 towards the development of programs that assisted immigration admission as well as to provide support such as training and language skills for the integration of immigrants in Manitoba. There was a 5.4 percent cut in grant assistance to immigrants, a 26 percent cut to the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council and a 25.7 percent cut to the Community Places Program.

It is clear that this government does not support new immigrants in their difficult transition into our society. Cuts to these essential services in the provincial budget ensures that the linguistic and cultural barriers that immigrants face are maintained. Lack of a systematic and formal plan of action on the government's behalf to monitor and assist immigrant entrepreneurs arriving has contributed to business closures and a lower rate of immigrants staying in Manitoba.

It is important that this government recognize the contributions that immigrants make to the Manitoba economy. Immigrants bring money when they enter the province, assist the economy through their consumption of products and create jobs through investment in business development.

The Manitoba government should put pressure on the federal government to eliminate the immigration head tax which was re-enforced in the federal budget. By not eliminating the head tax, the federal government has condoned the maintenance of a two-tier immigration system. Such a system is reminiscent of the immigration policy that existed during a dark period of Canadian history. Immigrants contribute a great deal to our society; however, policies such as the head tax simply target and penalize this group of people. The Tory government must speak out against this indirect taxation scheme.

Immigration to Manitoba has dropped by nearly 50 percent since 1990. In addition, Manitoba is the only province in Canada to record fewer arrivals in each of the last five minutes. The Tory government must take responsibility for its own actions and try to find innovative methods to increase and maintain the immigration to the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and on the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, and on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in further amendment thereto.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in support of the ninth budget of this government, the ninth budget in which Manitobans continue to experience no new increases in personal income tax and sales tax rates.

As the MLA for Rossmere, time and again, my constituents—and I assume the other constituents for the other members are telling their members the same thing, that they are taxed to the limit, and I am pleased to continue to tell them how proud I am to be a part of a government that has been able to maintain the longest running tax freeze in Canada.

As my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) stated, this budget also delivers the first back-to-back budgetary surpluses, \$120 million for 1995-96 and \$22 million in '96-97, and this has been for almost a generation, I believe 1971.

Madam Speaker, this is a responsible government. A government that is looking to the future, ensuring that our youth do not have to carry the burden of irresponsible spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax—practices that the previous government left us as its legacy. What it will be remembered for is spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax. This government is taking action to protect future generations, and the Minister of Finance's budget is paving the way for this to happen. Our balanced budget legislation does provide the basis for a stronger economy. Numerous news articles praising our government's efforts in this regard have been written by reputable, knowledgeable and impartial analysts.

In 1982, Manitobans paid through their taxes \$114 million in a year in interest on the debt. In 1988, when the NDP, with the help of one of their former colleagues, was extracted from office, the taxpayers of Manitoba were paying over \$545 million. For a party which is constantly criticizing businesses and banks, there seems to be a real affection towards banks because they love to pay banks interest. If there was anything that they love to do, it is to find a bank to pay them interest.

Well, Madam Speaker, I do not think that is a good policy. As much as we appreciate banks and any company creating jobs here, I would rather the government of Manitoba not owe them any interest. Yet that is still the philosophy that my colleagues on the other

side want us to adhere to. Our largest single source of revenue is the personal income tax, and almost half of what Manitobans pay goes towards that interest on the debt. That is money that is not able to be spent on health care, education, justice or highways. This is money that is not available even for tax reductions.

By again balancing the budget and paying down the debt, we will reduce the burden of interest payments and eventually free up more money for services. Again, Madam Speaker, this is responsible governance, caring about our future generations and ensuring that our youth do not have to carry the burden of previous governments' mistakes, the burden of deficits and debts created, yes, by our generation.

(Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

You know, as much as I sometimes try to avoid the Winnipeg Free Press, there are notable changes in the last little while that the Winnipeg Free Press—yes, even the Winnipeg Free Press—appears to be recognizing that this government is doing some things right. And I am not just saying that because a member or a former member of our House is now an editor of that Free Press and coincidentally happens to be sitting in the gallery.

An Honourable Member: Who would that be?

Mr. Toews: Well, I will leave that, for the record, anonymous, but, Mr. Acting Speaker, Mr. John Douglas recognized on April 6 of '96 in the Free Press business section that the PCs' fiscal policy is paying off and again recognized, and the only unfortunate thing is that this recognition goes in the business section, usually the back of the newspaper, and perhaps this type of article, this type of good news should be brought up more to the front along with some of the better editorials that are being penned by the Winnipeg Free Press.

* (1440)

But this year the Filmon government will spend, he says, 33.8 percent of its budget on health care. That compares with the NDP, who, in 1985-86, spent 31.4 percent of their budget on health care. This week's budget, I would also note, as did Mr. John Douglas note, was noteworthy because it spends more money this year on economic and resource development than on public

debt costs. In fact, the \$575 million Manitoba will spend on debt financing this year is the fifth highest expenditure, and as John Douglas says, that is quite a difference from the NDP days when it was third. But that is the priority of the NDP government in the past. It is not the priority of this government. We do not want to pay banks more interest; we would like to pay banks less interest, despite the encouragement of the members opposite.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) shared with us the positive economic performance in the areas of manufacturing, agriculture, mining and nonresidential construction, transportation and retail sales. There is optimism; there is hope. Manitobans understand the need for restraint to ensure a brighter future, and I believe that Manitobans are willing to help in the process. Unlike, Mr. Acting Speaker, the voice of doom mired in socialist rhetoric of the 1930s that our honourable members from the NDP continually spread throughout the province, they offer no hope, and they continue to be defenders of the status quo and old style governance, which is not a viable option in the new economy. It is ironic that we are called the Conservatives, when in fact the true reactionaries, the true people who do not believe in change, are the NDP, the defenders of the status quo. I see more life, more optimism even in the Liberal Party than I do in the NDP.

As I have indicated in this House before, Mr. Acting Speaker, there are two key global trends that are continuing to occur and continue to have an impact on the way we do business, the way our people in Manitoba do business and the way the government must react. These are the globalization of trade and the globalization of investment capital. These are facts. They are not opinions. They are not options. They are realities that we must deal with.

Members opposite would have us build walls around this province. The walls will mean that the business, the jobs, the opportunities will walk around us and will find other areas in which to invest and to create jobs. With the disappearance of businesses and jobs go our social programs. I fail to see how members opposite do not recognize this integral connection between the encouragement of the private sector to create wealth and the strength of our social programs.

We believe in social programs here. We believe in sustainable social programs. That is why we believe that

we need to encourage private investment. Members opposite think that we can create wealth by just having government pay other government departments and continually circulate the old money. That is not the way it works. They know better, and they only create mischief when they suggest otherwise.

I recently had an opportunity to attend a conference entitled Industrial Relations in the 21st Century. The topic of trade and the globalization of capital and the effects on labour relations were discussed and debated. Attendees were from Canada, Mexico and the United States. There were representatives from the union movement, from employers and from government officials.

It was evident throughout this conference that the globalization of trade and capital is having a huge impact on the way countries around the world do business. Times are changing rapidly, and traditional ways of doing business, traditional ways of creating wealth are proving to be outdated. Just by way of example, any of you who have experienced the Internet have witnessed the incredible access to information that we have in a matter of seconds. Technological advances are surpassing traditional methods of communication. There is an emerging public that is no longer dependent on newspapers or even television to get their information. We can now communicate through the Internet at a fraction of the cost of the traditional telephone system. Change is occurring rapidly, and we must move to stay ahead of that change to create the wealth, to protect our social programs that rely on that wealth created by private industries here in Manitoba.

Manitoba is a trading and outward-looking province. It is in the forefront of that change. Manitobans know that their prosperity is dependent on their ability to adapt. It is unfortunate that the opposition keeps on trying to pull Manitoba back into the old ways of doing things. The old world, populated by socialists with their cries for government handouts and a free ride, are rapidly losing their way.

What is the response then of government in this time of change, and where does this lead industrial relations? It was interesting to note, while attending the conference on industrial relations, what the experts were saying. When I am speaking of experts, I am referring to individuals

representing major unions, employers, governments and academia. There was one common theme emerging through that conference, and that is change. The reality is that we are working within a different economic structure. Labour legislation, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a reflection of the times, and we must continue to ensure that labour legislation is relevant in today's economy. Laws under which unions operate, laws which protect workers, laws which facilitate jobs, laws which facilitate small business and a mobile workforce must be examined to ensure that they protect the traditional concerns regarding workers, workplace safety and the job itself.

Today's economy stresses mobility and capital. Business moves freely throughout the world. Whether we like that fact or not, it does, and we must ensure that we capture our fair share of that market to ensure that our people in Manitoba, our people in Canada, benefit from this new economy. Our young people who are graduating from colleges and universities today know this. They know that they must adapt to a changing world. Our labour relations must ensure that walls are not put in the way for our youth to enter the workforce. Labour relations must also provide opportunity not only for those who already have jobs but for people who are entering the workforce. They must provide this opportunity.

I see some very encouraging signs that employers are recognizing the changing environment. Unions, as well, recognize that if they do not take steps to address these new realities and change structures and program delivery that they too will be by-passed by businesses that will find a way to work around them rather than work with them.

I know, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it will grate the members opposite when I say that if the labour movement does not change they will become irrelevant. We only have to look south of the border to see what is happening in the United States. In the United States, unionized workforces are at an all-time low, approximately 11 percent. Is this what the unions want in Canada?

* (1450)

I would just briefly make note of an article in the Winnipeg Sun on April 9 in 1996 headlined, U.S. unionist offers practical realism. This particular individual, a union leader of Council 62, American

Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, represents municipal workers in the city of Indianapolis. The city at that time was faced with many of these same problems that our municipalities and our province faces. They realize that unless they restructure some of the ways that they deliver their services, they would not be able to afford these services.

Now, this particular union leader opposed strict privatization of city services, and he was pretty aggressive on that point. He spoke out for his membership, and he specifically ran in his campaign against that kind of platform by the mayor who was running. Now, in fact, when that mayor won the election, and the union suddenly realized they had to work with government in order to secure the future of their members, they did work together, and today in that city privatization is a nonissue. What the real issue is, Mr. Acting Speaker, is competition. What the union leader said, he wants the city union to win because it gives administration more flexibility. So he wanted them to win these bids because the way they delivered services would offer a better business deal to the city. He said, we can throw a blade onto garbage trucks during snowstorms, for example. He said: That is just an example of the versatility; you use one set of equipment for another purpose. He demonstrated to the city, this is the way you do things, you work together.

To compete, what the union did was to remove narrow, old-style task descriptions that had the dual effect of raising costs and pricing members out of jobs. Instead, what he said is, let us look at how we deliver those services, and in most of these situations, the unions have come out on top by preserving jobs for their membership. If the unions say, we will not co-operate, we will not work, we will not deliver services in any other way than we have been, they will lose every time in the long run, but the progressive unions, mainstream unions, have adapted and have protected their workers.

Now, what do we want in Canada? Do we want the destruction of the union movement? I would say no. I would say, we do not want that destruction of the union movement, and indeed, the policies of the members opposite are in fact ensuring the destruction of the union movement, ensuring the same course of conduct that occurred and resulted in a rate of unionization at 11 percent in the United States. We want to work together

with the unions to provide the services for our people, and we provide the contracts to those unions not because they are public or private, but because they were competitive and delivered the best service.

I believe that Canadians are no less able to adapt and to provide that level of service. In Canada, in Manitoba, we must work together. The worst thing that we could do, whether we are employers, government or unions, is not to accept change. It is not to participate in change, and the worst thing is not to keep talking about how these changes should occur. Our young people, as they move into the workforce, will have little understanding, patience or sympathy for a baby boomer generation that throws up roadblocks making it difficult for them to enter into the workforce.

I recently read in *The Globe and Mail* an article regarding job growth. He referred to the different employment picture in Europe versus North America. For the last decade, Europe has basically seen no employment growth while in North America employment growth is steadily increasing.

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

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting to note that the U.S. is much higher than Canada in terms of employment growth. The reason that Europe is doing so poorly in creating jobs according to this expert opinion is because of a rigid labour market, high taxation, stultifying government regulations and an overregulated economy. What is happening in Europe is an example of what takes place when governments do not get their own house in order and are not proactive in dealing with economic realities in a changing world.

Recently I had an occasion to travel with my colleagues in southeast Manitoba. Perhaps that has been one of the most exciting things about my year in politics so far, not only the honour of representing the people of Rossmere but to travel with my colleagues in rural Manitoba. They have taught me many things, and they have shown me many things. I know that they are trying their very best to break me out of this Perimeter mentality. To a great extent, they are. I would encourage all members to go beyond the Perimeter more often, those especially who live in the city, and to see the dynamism that is occurring in the rural areas.

Why is this? Why is this dynamism occurring in small-town Manitoba? Why is the economy booming? Why are people optimistic about the future? For the one thing they do not have the Free Press to contend with there. But secondly, they have seen the future, and they are adapting to it. They are ahead of the future. They are making their move beforehand. They have seen the future, and they are making the economy boom in Manitoba. We here in the city are benefiting directly from the aggressive business and marketing of those people in these rural communities.

Believe it or not, sometimes we here in the city of Winnipeg have things to learn from our rural cousins and our rural colleagues and our rural friends. If we can take some of that dynamism and import it—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member put his presentation forward. I would ask the minister if he could put his comments through the Chair. It might add to the decorum of the House. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just encouraging members opposite to embrace some of this new dynamism, some of this new optimism, from whatever part of our economy it comes from, from whatever geographical part of Manitoba it comes from.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

We do not just want to talk about rural Manitoba. We also want to talk about northern Manitoba.

* (1500)

I know that some of my colleagues in the NDP have seen the dynamism of workers in the North as well and the mine operators working together with the unions to ensure that wealth is generated and that those taxes are paid as a result of these jobs that are being created and that our social programs are protected. I do not think I can speak with exception. Let me put that in a positive way. I speak without exception in this House when I know that we all want to protect our social programs. We have different ways of approaching it. I believe the system that is reflected in the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) is, in fact, the best,

but that does not stop us from listening to members opposite from time to time. Sometimes they, too, have a good idea.

Madam Speaker, I would now like to take a few minutes to talk about health, education and family services. These are the three priority areas for myself, for the government and for the Manitoba public, as well. I am in constant touch with the general public and various special interest groups in the social services, health and teaching professions, and I do not use the concept of a special interest group as a derogatory term because some of these groups have special interests that they represent, and they have a mandate to represent those groups, but we have to recognize where each of these special interest groups come from, and we take that advice from all sectors of the economy, from all segments of our population, and consider it in determining policy.

But I think that what all of these groups are saying is that we must protect these priority items, and the money that we are spending clearly reflects our priorities. The reforms that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is bringing in through the budget is bringing forward affordable health care, sustainable health care and will ensure that it will protect our health services in the future.

I would urge members opposite, Madam Speaker, to talk to the Premier of Saskatchewan or let members of the Liberal opposition speak to the Prime Minister or indeed to Mr. Axworthy or to Premier McKenna. Now, we may not agree here in the government with the priorities of the NDP in terms of their tax, tax and tax or the Liberals in terms of cutting the wrong end, but I am sure that both the Liberals in Ottawa and the NDP in Saskatchewan could educate members opposite about the hard fiscal realities, and I am proud to be associated with a government that has made hard choices in the long-term best interests of the people of Manitoba.

Now, I understand that my time is almost at end. I will have opportunity later on to speak about some of the proposals in labour reform, and I welcome comments from all groups. I have been going throughout the province speaking to all groups, the unions, to employers, and my ideas, the ideas of our party are, in fact, going to ensure profitable labour relations for all parties involved. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): It is an honour to be able to rise on this occasion to speak on behalf of the government's budget. However, I rise with a sense of regret and disappointment.

Madam Speaker, the budget is an opportunity for the government to present its priorities, its vision. However, I think that truly this government has lost its vision. This budget is very disappointing, because its clear agenda is to mislead the people of Manitoba through omissions, underestimates and deliberately misleading language.

There are always winners and losers in a budget and, in this budget, the majority, the average Manitoban, is the loser. For example, if we look in the sector of health care, all of us will become ill at one time in our lives. Now we see a clear attack on those who are ill. Individuals who have received care in institutions are now in their homes and, to the benefit of this government, they are reaping the savings of that community-based health care.

In my own family, my mother-in-law looks after her husband and her mother in their home in Woodlands, saving the government thousands of dollars in care. She does that out of her good will and out of compassion for her family members. The idea that this government would now consider privatizing and for them to lose that continued service perhaps is a great disturbance to our family.

Madam Speaker, does it make sense to do that? Does it make sense? Most people in Manitoba would say no.

It is true that the cost of health care is rising, but of course we are not so naive to forget that we have an aging society. It is to be expected that we have increased health costs. It is a responsibility of those who are younger, who are in the workforce and who are able to support those needs. We have made that commitment as Manitobans, as Canadians to support those who unfortunately need to use our health care system.

This government, I believe, has lost its focus and, through a budget which has misled Manitobans by not clearly articulating how it is going to proceed with the cuts, has betrayed Manitobans. Not only do we see a major revision of the Home Care program in the agenda, but Pharmacare was radically cut, Pharmacare, which

provided medication to many families, medications which are basically a form of treatment.

I cannot understand a government that does not think that taking medications is an integral part of a comprehensive health care system. If this is not dismantling a health care system, I am not sure what is. Medication will keep many people alive and many people healthy enough to continue in the workforce.

Madam Speaker, these types of cuts will not necessarily impact the poor, and that is true, the government has to be given credit. There are some people that will be covered and will actually have a more comprehensive program. It is not the very rich that are worried about these changes in Pharmacare. Who does it hit? It hits the working class, it hits the middle class. Those are the people that may do without, that may decide to skip a certain medication, will think, well, I have some choices to make in our household budget. The increased cost of paying for medication can be as high as \$3,000 for some families, a very difficult situation for any family to face.

Not only did they basically wipe out the Pharmacare program for middle income earners, they also have a hidden agenda of hospital bed cuts and, quite frankly, we have not said that we would not support some bed closures in hospitals and institutions. In fact, we are looking to provide more community care. The problem with the budget, in my opinion, is that it has not clearly articulated where those cuts are going to come. This is why the government has lost credibility, Madam Speaker. Be honest with Manitobans. Clearly articulate how many hospital beds are going to come out of rural Manitoba? How many hospital beds are going to come out of the Grace Hospital? Tell us what is the plan for the Misericordia Hospital. Does it make sense to close Seven Oaks Hospital when that community struggled for years to create a state-of-the-art facility which is supported by those people? I do not think so. To do what? To move those beds from a community setting. A community hospital provides service for less than the teaching hospitals. How does it make sense to move it from a community hospital into St. B and the General? It just economically does not make sense.

An Honourable Member: To you?

* (1510)

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, just look at the— a member on the other side of the House is saying “to me.”

Go out and speak to Manitobans. When you tell them what the cost of a bed at Seven Oaks is compared to St. B, what makes sense? Obviously, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has lost focus and is not looking at common sense or economic planning with these decisions for bed cuts.

In addition, we have seen the release of people from hospitals or the encouragement of people to leave hospitals very early. Madam Speaker, I had the great fortune to have a baby last year at the Misericordia Hospital and stayed less than 24 hours in the hospital. I feel very satisfied with the care that I received; however, there are many families who do not receive the support that they need. A recent study that was cited yesterday on CBC indicated that although 80 percent of women try to breast-feed their infants they do not receive the support at home because of early dismissal from hospitals. So women are left to struggle trying to provide a warm and a workable feeding environment for infants without the care from the hospitals. That means that apparently there has been a substantial increase in the number of infants returning to hospitals through dehydration and not getting the proper nourishment. Mothers being frustrated, not getting the proper attention at home, the medical care that they need, and then abandoning nursing. Those types of shortsighted health care by cutting institutional care and not providing the community-based care leads in the long run to more health care costs, a less healthy community and a very poor planning on behalf of this government.

In terms of preventative health care this government's vision is indeed very poor. Perhaps they consider the fact that their vision is so poor, they thought they would do it for the rest of Manitobans by cutting the eye care program for Manitobans, but we will not be fooled, Madam Speaker. The fact is that regular eye examinations do detect certain diseases and changes within eye care.

We hope that indeed these types of cuts will be remembered, and I have no doubt that this government is on its last pitiful legs of governing as we see Manitobans finally seeing the deception and the poor planning on

behalf of this government. Not only have they lost their vision, but they have also done other things, Madam Speaker, that have impacted on preventative health care

For example, they now have moved towards providing schools with the option they call—and they are very big on using the word “choice”—[interjection]—choices. Choice and choices is becoming a favourite term of this government. However, what it really means is the choice to exclude physical education from the curriculum in schools. Is that preventative health? We know that our children are less healthy than they have been in the past, that the one thing that we need to do, which is very important, is to increase their physical activity so that it will provide them with an environment with a healthy condition to learn better, and at the same time this government is squeezing out programs like physical education.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the emergency room closure fiasco that we went through just before Christmas was an example of a government that has very poor vision at best. Here we have a situation where the government decided it was going to close emergency rooms in community hospitals at night. Had they given it more than a second's thought, perhaps they would have kept emergency rooms open at night when the community facilities such as clinics are actually closed. Many of these decisions have been reversed because of basically I think the good work of Manitobans who were outraged by such foolish decisions.

Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly discuss some of the items that this budget offers in terms of education which was, quite frankly, very little. The losers in this budget are public schools. Let us not forget that this is a government that cut public schools by 2 percent a few months ago—announcing that separate from the budget—and in addition has provided a very clouded, misleading statement about the funding of private schools. The language has been radically altered. What they are now discussing is providing supports on the basis of actual costs.

We have some school divisions where the actual cost to educate a student is close to \$6,600 per pupil. Support by government is less than 60 percent. Some estimates have it at 54 percent of the actual costs are covered by the government. Does that mean, Madam Speaker, if their

goal is to cover 50 percent of those costs, that it is coming close, it is going to be equitable to the actual government grant that a public school gets? The language and the commitment that this government has made has ensured that independent private schools will have even better than before. The agreement of an 80 percent commitment—which I did not agree with, which we did not agree with on this side—does not necessarily equate to the new language of 50 percent of actual costs.

Madam Speaker, had they looked in some detail, this is a radically different funding formula, and what I find so objectionable is that there was not the clear articulation of that in the budget. If you have made this commitment, be honest, be open. Tell Manitobans that you have come up with a new funding formula, you have made a new deal with private schools, you are going to go and increase funding and come out and be honest and be brave enough to tell us what the increase for private schools is. As indicated, if we look at the actual numbers, it could be an increase of over 15 percent.

Madam Speaker, this government's funding decisions in terms of public schools have meant fewer resources, older textbooks that are going to be recycled over and over and over again, more students in classrooms, less help for those who need it, fewer options for the gifted students that we hope will accelerate and be the future leaders, fewer options and much less help for those students who need it, ESL students, handicapped students.

The decisions that may seem fairly sterile, a minus 2 percent, impact on the classroom and impact on our children. The decision at the same time as announcing a minus 2 to public schools to start a directed attack against public school teachers was done deliberately, and that also provides uncertainty and low morale for those teachers who are facing even more pressures in the classroom, Madam Speaker.

* (1520)

The other day I happened to have the opportunity to talk to one of our superintendents of our inner school division who was telling me about a case where we have students who have gone through or are about to go through the justice system, in this case a student who has been accused of murder, Madam Speaker, accused of

murder, who is in a classroom, afraid that he will be attacked by gang members and, of course, the other students in the school and in the classroom are very fearful and anxious about the relationship and what is happening there. The Justice department has basically reneged on its responsibility, letting these students be in a school without the proper supports, without the proper protection for this student, without the ability—this student is not prepared to learn. This student is there trying to get through the time before they get to court. They do not belong in a classroom, or if they are going to be in a classroom, then the Justice department should provide the supports, so that the teachers are not left dealing with a situation which is such a crisis.

Madam Speaker, the budget has slashed public schools, increased the amount of pressures on teachers and, at the same time, they take credit for increasing the amount for the reform, the blueprint, \$1.7 million. Let the government tell Manitobans how much their provincial examination program will cost. Estimates for the English exam alone were over a million dollars for that one exam, an exam that was written twice and had to be produced in French in both cases and is going to be expanded. So if we look at the costs, for example, estimates have reached over \$20 million for the testing program. If the government would be honest and open, I believe that they should come forward and give us a realistic budget estimate of how much this program of provincial examinations is going to cost Manitobans.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, the other losers in terms of this budget are taxpayers. Local taxpayers have seen property tax increases directly related to the cuts from this government and no one else.

In addition to that, this government is still looking at school division boundary changes, a program that we have seen through several studies which have indicated that it will not mean a cost saving. It will disrupt services, and it will not benefit students. I plead to this government to use some common sense, to listen to what the people say and abandon a foolish program of school board changes. Change them where they are necessary, change them when divisions have seen the need, and you do have several that are ready to amalgamate. I encourage the government to move forward in a more logical plan. Because they have a Norrie Commission and they have spent well over a million dollars does not

mean they have to be foolish and implement a program that we now know, having done some cost analysis, will cost taxpayers much more than having the programs as they are.

The winners, of course, are the private schools, and we still have to hear from the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) as to the actual increases.

Madam Speaker, people are very upset all over the province, here in the south when we have had the opportunity to visit rural Manitoba and southern Manitoba. Here in the city we visited many people. We have been on tours of the Interlake and the North.

Hog producers are particularly upset. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is determined to push forward a program not supported by hog producers, a program which they, even today in the House, were here to say to the minister, Harry Enns, slow down, stop. Let us have an opportunity to decide on this. I know, as a man of wisdom and a member of honour who has been in this House for many years and who respects the wishes of his neighbours and the hog industry, he will give this some serious thought, and I hope will listen to the hog producers of Manitoba.

Rural municipalities were speaking to us the other day about their concerns about the downloading of the maintenance of gravel roads. Any member here who has rural roots knows that the roads are in deplorable condition and maintenance of gravel roads is a major expenditure for many rural municipalities. That downloading is a major concern to rural municipalities.

How many rural hospital beds will be cut? How many schools will close because of boundary changes, not only just because of the depopulation of rural Manitoba? You are going to have an increased pressure because of school division boundary changes that this government seems to be bent on moving ahead with. We look forward to a retraction on that position.

Madam Speaker, people are upset with the idea of losing the Manitoba Telephone System. Thousands of people have responded to petitions and phone calls in regard to the proposal to privatize. They say no. They say we have a system that works effectively, provides low rates and has been there when we needed it. When we

needed to provide single line service to our farm in Poplarfield, it was done by Manitoba Telephone System, and it was done through the co-operation—

An Honourable Member: Under what government?

Ms. Mihychuk: The NDP in its election platform also would have done it. We have to congratulate— [interjection] Who did it? The Manitoba Telephone System did it. Would a private company take that risk? I do not think so. That is the point, that the Crown corporation under the will of this House will provide services that are not deemed economic in the short term, but are deemed as useful for the people of Manitoba. That is why it does not make sense to privatize the telephone system. Does it make sense given the projections that we have been hearing that telecommunications and telephone companies are going to see larger profits than ever, at a time when we are going to see increased incomes, this government is considering privatizing? It seems to be very shortsighted and not to the benefit of Manitobans.

Manitoba Hydro, a corporation envied around the world, a corporation that is the most effective and productive corporation in North America, has gone through a massive structural change, Madam Speaker. For what purpose? Under the pretence of deregulation and competition, that there needs to be restructuring to handle it. The Dominion Bond Rating Service indicated that there is no other utility more prepared to handle those challenges than Manitoba Hydro. This government's position to deal with competition is to raise rates. Let me explain to them that the way you deal with competition is to lower rates. [interjection] No. Manitoba Hydro is a success story. They have trouble in saying that, that a Crown corporation is a success story, and it needs to remain for the people of Manitoba. That is why we are concerned.

Why tamper with a corporation that is so strong, so effective and providing a sustained, cheap service? The reason is clear. Ideology and political philosophy are driving this government. They would sell anything if they could find a buyer, and they will sell it off for virtually nothing. It is as if they are paying off their friends as they are in their last leg. They are saying, adios, here have a little gift and have a piece of Hydro, have a piece of MTS.

Madam Speaker, quickly, there are some winners in this budget, and I just wanted to articulate some of them. Certainly, we have seen some friends of the Tory government reap huge benefits. For example, the private home care providers, We Care, will be in line to reap huge profits off of the idea of privatizing Home Care. Not only that, we are seeing certain PR contractors getting huge benefits. Barb Biggar, for example, is a big winner in this budget. We also see that Mike Bessey and Faneuil are stable and are doing very well, thank you very much. Huge hog producers are in the winner's circle, and not only that, but in terms of education exam markers are also going to see a heyday. Not only that, there is one other sector that we know is doing very well, and that is the manufacturers of VLTs.

* (1530)

On a sector that is close to me, the mining sector, we have seen an increase of activity and revenues, and we all celebrate in that. As commodity prices increase, we are seeing boom times return as we had them in the NDP administration in the '87 to '89 area. But it is commodity prices that are driving this boom, let us not be fooled. We are in a competitive world community when it comes to mining, that is true, and the government has eased and made some regulations better. In fact, I must congratulate the Minister of Mines (Mr. Praznik) for recognizing the disparity and the inequity of having a tax on geophysical equipment. For example, geophysical equipment provides the exploration geologists or a mining company with the ability to see. So in fact they have actually provided a grant or recognized, improved the vision of mining companies while at the same time cutting the eye care services for regular Manitobans. That is a dichotomy; that is the hypocrisy. That is the ridiculous focus of this budget.

Clearly, we are pleased that there is some clear vision provided to mining companies, and we celebrate that. However, there is a clear difference, and, Madam Speaker, in the few minutes I have left, I just wanted to discuss some of the differences between mineral exploration and oil exploration. I had the opportunity to raise this during Question Period. As we know, Manitoba has a small, modest oil field in the Virden area, an oil field that we have been working on and have developed for many years, and we all wish that it was much bigger. However, estimates have indicated a 10-year reserve.

The North and parts of Manitoba have huge mineral reserves that have never been explored. That is the difference. What you are talking about is further development in Virden by paying off oil companies, rather than true exploration as is occurring in the far north.

Madam Speaker, what are the real economic signs in Manitoba? They are quite disheartening: a 19 percent increase in the use of food banks by children; twice as many people on welfare; housing starts only a thousand, while during our mandate 6,000 to 7,000 per year; Statistics Canada indicates over the last year Manitoba is the second last to Newfoundland in terms of GDP growth in Canada; Workplace Safety and Health statistics indicate a 17 percent increase in the number of injuries reported; backlogged courts, particularly for young offenders; and an all-time low of consumer confidence.

This is a budget document that is a true reflection of this government, which has contempt for the public, clearly a lack of honesty, and it shows the lack of credibility that this government has. Arrogance is seething on that side of the House as they think that they are pushing forward on programs without any care to what the real wishes of Manitobans are.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to challenging this government in Estimates in the future, and I thank you for the time to comment on the budget.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, it is a distinct pleasure for me to rise today and represent the constituents of Morris on our government's 1996-97 budget.

I guess while it must be a source of tremendous frustration for the members opposite to listen to our government deliver the budget as fiscally responsible and forward thinking as the one tabled last Tuesday, it is equally satisfying to hear for those of us elected to the responsibility of managing the province's finances.

I would like to take this time to thank all the members in the government benches for the contributions of time and effort they gave to the creation of this budget, and I would like to pay special acknowledgement to my colleague the provincial Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson)

for delivering a budget that will serve us well both now and in the future.

Since being elected to represent the Morris constituency in April of '95, I have come to truly appreciate the difficult decisions that government must make. A large part of what makes these decisions difficult is the fact that they must take into account the effect they will have on future generations.

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

It would be a relatively easy task to operate a government if all the decisions that were made by that government were done so only with the thought of their most immediate impact. In fact, up until recently many governments did operate under a short-term, self-destructive mindset. Manitobans would be quick to recognize many of the members opposite in belonging to such a former government.

We can only assume that during the seven years from 1981 to 1988, while the former NDP government was busy increasing Manitoban's debt by 424 percent, there was little thought given to the need for an adequate health care system in the '90s, an education system in the '90s or any reasonable social programs in this decade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the shortsighted and irresponsible spending habits of that former administration, an administration that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) proudly counts himself a member of, would have led this province into a state of economic and social disaster had it been allowed to continue along its reckless way. Fortunately, we can thank the people of Manitoba for recognizing the problems associated with such a lack of planning and such a shortsighted vision.

Residents of the Morris constituency, and I believe this to hold true for the majority of Manitobans, know that as individuals they must plan for their future and look forward. As such, they establish savings funds for such things as their education, for their retirement and for unforeseen emergencies. They also realize, if they spend more than they earn for long periods of time, their future lifestyle will eventually be affected. Manitobans realized in 1988, after eight consecutive deficits, that the NDP government did not understand finances as well as

Manitobans did, and they took action at the polls to protect their future and the future of their children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my apologies. Our government began laying the groundwork for economic confidence and social stability in 1988. Other provinces have not acted so quickly and are now facing very difficult decisions. This government, however, began cleaning up the financial mess left by the previous NDP administration nearly a decade ago, and now, after many tough decisions, we have restored confidence in government, confidence in the economy and confidence in Manitoba. Signs of this renewed confidence are all around this great province and can be found in virtually every sector of the economy.

In 1995, Manitoba experienced the biggest decline in the unemployment rate in over three decades. In fact, 10,000 fewer Manitobans were collecting unemployment benefits at the beginning of this year than last. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is 10,000 individuals who not only have a new income but also have a renewed confidence and a renewed sense of worth. Young people also have a reason to be optimistic as our province now has the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada.

These are not jobs that were created by the government directly. NDP governments have long shown the futility of pouring money into an economy in the hope of creating long-term jobs. By proving to business that Manitoba is a place where they would not continually be asked to pay higher taxes but proving to them that government could control its own spending, we have created an environment where businesses feel confident and secure to invest their money and employ workers. In fact, last year, total investment in Manitoba increased by 12.5 percent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was the highest increase in all of Canada, and second place was not even close.

While Manitoba can boast investment increases in manufacturing of 58 percent, increases in communications and utilities of 51 percent and increases in wholesale and retail trade of 46 percent, these are not really the numbers that are important to Manitobans. Those numbers are reflected in the 75 to 100 jobs created by Repap investment, the 500 jobs by Schneider's, the 120 jobs by Standard Knitting and the 45 jobs created in my home constituency by Canadian Agra investment at Ste. Agathe.

* (1540)

The confidence that has been created in Manitoba's government has filtered down through the economy and is providing Manitobans with new opportunities and prosperity. While that confidence may not show up on the bottom line of any statement or as a line on a graph, its reflection is at the heart of this budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the first time since 1971, Manitobans have a budget that delivers back-to-back surpluses. As part of this government's long-range financial plan and as committed by The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Act, this year's budgeted surplus, along with the '95-96 surplus, will be placed in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. All future surpluses will be placed in this fund until it reaches the target level equal to at least 5 percent of operating fund expenditure. The fund is an integral part of the government's plan to retire the accumulated debt in 30 years or less. This fund, which is designed to be used when unforeseen events such as fire or flood take place, is part of the Filmon government's proactive rather than reactive approach to money management. Members need not look any further than at the accumulated snow we have outside our Legislature to see the possible need for such a fund this spring.

While it seems that members across the House would prefer that government adopt a don't worry, be happy approach to money management, we, along with most Manitobans, prefer to plan for emergencies. Just as many individuals and families put a percentage of their income away for such unplanned occurrences as car trouble, so should a government be able to respond quickly to emergencies without having to sacrifice social programs, spending or increasing taxes.

The type of see-what-tomorrow-brings approach to budgeting prescribed by members of the opposition is not good enough for the people of Manitoba or their government. Our province has been able to climb out of the financial hole it found itself in in 1988 not by stumbling along from day to day but by doing long-range planning and preparing.

In the editorial page of the Winnipeg Free Press on Wednesday, April 3, there was an article that contained the following: When the Tories first came to power in 1988 they promised to reduce taxes, balance the books

and make Manitoba more attractive for investing. They have largely lived up to those promises over the years.

I have already outlined the success we have had in attracting investment to this province, and the budget itself is testament to our commitment to balancing the books. This government's ability to deal with the enormous debt left by the previous government, which ran deficits that ranged around half a billion dollars per year, while not increasing major taxes for nine consecutive years is an accomplishment unmatched in Canada.

In 1988, when this government was elected, Manitobans made it clear that they were paying enough taxes and that government needed to look at how it spent money in order to eliminate the deficit. By examining each department, each expenditure, Manitoba now has the lowest cost government in Canada. This government has absorbed the massive federal Liberal transfer cuts, has inherited the NDP debt and has managed both not by asking Manitobans to pay more but by ensuring our own efficiencies.

This budget continues to look for increased efficiencies with the establishment of seven new special operating agencies known as SOAs. The 15 operating agencies in place represent 3 percent of the civil service and \$65 million in business for government. These agencies represent a pioneering effort by our government to deliver and finance services. Their success has resulted in other governments modelling their operations after Manitoba's.

Manitobans asked governments to become more efficient, and we responded. We will continue to look for better ways of providing services. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government was elected last April for the third consecutive time because Manitobans have faith in this government, its priorities and commitments.

We were elected because the people of Manitoba do not believe the rhetoric spouted by the opposition. During the election and ever since, the people of Manitoba have been inundated with erroneous information by the opposition about this government's commitment to health care, education and social services. The fact is that this budget continues our previous practice of devoting the bulk of our expenditure to these three areas.

I would like to relate the fact to all members of this House which members of the opposition conveniently overlook. Since our government took office, 90 percent of the increase in our program spending has been allocated to health, education and family services. Our 1996-97 budget dedicates almost \$3.5 billion to these priority programs. This is nearly \$1 billion more than was spent by the official opposition in '87.

I would like to take this opportunity to further express our commitment to the people of Manitoba. I am always amazed and surprised when I hear the NDP speak about our record on health care, especially since we have consistently spent more in this area than they ever did. For example, in the 1987-88 fiscal year the NDP government spent 31.5 percent of their budget on health care. This is a sharp contrast to our latest budget. In the 1996-97 fiscal year, we are devoting 34 percent of our total budgetary expenditures to health care. This represents 34 cents out of every dollar. This expenditure will go to those health-related areas which the people of Manitoba, in consultation with this government, have deemed to be areas of high priority.

Our health care budget will be devoted to the Personal Care Home Program. Funding support for this program will be increased by \$2.5 million for a total support of \$267.5 million, and, in home care, to deal with an increasing need for services, the Home Care budget is increased by almost \$8 million to \$91 million. Since 1988, we have increased funding for both personal care homes and home care. The Home Care budget has more than doubled while funding for personal care homes increased by close to \$100 million.

If my memory serves me correctly, the opposition was in government in 1988 and had every opportunity to undertake the same increased spending and health care initiatives we have. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record is clear on which party feels a greater responsibility to maintain the quality and standards of health care for Manitobans. This government is increasing support to health care because we recognize the need to make an investment in the present and future health of Manitobans. Money spent now on health care will mean increased health for Manitobans in the future. There exists a need for certain health care services, and we are maintaining our election commitment of targeting our financial resources to priority areas of need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our budget maintains our ongoing commitment to priorities, social programs and the most vulnerable in our society, single parents with children under the age of six, the elderly, the disabled and women in crisis shelters. This budget devotes \$655 million to support Manitobans in need. We have maintained our commitment to child daycare. Since '87-88, we have added over 3,000 subsidized spaces in Manitoba, and we have ensured that the number of children who received subsidized care last year will not change. An additional \$2 million is being devoted to support adults with disabilities. Four million dollars more has been targeted to support children in care. We are continuing our commitment to merge the provincial and municipal welfare systems in the city of Winnipeg. We are confident that this will make the administration process for both staff and recipients more straightforward, will reduce the abuse of our social assistance programs and will place increased emphasis on employment. Our commitment to those most in need in Manitoba has not changed since first coming to office and, despite what Manitobans have heard from the opposition, will not change in the future.

This government recognizes the need to invest in the future education and training of our young people. An investment in education, like an investment in health and social services, is an investment in the future of this province. We envision an improved education system which prepares our children for the challenges they will face by giving them the skills, confidence and training to seek out and obtain meaningful employment opportunities. It is for these reasons we have allocated \$1 billion to education and skills development

* (1550)

Manitoba is the first province in Canada to implement a \$12-million learning tax credit which will allow Manitoba students to invest in their own education. This refundable tax credit covers 10 percent of all eligible tuition fees and will be administered via the income tax system. This credit is part of our continuing effort to ensure that education remains affordable and accessible to Manitobans. We have allocated an additional \$1.7 million for education renewal, bringing our total expenditures in this area to \$5.4 million. Part of our educational renewal initiatives involves assisting teachers in the classroom, and that is why \$750,000 is being directed for use in key curricula areas. The financial

resources of the Post-Secondary Initiatives Fund has been increased from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million. This increased funding will encourage universities and colleges in the province to focus more on marketable skills and new innovations which will benefit the students of Manitoba by better preparing them for a rapidly changing work environment.

An exciting budget initiative is the merging of the Apprenticeship Program with Workforce 2000. The amalgamation of these two programs will only strengthen these two workplace-based training initiatives. Training partnerships such as these are of enormous benefit to participants and to the provincial economy. To date, \$20 million has been leveraged from industry and other levels of government.

In 1995, Manitoba had the lowest youth employment rate in Canada. To build on this positive development, youth employment initiatives to provide training and employment services for students and unemployed youth has been increased from \$8.4 million in our latest budget, a 9 percent increase from the '95-96 budget level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so far my comments have been restricted to our budget commitments in the three areas of health, priority social services and education. But our commitment does not stop there. We have also increased funding to many other areas of concern to Manitobans and to this government.

Public safety is an issue which concerns each of us. We recognize that public safety is integral to a healthy and active community, and we should all have the right to feel safe in our homes, neighbourhoods and communities. For this reason, since first coming to office, our government has put into place many programs and policies to deal with crime and criminal behaviour. Our latest budget continues this ongoing commitment, a commitment of \$2 million in added funding to place more police officers on the streets of Winnipeg. An increased police presence will work with other reforms we have initiated to further reduce crime, violence and criminal activity. A commitment to initiate a victims assistance study in order to determine how best to meet the rights and needs of the victims of crime. A commitment to implement the urban sports camp program. Urban sports camps will provide high-risk urban youth with positive alternatives to youth gangs, violence and crime.

Rural communities, although not experiencing the same levels of crime as urban centres, must also be provided with the same levels of service. It is for this reason that we have extended 911 service to many rural communities in Manitoba and have committed funding for an improved \$3.6-million RCMP telecommunication system. We have also put into place additional protection against stalking by reducing the amount of access available to information about individual Manitobans.

As someone from rural Manitoba, I have first-hand knowledge of the vibrancy and the growth which is an integral aspect of many of our rural communities. This government recognizes that rural Manitoba is an essential component of the provincial economy, and to strengthen this vital area we have devoted additional financial resources to rural Manitoba. Funding for rural economic programs has increased to over \$19 million, which is up 10 percent from '95-96. Specifically, the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation will provide financing programs to those in rural Manitoba in order to encourage diversification in areas such as livestock and value-added products and processes.

Manitoba, along with the federal government, has developed the Enhanced Crop Insurance Program to allow agricultural producers access to affordable, quality crop insurance. Manitoba's program is the first of its kind in Canada and will operate on a trial basis for three years.

One of this government's most successful programs for rural Manitobans is the Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as REDI, which to date has helped to create over 1,300 jobs in rural Manitoba and has provided over \$21 million to the rural economy and has generated more than \$170 million in investment. We will continue this program which has contributed so much to the quality of life in rural Manitoba.

Another successful program we have initiated and will be continuing is the Grow Bonds Program. To date, this program has helped Manitobans raise over \$7 million, and they have leveraged that into \$21 million in new capital investment and about 450 jobs. A recently announced program, the \$12.5-million Community Works Loan Program, will also be continued. This program, which gives rural communities the opportunity

and the ability to take an active and direct role in sustaining their economic future, has created many new jobs in rural Manitoba by providing capital to small business ventures.

In this budget, our commitment to rural municipalities is continued. They will receive an increase of over 6 percent in provincial municipal tax-sharing payments. Rural communities have an important and substantial role to play in the economy in Manitoba, and this role must be fostered by government.

As co-chair of a committee which travelled throughout rural Manitoba to listen to the ideas of how we could further strengthen and diversify our rural economy, I am well aware of the many worthy ideas and initiatives Manitobans have. What we as a government have done and what we have committed to doing with this budget is give rural Manitobans the tools so that they can take their ideas and turn them into activities that will strengthen their communities in general and Manitoba in particular. The rural economy has always contributed significantly to the overall economic well-being of Manitoba, and all signs are that its contribution will grow even further.

The Conference Board of Canada suggests, all factors point to a buoyant agricultural sector in Manitoba for 1996. While there are certainly challenges to be met in this post-Crow era, we have been working with all the stakeholders to address these challenges and build on new opportunities. It is our government's demonstrated commitment to continue to create an environment in which Manitoba's rural economy flourishes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has come a long way since 1988, and I am certain that there are many who doubted we could achieve what we have in eight short years. Undoubtedly, many of those doubters occupy the benches opposite. However, I truly believe that we have turned the corner in what has been a very long road and are now headed in the right direction. This has not been an easy process. It is a familiar refrain, but each of us knows that it is much easier to pay with credit than it is to pay down that credit. We have, though, through tough decisions and careful examination, come to the point where we will soon be paying off the credit that the former NDP government ran up on the backs of Manitobans. It has been a difficult struggle to reach this stage, as each of us knew it would be, but Manitobans

know that economic responsibility is not so much about today as it is about the future, their children's future, the future of their social program and their services. This budget is much more than about government's desire to become responsible. It is about Manitobans' demand that government become responsible. We have worked together to accomplish what many thought we could not, and we will continue to work together to ensure that Manitoba continues to grow, to prosper and to succeed.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome this opportunity of speaking during this Budget Debate, and it is very tempting to use the limited time available to talk about a lot of the government arithmetic and machinations and playing with numbers that has occurred as a result of this budget. But, because of the very serious implications of some of the government's recent policy decisions in the area of health, I am choosing to use the bulk of my time to discuss issues arising out of some of the government's very, very serious errors that they have made in the health care field.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently we had occasion to present to the public a document entitled Strategic Redirection of Home Care, a Treasury Board presentation. Now, this document was forwarded to our attention anonymously. It has been a plan that has been long standing with the government concerning the privatization of home care. When we had occasion to present this document, we were doing a public service to the people of Manitoba, because I suspect that the government was not going to reveal its intentions during this budget or during the course of the session but rather would have waited, as they oft do, until the break in order to implement this policy and not allow for any policy discussion.

* (1600)

So we did the appropriate and proper thing by bringing this drastic policy change to the attention of the public to allow them to have an opportunity to debate and discuss this issue prior to the government implementing it, although it is fairly clear from government statements that they have no intention of listening to the public.

Nonetheless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have always insisted it still remains a democracy, and the

government's goal is to reflect the will of the population that it serves, and, hopefully, the debate that is ensuing now in the province will serve those ends and serve to convince the government of the ramifications of its wrongheaded decision.

Now, I wanted to spend some time on this document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the way the government has dealt with the issue and the way the government has dealt with the document is very illustrative of the policy approaches and direction of this government. When the document was released and it was indicated that the government was going to privatize home care, the minister held a press conference and indicated, oh, yes, we are going to do this, and we are going to follow the dictates. We are going to set up a private Crown corporation, and we are going to privatize the system wholly, et cetera, as the document indicated because it was approved by cabinet. This was the agreed policy, albeit no public discussion.

A few days later, after the government spin doctors got a hold of it and their press people got a hold of it, the minister held a press conference, and all of a sudden the direction had changed somewhat. This was going to be an interim policy, they had worked around it, and they had developed a bit of a different policy. The minister kept saying and keeps saying and keeps insisting that the NDP is fearmongering, and one of the ways the government attempts to stop debate on this issue and divert attention away from the real issue is to try to turn the issue back on any of us. So they say, oh, it is NDP fearmongering. It is seniors fearmongering. It is physically disabled fearmongering. It is patient fearmongering. It is client fearmongering. When you get right down to it, the only people who are not supposedly fearmongering is the government themselves.

I want to return to the issue as stated in this document. Now, let me state the very initiative. It says, quote: Manitoba Health policy—divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations. Now, what does that say? That says that nongovernment organizations are going to deliver home care. Now, that is the government policy. We do not know where that policy came from. The government has forwarded no documentation, no justification, no rationale for that decision, not one. It has not been tabled. It has not been presented. It has not been argued. There has not been one single document or

argument forwarded, and the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) can get up and if he can—I will give him my time right now if he can show me documentation, because he knows there is none that will demonstrate it.

So what can we conclude from that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We have a document that says, divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment. What do we know on this side of the House? We know that in 1994 We Care corporation made a presentation, and what did that presentation say? It is in writing. That presentation said, you should set up a government co-ordinating body, and then you should privatize all the delivery of services.

Now, is it mere coincidence that that presentation by We Care in 1994 in writing happens to identically reflect the documentation in the government policy that was presented? Is that coincidence? If it is not coincidence, then present the government justification and rationale for doing that, and they cannot, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what else can we conclude? We can conclude that members opposite have been swayed not by rational policy reasons but by other than health-related reasons, other than factual reasons, because the lack of justification, the lack of factual evidence offered by members opposite leaves no other conclusion other than that which we have reached. The member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) can complain all that he wants, but until he can get up and show us the reason and the rationale for this policy, there is no other conclusion that can be reached.

I could be much worse, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could be much worse in terms of allegations concerning relationships and concerning the fact that there are friendships involved, the minister has mentioned, but I do not have to do that. I do not have to do that because there is such lack of justification for this program that the government policy collapses on that level. The member for River Heights ought to talk to the Minister of Health and the Premier to see where the policy and issues are for this.

Let me go further in this document. The Minister of Health insists and sends out—the associate Deputy Minister of Health sent out a letter to all home care clients. The Minister of Health sent out a letter to all home care clients. The minister insists there will be no

user fees involved in the new home care initiative. There will be no user fees involved.

Let me read from the document. Let me read what the document says, the government Treasury Board document. It says core services government funded, core services government/customer funded, noncore services customer funded. Members opposite all jump on that and say fine. Let me go through this very, very carefully. The document does not say core services government funded, noncore services customer funded. I resent the word “customer,” but I will use it because this government does.

Core services. It does not say core services government funded, noncore customer funded. There are three lines. There are three definitions and the second definition says core services government funded/customer funded. Now what implication can we draw from that? That core services are going to be funded not just by the government but by the customer, and how does the customer fund the core service? They fund it with a user fee. They do not fund it with, oh, they call it—their euphemisms for this fee—they call it contributions and they call it co-payer but the fact is it is a user fee. There are user fees presently in health care. There are expanded user fees in health care.

The very document upon which the policy has been made does not just suggest but recommends that there be user fees in the implementation of the home care privatization plan. That is on top of what we know occurs in the whole privatization model when the service is privatized. Even if we take the minister’s word at 100 percent that all services that are presently paid for will be paid for. It is noteworthy that the minister says presently paid for will be paid for. Does that mean that if someone’s condition deteriorates, the extra service will have to be paid for? Does that mean that new patients into the system will have to pay additional costs for these services? It certainly implies that. I suggest from both this document and from the government experience in the past that that will in fact be the case, that we will see user fees pay for home care services and the dilemma with that is that a good portion of those user fees are going to go right into the pockets of the private companies.

Members opposite love to talk about the competition. This document talks about dividing the city of Winnipeg

up into four regions and farming it out to their private friends and private companies. That is some competition. These companies are not large enough at this point to even take one-quarter of the services, but certainly they are going to be trying to be building up enough in order to take over that service, but it virtually is a licence to print money for these companies.

* (1610)

We released today a document from the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation that said the dilemma of privatization in the United States is at 33 percent of the costs; 33 cents on every dollar goes to administration, management, et cetera. There is no doubt that with privatization we will see something in that range go toward the services and the companies—33 cents on the dollar. Money that formerly went to workers and patients will now be going into administration and management.

Now I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that an appropriate use of health dollars when we have an efficient management and administrative system for home care presently? I want to just briefly touch upon the whole issue of reform of home care because there is no doubt, and we have said consistently on this side of the House, that there are changes that are necessary in the home care system. There is absolutely no doubt. The home care system was developed in the 1970s to deal with 1970s' needs. Unfortunately, it has not kept up pace with the changing demographics and development and health care in the past few years.

But a change and reform of the home care system does not mean destroying the present system in place and completely replacing it with something else because that is in effect what the government is proposing to do. I think that is one of the reasons why there is such widespread public opposition to this change, this drastic change by the government.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been struck by the heartfelt anger and anguish of the patients who unanimously—the hundreds that I have talked to—are against this decision and do not understand why the government would upset completely the regime, the administration, the people that provide them the care. Does the government not recognize that a longstanding relationship often develops and usually does develop

between caregivers and those requiring the care? That is very crucial to not only the health but the healing of the individual involved, and this policy proposal, which is supported by no realistic analysis or any justification, completely upsets that.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, does the government not realize that the caregivers, those who deliver this program, are most important? I mean, the most important link in this chain between government and those requiring care is the caregivers, and something of their well-being is important to this program as well. These people—and if any members opposite have opportunity to talk to people who provide home care—are dedicated, long-term people—I should say, mostly women—who do an outstanding job far beyond often the demands.

I have gone to homes and talked to home care workers where the woman has gone out, does not have to go back to see her client because the client needs turning or something, does not charge for it but does it because they have developed a relationship. These people care and care deeply for their patients, and you are saying you do not value their work anymore.

Members opposite say, well, they are just moving from a government organization to a private organization, but what are the realities of that, moving from a government organization to a private organization? We Care, the government's favourite company, pays a homemaker \$6.60. They charge the government and the client \$10.75 for that service. The government service charges \$10.75 and pays the caregiver \$10.57. In other words, We Care takes about \$4.25 off the caregiver's salary and pockets it. The government service provides that money to the caregiver. They get to take it home. They get their payment. When you say to these workers, we are going to take that 40 percent away, what does it say to them? It is not just a question of dollars; it is a question of valuing the care and the respect that you have for human beings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government proposal is wrong on all counts. There is absolutely no justification on any count for the government to be proceeding with this policy initiative. I am surprised that members opposite have not rebelled to their Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to indicate the wrongheadedness of this

decision. I would respect the Minister of Health much more if he were to stand up in this Chamber and admit that they are taking a step back from this program because that is the right thing to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the right thing to do, and one of the reasons we will not give up this fight and the caregivers will not give up this fight and the patients will not give up this fight, is because it is the right thing to do. What the government is doing is wrong. Now, we can have debates about all kinds of policy initiatives, and members opposite could say their policy is right and our policy is wrong, but I do not think I have seen a more illustrated example of a wrong decision since I have been elected to this Chamber than the decision made on the privatization by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). I do not think there is a better example of a case where the minister ought to consult and change his mind before he goes further on this initiative. Now, of course, we are facing a situation where those who were providing home care felt they had no choice but to make their voices heard by having a strike vote and voting in favour of the strike. Unfortunately, members opposite, the government, the Minister of Health, will attempt to use this as justification for their decision, and I think that is wrong. I think that is terribly wrong.

The government has an opportunity to avert the strike, save all the dislocation. They do not have to go about trying to put in place contingency plans. All they have to do is to stop the privatization. This is not something that is going to create jobs. This is not something that is going to—well, now there is a question of whether it is going to save money or not. The Minister of Health said it was not going to save money. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) said it was going to save \$10 million. Heaven knows where the right answer is on that, but this is not the kind of initiative where you are talking about an investment in a capital project or something like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a job that has to be done that is a very difficult job. It is a very important job. The Minister of Health ought to stand up, back off today, tomorrow, prevent the strike, admit the error. I know in this political environment it is very difficult to admit the error, but I suggest that if the government were to back off today, they would gain more respect from Manitobans than proceeding blindly on this initiative with the ensuing ramifications that this is going to have. I cannot state strongly enough our desire and our hope that this government will listen to what the public has to say.

I am tempted to use the balance of my time on this important issue, but there are several other issues that I wish to discuss in the context of the budget and in the context of my representation of Kildonan constituency. Over the past several months, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been waging a fight in our end of the city to save Seven Oaks Hospital. Now, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has insisted no final decision has been made as to whether or not Seven Oaks Hospital will be closed. I have real difficulty knowing when a decision is made by this government and when it is not made. If the Deputy Minister will recall, several months ago, there was a letter that we leaked that said that the Minister of Health had given his approval to the elimination of physical exams every five years for patients. Well, we provided this document. The Minister of Health came back and said, well, my approval was conditional. That was a conditional approval that had been made, so I assume the decision had not been made. In fact, that is one of the very outstanding issues that we wish to discuss with the government, particularly in the context of this budget and the elimination of eye examinations, as to whether or not the decision for physical examinations has been finally approved. We think that is a wrong decision by this government.

Returning to the issue, the minister set up a series of review teams that recommended Seven Oaks Hospital be converted to a geriatric centre. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are very few arguments, if any, for justification of this particular decision. In fact, we are still trying to figure out how the government design team has arrived at this decision. The community has arisen in a manner and a fashion that has been unprecedented. I personally have received over 2,000 letters. Members on all sides of this Chamber—well, actually members on this side of this Chamber from both political parties have received thousands of responses. There have been literally thousands of people that have attended rallies to save our community hospital. [interjection] What was that?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): You are promoting it. That is why.

Mr. Chomiak: The member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) says we are promoting it, that is why. That is one of the traps that members opposite fall into. Whenever there is a negative issue they attempt to state

that it is only being raised by the opposition. That is at your own peril because you do not realize when you mask it by saying, oh, that is only the NDP, you do not realize that behind us are hundreds of thousands of Manitobans who are more than disappointed with what you have done, particularly in health care.

* (1620)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, literally thousands of residents at our end of the city have attended rallies and say keep our community hospital open. Why is that so important? Seven Oaks Hospital is an integral part of the community. We have seen a breakdown unprecedented in terms of community and in terms of relationships and in terms of structure. We have great difficulties in many of our communities, and a hospital serves as a centre for the community. That is what Seven Oaks Hospital is. People work there, people volunteer there, people take their parents there, people die there. Not only is it symbolic, but it is an integral part of the community. There are more family practitioners at Seven Oaks Hospital than any other hospital in the city of Winnipeg. Where are they to relocate their practices to? The reason that they are there at that end of the city is because they are reflecting the needs of the community who want their practitioners at Seven Oaks Hospital.

The psychiatric service sees thousands of people each year—and I cannot tell you how many patients that I have talked to from Seven Oaks Hospital who are distraught at the prospect of moving their psychiatric service to another facility. It is not, again, as simple as relocating a factory. It is far more complex than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Further, I mean, the arguments go on and on and on. This is the newest facility. It has got some of the finest equipment in the city of Winnipeg and in the province of Manitoba. It serves a population base that is literally growing. It was built for a very good reason. It has served one of the quadrants of the city of Winnipeg. It ought to be continued to serve a quadrant of the city of Winnipeg.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has recommendations on his desk to close it. The Minister of Health also has a 1992 report that was supposed to be the guide for so-called health reform in the province of Manitoba. That guide said the goal of health was to have services at community-based hospitals. This decision seems to fly completely in the opposite of the decision to

have more community-based service. Now, members might argue that a hospital is not community based, but a community hospital is far more of a community institution than, for example, a tertiary care facility. It serves those needs in a far different way than a tertiary care facility, and it does meet those needs. There is no reason why you cannot take Seven Oaks Hospital and expand its role in the community to make it an even more integral part of the community and run more community-based activities out of that facility.

Now, the government seems to have lost sight of that particular aspect. They seem to have lost sight of the fact that community is important, that the hospital is important, and I think that again this is another example of where the public has said to the government, if you undertake this decision, you are wrong and you ought to consider what the community has to say. You ought to consider what the public has to say prior, and if you do consider what the public has to say, then you will keep Seven Oaks Hospital functioning as a fully functional acute care facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many things that this budget did not say in the area of health care. There are a number of decisions that have been made or shortly will be made by this government that are not contained in the specifics of the budgetary document as they relate to health, and they are very significant. They include the whole issue of remuneration of doctors. They include the issue of the physical exams that I referenced earlier and whether or not the government has proceeded with its conditional approval previously made to eliminate physical exams on a regular basis.

I just want to stop here and say that that would be a regressive step. The significance of physical exams—we have spoken and I have spoken with many physicians and practitioners and others in the health care field and enough of them who have convinced us that this would be a regressive step, that the nature of physical exams is preventative and is helpful and goes beyond again just what is listed in the documents. So often so many problems that might not come out in other forms of visitation to a doctor come out during the course of a physical exam and ought to be continued by this government.

We do know what the ramifications of the decision in Pharmacare is. The Pharmacare decision speaks to a

whole series of issues. Not only does it speak to the issue of fairness, but it speaks strongly to the issue of competence of this department of Health and indeed in fact the competence of this minister to continue as the Minister of Health after so many serious—[interjection] Yes, it is very difficult. The botching is the one that comes to mind, but I would say fiascoes is another one. But the mismanagement by the Department of Health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is stunning and has been stunning in its application.

The emergency doctors' strike and the ramifications were administrative and a management disaster. If you look at the Pharmacare debacle, the lack of public consultation, the lack—you know, the minister used to stand up and brag about all of the people that he consulted on Pharmacare changes. I note that he is not standing up on this particular change to talk about all of the people that he has consulted with prior. He used to go through a long list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we did not hear that this time. It is because it was done in secret and even when they do it in secret, they still botched the application and I have very serious doubts about the ability of this minister to conduct and carry on health care in the province of Manitoba, because I do not think that they have competently managed health care and I do not have any faith that they can competently manage health care in the future.

I think aside from the policy differences the competence and the ability of this Minister of Health and this government to deliver health care is seriously in question and I think ought to be considered. The Pharmacare debacle is only one example.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I used to think that I could say everything I wanted in 30 minutes. It is evident that I cannot, but I will simply close on the note that I seriously hope that the government is listening to the public on the home care issue and seriously consider both their rhetoric and their policy decisions in the next several weeks because of the very serious effects the government policy decision will have on the health and welfare of Manitobans. Thank you very much.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise to address the budget and to put a couple of phrases on record in support of the budget but also to rebut a few of

the wild-eyed, irresponsible comments that we hear coming from the opposition. Unfortunately, while it was a somewhat subdued address that we heard just previously, I think there were a lot of issues that were raised speaking of rhetoric and the words that came out around changes that are occurring in government today.

I, frankly, am a little bit incredulous in terms of being able to appreciate how it is that someone has sat in this House for the past number of years, has been in opposition for a number of years, and has now demonstrated why he will stay in opposition for a number of years, because he seems unable to demonstrate an understanding of the fact that Manitoba and every other province in this country are in a significantly changing environment, and management of that changing environment is, in fact, the only way that this government or any other government is going to be able to achieve success in terms of bringing future stability and success to the province and to our citizens.

* (1630)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I only want to put that in context, that I believe this budget is one that has demonstrated an opportunity for—the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is yattering away over there. I am not sure if he wanted to contribute to my facts' base or whether he was trying drown me out. [interjection] He wants to help me. Okay, let us get at it.

The fact is that stability and opportunity for growth would restore some confidence in the taxpayers and the citizens of this province has got to be one of the key objectives of a presentation of a budget, and it has to be one of the responsibilities. It has to be one of the key responsibilities of any government to obtain and maintain the confidence of the public and to provide leadership so that they can take advantage of growth opportunities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that bothers me the most is when I come in to the Chamber and I listen to stories of doom and gloom that are coming from across the way in the addresses that we have heard from their side about the budget. I think that we have to put in context what is happening in Manitoba and what is happening in other jurisdictions across Canada, across this continent and virtually around the world.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

We do have a situation where Manitoba is now well positioned to take advantage of what is an increasingly large number of opportunities for growth and provide stability and opportunity within our jurisdiction. But the first thing that had to happen was that we had to bring about some balance to the books in this province, that we had to show to the public that there was a responsibility being exercised, that the only solution for balancing the books was not to go into their back pocket every time an expenditure or a problem arose but that we had to deal responsibly with the priorities that are placed before this government, before any government frankly.

I know there are a couple of smiles across the way when I refer to not raising taxes or going into the pocketbooks of the public, but there is quite a difference between being able to have a camping site on the weekend and having a bed during the week in the hospital. I mean that is not a comparison that this minister or anyone in this house would want to have to make a comparison to.

An Honourable Member: Talk about Pharmacare.

Mr. Cummings: I will talk about Pharmacare briefly in a moment, and I think you will be quite interested in some of the facts perhaps, because that is one of the things that seems to be missing most in the communication that is going out to the public from those who are opposed to making any changes. They do not let the facts get in the way of a good story, and that is exactly what has been happening across the way.

Madam Speaker, when I talk about growth and opportunity in this province, the first thing that we have to recognize is that we have a combination of one of the more significant urban centres with industrial opportunity and all of the opportunities that go with a concentrated population that is highly skilled and well educated, and, at the same time, we have to recognize that we are heavily dependent as an economy on agriculture and natural resources to be able to produce the fuel that goes into the engines of our economy.

When you refer to use of natural resources in this House, far too often, we have people rising up decrying the destruction of the future of the forests in this province or the elimination of opportunity for preservation for future generations, and, again, I indicate that that is one

of the responsibilities that government has to deal with, bring that balance, bring a reasonable balance to the use of resources as opposed to simply the use for personal gain or for opportunity for individuals without looking responsibly to the future for the opportunity for other individuals and for the next generations to have an ability to share in that wealth.

I think the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) knows that probably better than most, being closer to a number of the parks, being situated in one of the richest agricultural areas of the province. He only too well will understand how it is that we have to balance the demand for prosperity and opportunity in jobs and the use of our natural resources with making sure that they are there for future generations. [interjection] How can I tell when I get there? When I come around the corner of Riding Mountain into those beautiful productive plains around Dauphin, then I know I am in the heart of the Parkland, right next to Ste. Rose which is the cattle capital of the Parkland, but the fact is that while the member and I can have a few laughs back and forth, we collectively in this House have a responsibility to demonstrate leadership so that we can provide opportunity for the citizens of our own region, at the same time providing for our children and our grandchildren to have the same opportunities.

That means that we have to have opportunities for the harvesting of our resources. At the same time, we have to make sure that we are marketing those resources, and you can take a lesson from Louisiana-Pacific probably when it comes to marketing, because there is one of the opportunities that their management and this government finally recognized, that there was a resource out there in the quivering aspen, which was the fancy name for the dirty old poplar that we have been rooting out for the last number of centuries of our farmlands, and we have taken the opportunity to turn that into a high-value product that is very saleable across the continent and probably around the world if the opportunity should arise.

That is only a small demonstration that we can very easily, I think, translate into our agricultural sector, where we have spent far too much time over the last 20 years arguing about how the Crow rate should be managed, arguing about how transportation subsidies should be managed, spending virtually years of our lives arguing about what would be the best way to disperse what was an institutionalized and ongoing subsidy for the grain

industry in western Canada, and right under our very noses was the opportunity to use that product, to provide value-added processing to that product and increase—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable minister's remarks.

Mr. Cummings: I was actually having a little trouble hearing myself there for a minute, but I believe I heard the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) use the word "arrogance" a couple of times. I am not sure if he was referring—[interjection] Well, if we want to talk about arrogance, I would suggest, Madam Speaker, one of the most destructive forms of arrogance is for any of us to decide that there is absolutely no way but our way to deal with an issue. The fact is, we have spent years and years of our lives debating what is the future in the agricultural area, what is the future for this province. The implementation of policies to take advantage of the information that has been gathered over the last number of years is finally starting to bear fruit because only in the last short period of time have we seen, in the agricultural field, people beginning to look diligently at some of the value-added opportunities. For some of my urban colleagues and the members across the way, let me use one simple demonstration of how badly western Canada was left out of some of the opportunities a few years ago in sales and value-added opportunity of our products.

When we received the transportation subsidy to move our grain into eastern Canada and at the same time there was an additional subsidy for feed grains going into eastern Canada so that we could turn around and ship our cattle down there so they could eat the grain that we were subsidizing to ship there. That is about as simple an example as you can apply to what has been wrong with some of the economics and some of the programs that have negatively affected western Canada and Manitoba in particular.

* (1640)

But that leads very directly to a number of changes that are occurring within our government and within this province. I think it would only be fair if I were to do a little bit of comparing about the actions that this government has taken as compared to other jurisdictions

across the country and around the world, because it would be anything less than honest if the opposition would not acknowledge that this government by and large has been very proactive but has been moderate in the approaches that it has taken to the solution of some of the deficit problems that we have been faced with.

You only need to look at the drastic solutions that have been required in other jurisdictions. It does not matter what political stripe you are talking about because the best demonstration of those changes and the requirements that go with them are right next door in Saskatchewan where they are facing the same problems we are, but probably even more so, because of their dependency on the grain markets and their lack of diversification in their agricultural industry and their extreme dependency on the future of not agriculture as a whole but only one part of the industry.

An Honourable Member: Let us talk about Saskatchewan.

Mr. Cummings: Interestingly enough, if you want to talk about Saskatchewan more, I do not suppose you want me to raise the fact that they took the hospital designation off 50 buildings across rural Saskatchewan. When you look across Manitoba, that is not happening. I heard a very lively discussion from the Health critic a few minutes ago for the NDP talking about hospital closures and directions that hospitals can be taken in this province. The problem I have is that while he will acknowledge that change is necessary in some areas, he does not want to look at change in the total picture of how we can best deliver services to the public of this province, whether it is inside the Perimeter or whether it is across rural Manitoba or in the North. The change has to be looked at in the larger approach as to how we can best provide services within the dollars that are available for us. I have to adamantly say that this government in my view has done—and this budget reflects that we have done as good a job as any administration in the country in trying to bring a reasoned and reasonable approach to change in areas where we no longer have an abundance of dollars.

An Honourable Member: Tell us about it.

Mr. Cummings: The member says, tell us about it. Well, frankly, that is exactly where I was leading. If you

were looking for changes that are easy to criticize, of course, you can point to the changes in the number of beds that are available in this province, but that does mean that you deny or bury your heads in the sand when you have realized that with today's modern medicine we do not need the same number of beds that we had 10 years ago. I do not think there is one member over there prepared to stand up and say that that is not a true statement. However, I challenge them to bring forward some ideas. They can argue about the priorities if they like. They can argue about the changes, but where are their ideas? It is easy to be critical but provide your best thoughts, because it is not just wisdom in one chair that is going to provide the type of changes. It is going to take a collective effort on the part of all Manitobans.

I think the job of government is to provide leadership and direction and provide, in many cases, the opportunity for the individuals within our society to succeed. Now, what has that to do with modernization and changes in health care and education and social services? It has an enormous amount to do with it, frankly, because one of the issues that is most important to this government is that we truly believe that we should not just be arguing as we sometimes do in this House about who cares the most when it comes to talking about health care, education and social services.

If it is only a matter of public relations to say that I care more than you care because I want to keep—[interjection] The member across the way argues about whether or not public relations is part of it. One of the most significant public relations and grandstanding efforts that we see here every day in Question Period is the constant criticism of the initiatives that we are taking without providing any alternate thoughts, without providing any additional ideas. I suggest, and they are not going to like it across the way, but I suggest they are bereft of ideas in how this could be done better. The only thing they know how to do is to stand back and criticize. Reaction is fine, but let us remember, the fact is that what you are seeing today in a number of changes—[interjection] That is quite a while ago. I cannot remember what happened back then.

Madam Speaker, I think the opposition is diverting me from my time. Would you like to add a minute or two to my time? The fact is the reality of dealing with education costs is not a situation any longer where we can continue

to go to the tax base to add more money to provide that better education. We have to work with the educational community to make sure that we have the highest standards and the best quality of education possible available for our youth.

Let me say very clearly that there is no game by myself or any of my colleagues to put ourselves in a position where we are somehow seen to be in conflict with the educational community. No one deliberately sets out to embark on that type of a debate, but the fact is that we need to get down to a debate that is realistic, that deals with the facts of the issue.

I was a trustee longer ago than I care to remember, but the very issues we are discussing today were discussed 15 years ago. They were discussed 20 years ago. The problem is that they are a little bit more urgent today. As so often happens in our own personal finances and in our own families, the very same problem is now facing us as a government, as a community, as a province, and that is, the economic reality of today is forcing us to make decisions that we have been delaying for far too long. Those decisions are not any easier today. In fact, they are more difficult because they have been more and more entrenched in the mindset of all of the participants, including ourselves.

I would acknowledge that, but the time has come, not only in health and in education and social services but in all of the activities of government, to face the realities of where we are and deal with them judiciously, deal with them with the best interests of the public at heart, but not only at heart but in fact. A few minutes ago I was challenged to discuss the Pharmacare program and the changes that have occurred there. Let me make it very clear that, again, that is another change that Pharmacare—is that the second time I said that? Changes in Pharmacare are not an issue that this government would actively want to pursue, but when you look at what you must provide, what you should provide and what is less necessary for you to provide, obviously health care becomes a priority. But there again it is not a priority that can go much further in terms of the dedicated dollars within our budget. We are well above a third of our budget into health care. That seems to elicit a groan from at least one of my colleagues across the way, but if he has different mathematics I would invite him to enlighten me down the road. The fact is that, when it comes to

Pharmacare, this program was one of the best in Canada, and when it was instigated it was a universal program. It was instigated at a cost of about \$10 million or a little less, I believe.

In 1988 when we came into government, it was growing at 15 percent year over year. Now, if there is anybody that wants to tell me that we can maintain that type of growth in any program year over year, then we better have 10 percent growth in our economy or more. So then what happens is that you have to look at how do you manage the cost of that program, and as every other jurisdiction has done, Manitoba looked at adaptation or movement in the deductibles and then a co-payment. But the bottom line is that Pharmacare—and I have used this numerous times in my constituency as an example of where government unexpectedly found itself with an uncontrollable program as far as growth was concerned on its hands—control is not the issue so much as the cost of that program growing far beyond our ability to continue, to cut off other programs to make sure that it continued to be funded at the rate of which demand was being put forward.

One of the prime and most important criteria in revising a health and education and social services program is to make sure that the poor, and more importantly—and I think this is something that the members of the opposition despite their philosophical bent too often forget—the poor is not necessarily the person on welfare. The working poor out there get hammered far worse in this society than most people would care to admit. The first thing that you need to do when you are looking at the cost of supporting and reforming a program is to make sure that those who are the most vulnerable are not left at the mercy or the whim of others in society, and that is government's job, to make sure that does not destroy reasonable expectations for those members of our society.

* (1650)

So, when the members want to criticize Pharmacare, they want to criticize education, they want to criticize social services in the areas of support and what should be done, the only thing that we have heard is that we should do more. I would challenge them to add, beyond that statement, where are you going to take the priorities from? Where do you want to switch the priorities from?

Do you want to close hospitals in parts of rural Manitoba where it puts them two hours away from health care? Is that a reasonable option? I do not think I see any nods of approval across the way. Do you want to make it so that we restore beds instead of health care? I think not. The long-term approach has to be that we are going to deliver more health care closer to the patient's home, in fact deliver more health care right in the patient's home because that is the more cost-efficient way and, in many respects, I believe the vast majority of patients appreciate and in fact receive better care and better recovery time under those circumstances. I know that if I were ever in that situation, those are certainly the results which I would expect if it were to affect me or one of my family.

But, Madam Speaker, because we hear no advice from across the way other than just do not do it, we have to look for the best way to deliver increased home care services to the public efficiently, at the time that they need it, when they need it, of the type that they need. While the members across the way want to argue that they do not like our changes, the fact is that there are very few alternatives that they are bringing forward except, do not do it.

Madam Speaker, I want to move back to the positive side of what I think has been a budget that has followed a long-term plan that this government has been putting in place and evolving over the last eight years. The fact is that we have come through a number of years in the late '80s and early '90s when Manitoba's economy, along with every other economy across Canada, was not performing nearly the way it did in the previous decade and was not performing up to the expectations that any of us had. I look at myself and my colleagues in agriculture particularly, because not only did we come out of a number of years when production was not what it should have been, we came out of a number of years when prices were not what they should have been, and agriculture is a perfect example of a major industry that was not contributing to the economy in the way that it normally did. In fact, it virtually became a drag on the economy because of the economic situations that we found ourselves in.

So I look to the budget speech and I look to the good news that is now beginning to become increasingly obvious to those outside of the province and to those inside the province, because when you look at the

confidence that we now see in our entrepreneurs, their willingness to invest, the fact that there has been potentially a billion dollars worth of investment announced this summer leads me to believe that we have now turned the corner in terms of where the provincial economy is going to go and, certainly, we have turned the corner where the confidence of our citizens and the confidence of investors both inside and outside of this province has now risen, because now we have seen that our value of exports are up into double digits, beyond double digits, up over 20 percent, an increase in total investment that was the largest in Canada on a percentage basis. Manufacturing investment is up over 50 percent to a new record level. We have seen a real increase in manufacturing shipments, the largest in over 20 years. The value of mineral production rose over 20 percent. Farm cash receipts are in double-digit increases for the third consecutive year. The unemployment rate has dropped, the largest drop frankly in the last three decades. Retail sales increased more than twice the national average at the same time we see business bankruptcies at the lowest level in 15 years.

Madam Speaker, when we tie all of these things together, it becomes increasingly obvious that a plan and an aggressive approach to dealing with the economy and with the responsibilities of government within the confines of our available dollars has now brought Manitoba to a position where we are able to take advantage of the economic climate out there. We are able to take advantage of the investment opportunities and we are able to take advantage of those opportunities at a time when other jurisdictions in fact are still making some of the changes that this government imposed upon itself three, four, five and six years ago.

So, Madam Speaker, I suggest that the idea of nonconfidence of the public in a budget such as this is totally wrong. In fact, I would suggest the reverse is the case and that the public does have significant confidence and it will in fact be increased by the figures and by the outlook that we see in this budget.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, in response to the challenge of the last speaker, the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), in this Budget Debate I would like to focus on ideas, interrelated statement of ideas that he is looking for that we all should take into consideration in any discussion

and consideration of any budget of any government. Therefore, I would like to focus on these interrelated principles, statement of ideas.

First, we should all recognize that in any enduring society such as ours, in all the activities of human beings, there always will be an underlying structure of shared moral values that they all accept, or else society itself will not last.

* (1700)

The second principle is that among these enduring, shared values of stable societies, the highest and most important value that they recognize is that the general, common good of all must prevail over the good of one or a few.

Thirdly, in maintaining this social community or political society, all those who share in society's resources and benefits must also accordingly and proportionately share in the burden of preserving and promoting that particular society.

Let me now focus on each of these principles. The first principle that I stated is that we must all recognize an underlying, shared structure of moral and spiritual values. Despite our differences in ideologies and beliefs and opinions, we all will have to accept that there is such a shared system of values. Let me illustrate this. Any social controversy or social issue, if you really analyze and look at it, really can be reduced into economic issues. If you look closely at the economic issues you really will say that it boils down to some ideological, philosophical differences of a political nature.

For example, when this Filmon government decided that people between the ages of 19 and 64, their coverage in eye examinations as an insured service under medicare will be stricken from that list so that all Manitobans now between the ages of 19 and 64 will have to pay an average of what is estimated to be \$49 for a routine eye examination, this is a health issue, a social issue but, then, if you look at it, it is really an economic issue of whether everybody or some can or cannot afford to pay such a medical examination fee. That economic issue is really an ideological issue of whether everyone, poor or rich, should have that opportunity for eye examinations for the general health and interest of all the people in society.

If we search out this underlying structure of moral values, what do we find? One sociologist, Felice Bataglia, stated that society as an original entity when it was conceived is a group of individuals who co-operate rather than compete for the fulfilment of the essential goals of their mutual preservation, prosperity and perpetuation. So it is mutual. Everybody has an interest that they be preserved, that they all prosper and that they all continue in the good life that they conceive for themselves as a member of this society.

The same set of individuals organized themselves into a political system so that in the words of the political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau every person enters into what he calls a social contract whereby he surrenders himself to the total community, but this is done by everybody. Everybody enters into that social contract, but in so doing he loses no right because everybody who relinquishes their rights regains the same right as a collectivity. At once, then, the social contract created a mystical collective body we call the society.

Yes, it is intellectually created. The union of all the selves taken together to promote the general good of all—[interjection] That is right. So when all these selves unite themselves together, they created a composite, a greater unity, a greater interest we call the collective, common good. This is the highest good, which philosophers refer to as the summum bonum, the highest good, because it inures to the benefit of everyone in the community or in the society.

As the collective, common good it has an inherent primacy, an inherent priority over the good of one or the good of the few. Anybody who violates that principle is subverting the very existence and continuation and perpetuation of society.

Therefore, to do a righteous and good act is to promote the general, common good. To do a wrongful, injurious act to others is to destroy and subvert the general, common good. According to Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, this is the very definition of justice. This is the very definition of social justice, that you do good to others and avoid harming the others in the community. The doing of the righteous act and the avoidance of the injurious or wrongful act is therefore the very definition of the promotion of the good of all. Justice, therefore, becomes operational as the spiritual, collective

righteousness that is identical with the greatest virtue that defines the highest good of the common life. This is embodied in the universal maxim that everybody knows as the golden rule: I do unto others what I want others to do unto me and, negatively stated, I do not do unto others what I do not want others to do unto me.

If we fulfill that maxim, then we are promoting the general, common good in the community and in promoting the general, common good we are promoting the interest of all the selves that join together to form that society. We, therefore, have practical, universal moral criteria for judging whether any particular act or decision of anyone acting on behalf of the community is wrongful or righteous. This is the universal measurement. I say universal because even Confucius, in an unchristian country like China, had stated a long time ago: You do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you. That was the negative of what our Lord Jesus Christ had stated that we love others as we love ourselves.

The negation of a negation is a positive, so this is the same thing stated otherwise. Therefore, those who are elected, like us, like political people, those who are elected to act on behalf of the community and those members of the bureaucracy who are appointed to act on behalf of the community are bound by this universal maxim to do and promote the highest common good of everybody.

The British utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, tried to pin down this elusive concept of the highest good by saying that it is the same as the collective happiness for the greatest number, which ought to prevail at all times over the private interest of one or of the few. The happiness of the greatest number, that is a good formula to remember. Unanimity is almost impossible to secure, the consent of everyone in the community. This effectively linked the idea of the highest common good with our conception of majoritarian democracy, the majoritarian democratic decision making that inure for the greatest good of the greatest number.

* (1710)

Now, in the context of this provincial budget that we are debating now, can we illustrate whether this government, now that we have a criterion for judging—can we find out whether this government in its policy-making

decision is complying with this universal maxim of the greatest common good or not? Are they making decisions that promote the highest good of everyone or only the good of particular individuals or a particular group? Let us find out. The Pharmacare deductible that the honourable minister has just discussed, this is now to be based on income rather than on age, such that it resulted in the increase in the cost of prescription drugs because it has taken away from the list of secured insured lists under medicare. Approximately how many people are affected? About 200,000 Manitobans will be affected adversely, because they have to spend more because they are no longer insured for medicare in the insured list protected by the government.

Now, in contrast to that, the same government has just given and added the very few wealthy owners of mining companies sales exemptions from their exploration equipment, which is estimated to be about \$100,000. On top of that they also gave to these few wealthy people, already wealthy in the community, \$1 million additional grant for exploration programs over and above the need of 200,000 seniors who are sick, disabled and affected adversely by medicare. Now, tested by our criterion, is this right or wrong according to the standard of justice defined as the highest good for the greatest number? Think about it. Those who are on fixed income, those who are sick, those who are relying on medication for their very survival and existence are ignored so that the monies that normally should go to them go to the hands of the few who are already wealthy because they own the mining company. Is this the promotion of the general good of all or the highest good or the promotion of the few rich individuals?

I just heard that this government is about to spend \$350,000 for a public relations propaganda contract on behalf of one individual, most talented, because she was the chief architect of the public relation campaign program in the last election. Now, to give \$350,000 to one talented individual, no matter what her qualities might be, at the expense and the cost of the hundreds of seniors, is this the promotion of the general public good in the community? That is the promotion of one individual over 200,000 seniors and other middle- and lower-class income people who have been paying the taxes and now they are being channelled to the hands of one. Are we supposed to say to the seniors, do not take your medication anymore, or take it less frequently than

you need to? Because they are on fixed income, how will they adjust themselves to this change of circumstances?

Take the home care issue. This government prided itself: Oh, we are increasing our funding for home care. We are putting \$8 million more into the Home Care program. Is that not good? Why are we doing this?

They are doing this in anticipation of privatizing the very Home Care program on which they are pouring some money, \$8 million additional to the Home Care program, which will be privatized so that it will become now the project in the hands of the few profit-seeking entrepreneurs which are promoting it at the expense of the sick.

They are making a business out of providing health services, which is an essential public service for the greatest benefit of all the citizens in this province, and, yet, they are cutting 30 percent of what normally should go to those people who are needing those services so that they can pocket them as margins and profit because they are entrepreneurs. Is this not ideological prostitution of the promotion of the highest public good in this province?

They are merely channelling the taxpayers' dollars, \$8 million more, into the Home Care program which tomorrow will go as profit to the private entrepreneurs.

Since these are private operators, they no longer will be subject to monitoring by the government. They can hire whoever they wish, trained or not trained. They can deploy their resources the way they like in order to make a margin. That is the promotion of the highest common good for the few entrepreneurs. It is good for all the population and the sick and the disabled? That is not good. It is wrong.

I now focus on the next principle. Whoever shares in the resources and benefits of society must also proportionately share in the bargain of maintaining and promoting that society. This is common sense. If you share in the benefit, you contribute to the bargain.

Society created government. Government, as the agent of society, to promote the good of all, is given the power to tax. Therefore, the government is obligated if it is necessary to exercise this authority given to it to raise the

public money in proportion to the benefit that people are receiving. Those who have more resources, as stewards of this Earth's resources, they are morally obligated to contribute more so that those that have less will also equally enjoy a kind of living that gives them decency and dignity as fellow human beings on this Earth.

Now, one of the richest persons I have read about, industrialist—it is not one of you guys—was Andrew Carnegie. He once observed that the problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth so that the price of brotherhood and sisterhood may still bind the rich and the poor in harmonious relations. All he is saying is that I am just a steward of the wealth that I share. Maybe I get a greater share of the wealth, and I am a steward of it, but I am duty bound to administer my wealth in such a manner that I give and maintain the bonds of brotherhood between the rich and poor.

Let me add that such binding togetherness of the rich and the poor is made possible where there is an institutionalized agency of society, which is the government, to which fair and just taxation could be implemented so that fair and just distribution of benefits could be effected.

If we adhere to the philosophy of the opposite, saying the least government the better, because they just interfere with so-called free economic activity—that is what they will say—if we leave the sharing of wealth to private, voluntary philanthropy alone, all that the poor people in this world, in this province, in this country will get are the crumbs that fall from the table of the rich. That is the reason why government exists. That is the reason why the government as the agent of society has the power of taxation, to take a portion of the wealth that is entrusted to some members of society. Out of their skill, maybe they are bright, intelligent, they have more balance and get the portion in the form of taxation and redistribute it to those who need it the most, so that none will be below the level of decency and dignity as human beings in this world.

* (1720)

That justifies the right to tax. The right to tax exists only because it is coupled with the moral responsibility to take care of the less able members of society who are less able to keep and maintain themselves. Outside of that, the power of the tax is a power to destroy.

When the wealthy legally resort to the rules of taxation which they themselves helped to formulate, what we call tax avoidance, so that they contribute little or no taxes as some of the big corporations are doing and the big banks are doing, according to the theologian by the name of Meir Tamari, this is tantamount to theft. They are stealing. From the poor recipients of social services, they are stealing or they are stealing from the other middle-class taxpayers who therefore must bear a greater share of the burden because of the people who are using tax avoidance.

Therefore, we say that, although theoretically we live in a democracy, we accepted that, theoretically yes, but look closely. Look closely. This is a society of the few who have tremendous influence in the formulation of tax laws and all other law, that they benefit themselves indirectly through the instrumentality of society. This is oligarchy, where the rich and the powerful, economically and politically, determine the rules that benefit themselves and then take some of the power from the majority of people who do not know any better.

Let me say then that these three related principles, the underlying, shared values we must continue to promote and sustain, or else society itself will be at risk, one of the underlying, shared values is that the good of all should all the time be the guiding light over the good of one or the good of some. Any government that formulates budgets must remember that.

Third, that society had created an institutionalized agent, the government and the bureaucracy that is there, in order to promote social justice in the sense that all who share the resources of society must be made compulsory to contribute to the maintenance of this joy of living in our civilized society peacefully and enjoying all the benefits and blessings of our advanced society. That is a burden that everybody must share.

We say that we have a mix kind of economy. We say we have mixed economy. Yes, we do, but it is mixed, a little bit tilted in favour of the capitalist system. It is ostensibly mixed, but we have to recognize the fact that it is primarily capitalistic. The forces of capitalism is based on profit. It is based on—without a return on investment they have no incentive to invest, but if you left it unchecked there is a tendency among capitalists as proponents of laissez-faire to abolish all competition. In actual fact in our so-called economy which is competitive, it is really oligopolistic.

But a few—how many gas companies do you know? How many gas companies? Shell, Imperial Oil, Petro Canada. You cannot name them on your hands. They set the price as an oligarchic community.

How many banks do you know? Five. Royal Bank, Bank of Montreal. You name them all. They control monetary and credit systems, so we say it is competitive. It is not so. It is an oligopolistic kind of economy. Therefore, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer unless there is this government that intervenes on behalf of the general good of the greatest number of people.

But if the same government is now under the control of the same group that controls economic and political power or is submissive to the wishes of these architects

of capitalism, there you go, the suffering will be so much that there will be no more security for everyone, and so we witness the eruption of violence, of youth gangs and all the other problems in our society because of the excesses of people who are in power. Thank you.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, is there a will to call it 5:30?

Madam Speaker: Is there a will of the House to call it 5:30? Agreed?

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 10, 1996

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