



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, 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, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	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.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 17, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Russell Schlamp, Paul Doiron, Gary Porter and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Hy M. Reubin, Laura A. Fossey and Margaret Sutherland praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

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

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), 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: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). 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 has embarked upon a project in which it is closing hospital kitchens and having hospital food transported in from Toronto for reheating; and

WHEREAS this proposal will not improve the quality of food but will cost hundreds of jobs to the provincial economy; and

WHEREAS on December 8th of 1997, the provincial cabinet staged a photo opportunity for the media in which government MLAs were served chicken breast from a chef flown in from Toronto for the occasion while the actual meal served residents that night was macaroni and peas; and

WHEREAS this proposal will result in more health care dollars being spent on questionable privatization projects; and

WHEREAS in December of 1997, the provincial government was forced to drop a similar privatization scheme involving home care which had been opposed by the clients, families and the public; and

WHEREAS once again the provincial government without consultation has committed itself to a privatization project which will likely cost taxpayers more money for a poorer quality service, thus forgetting the patients who deserve better care.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the '96-97 Report for Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Winnipeg Hospital Authority
Interfaith Agreement**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, last week in reviewing minutes from labour and management at St. Boniface Hospital, the minutes note that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is intending, with his new interfaith agreement with the WHA, to break the 1996 interfaith agreement. The minutes go on to say that the present Minister of Health does not care about that.

I would like to ask the Acting Premier: is it the intent of the provincial government to break the interfaith agreement they have with the Winnipeg hospitals, pursuant to implementing the WHA proposal that is scheduled to come in place in two weeks today?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Acting Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would be happy to take this question as notice from the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Minister of Health.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this is obviously a matter that is not important enough to this government to raise at cabinet, whether they in fact are breaking an agreement with major faith groups in the city of Winnipeg to implement their plan under the WHA, which is scheduled in only two weeks from now to be implemented.

I would like to table a letter, written by the chair of Concordia Hospital, wherein the chair of the Concordia Hospital says to the government that they are disappointed by the intimidating tone of the government in dealing with them, and further go on to say that the position that the government is bringing to the table to implement their proposal on the WHA undermines the spirit of the agreement that they signed with this provincial government, with this Premier in 1996.

I would like to ask the Deputy Premier again: are you using intimidating tactics with the faith-based hospitals, point No. 1, and are you breaking your agreement with the faith-based institutions, in order to implement the WHA proposal?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, the answer to the first question is no. Secondly, this government fully appreciates the contribution that all the faith-related hospital organizations have brought to this province. Again, this government's responsibility is to work with those organizations to make sure that the health care of the patients, not only today, into the future, for the people of Manitoba is looked after. That is the responsibility of this government, and it is a matter of working in a co-operative way to make sure that that is accomplished.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it is the chair of the board, Mr. Olfert, that talks about the intimidating tactics of the government. It is the chair of the board that talks about this government breaking its co-operative agreement that was signed by them in 1996, and the letter goes on to say that this government, who just talked about patient care, has significantly reduced their funding over the last number of years at a time when their caseloads were dramatically increasing. It documents it in the letter and goes on to ask the question of the government of coming to some co-operative agreement with them.

I would like to ask the government today, in light of the fact that they are only two weeks away from implementing the new WHA—you have already hired 60 staff, you have already told us that we are going to have peace in our time after the WHA is implemented—can the government today table the draft plan that the WHA has with the faith-based institutions, or are we going to again see crisis, last-minute management from this government that does not care about the agreement they have with the faith-based institutions?

* (1340)

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has a very short memory. I can tell him quite frankly that this government has worked very aggressively and co-operatively to make sure that we maintain and improve a health care system in this province that meets the needs of the people, unlike—and I was going through some files recently of letters that were sent to the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). We could not find him for two weeks to ask questions of the government when the New

Democrats were there, when they were closing beds in Brandon. He was noted to be in the bunker someplace at Shilo.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition was very clear. It was in regard to the agreement with faith-based institutions, and the very clear question was not only not answered but then the minister seemed to have a flashback to a time in the mid-1980s when he was in opposition.

I think, Madam Speaker, you should call him to order. By the way, to the minister, if he keeps this up with this government, it will not be long before he once again is going to be asking questions because he is going to end up in opposition once again with his policies on health care.

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Whenever a reference is made to the NDP version of health care reform as exercised in Brandon in 1987, there is a sensitivity that arises over on the other side of the House and gives rise to points of order which really do not usually lead us anywhere, and the honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order. The honourable Deputy Premier was attempting to be responsive to the questions being raised and I am sure will continue to be as responsive as he always is.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, it I believe is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Personal Care Homes Private Nursing Assistance

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I would like to ask a question, in the absence of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik)—I am sorry. I withdraw that statement. I would like to ask the question of the Deputy Premier who is concerned about the health care of people of Manitoba as he has told us. A constituent of mine has

told me that her mother who is 94 years of age and who pays between \$1,000 and \$1,100 plus GST per month to the Bayside Personal Care Home in Killarney, is paying that, but because she required additional attention and care for part of the day, the nursing home decided that a private agency, namely We Care, should be brought in to be with this resident. They paid nearly \$1,150 so far, and the nursing home, I would say, obviously does not have sufficient nursing staff, leading to this unacceptable situation where private nursing assistance has to be brought into the home.

So my question to the minister is: will he now admit that some nursing homes are obviously underfunded in this province and are being undermined in their ability to provide an adequate level of care, and that in the process they are spawning a two-tier system, which goes against the principles of universal, accessible health care?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, I will not accept any of the premise or the preamble, but what I will do, as normally would be done, is ask the member if he has provided the details to the Ministry of Health so that could be worked on, or is this the first time that he has raised it in this Assembly?

Madam Speaker, I would appreciate if he would provide the details to the minister, so it could be further reviewed and responded to the next time there is an opportunity in Question Period.

* (1345)

Health Care Facilities Private Nursing Assistance

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I would like to ask the Acting Premier if he thinks it is acceptable for the Killarney hospital to require the family of an Alzheimer's patient, who is very difficult to handle, admittedly, to pay approximately a hundred dollars a day or \$3,000 a month to the We Care company to bring a person into the hospital to look after him.

Why is the hospital not given financial resources to hire its own staff to deal with difficult situations? This

is supposed to be a universal, accessible health care system, Madam Speaker.

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding if people want to add additional services, they are free to do so in the facilities to which the member referred. I would ask for him to bring the details to the Minister of Health so we could answer directly the specific issue which has been raised by the member.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Madam Speaker, I would ask the Acting Premier if he would undertake, in conjunction with his colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), to do a survey of the situation in Manitoba and actually determine how many similar situations exist both in nursing homes and in hospitals whereby private agencies are coming in, paid for by the families or by the patients, to provide the service that should be provided by the regular staff in the nursing home or in the hospital in question? As has been stated by the CBC in recent news reports, this problem seems to be more prevalent than the government is willing to admit.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, I will take the question as notice, but I will, as well, also check as to how far back the policy goes as it relates to the specific questions asked by the member. This could have been a policy that has been in place for many, many years.

Urban Crime Prevention Staffing

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. We understand that early in the new year the minister finally created a position in his department for urban crime prevention, a long overdue and important development, and we commend him for that.

My question to the minister is: would the minister tell Manitobans, who are desperate for new effective ways to protect their safety, why the minister has filled this position with the past vice-president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for St. Johns for the compliment in respect of the efforts that our government has been making in respect of

anticrime initiatives. I am committed to working very closely and to ensuring that our department is responsive and working together with police forces to ensure that the crime rates in our city, in our province are continually on a downward decline.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister tell Manitobans, give us an answer, what is it in Loretta Barrett's background or Loretta Martens' background, other than her politics and her party service, that led the minister to believe she is entitled to this position without a competition? Is it her experience, for example, as executive assistant to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman)?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, unlike the New Democrats before us in government, I do not get involved in personnel matters of that nature. [interjection] Well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) sits there and sneers from his seat. Maybe he wants to stand up and talk about how the New Democrats used to do that, and I recall it very well, and I can give a lot of details, when I was a public servant. So if he wants to talk about that, I can, but let me answer this particular question.

First of all, as I understand it, this individual is filling this position on a term basis, and there has been no final decision made by anyone in respect of whether she will be in that position for any length of time.

* (1350)

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister answer the question? What is it in Loretta Barrett's background that entitles her to be trained and entrenched in this position before a public competition? Why the stinking patronage when our safety is at stake?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I resent very much the comments of the member for St. Johns in reference to the allegation of patronage. I know how the New Democrats practised patronage when I was a civil servant for 15 years, many of those years working under them and watching people on direct patronage being leapfrogged over public servants. I want to tell you that that is not the kind of minister I am and that is not the kind of minister I intend to be, and I know our government does not practise that way.

Education System Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the big lie at the heart of Tory budgets is that there have been no tax increases. I use the phrase "big lie" advisedly, knowing that your predecessor ruled it acceptable parliamentary language, and a good thing it is too because there is no other language to describe the planned and deliberately systematic execution of education funding since 1991 this government has systematically offloaded.

I would like the Minister of Education to explain to the House why the amount of education tax that is coming from local municipalities or local divisions has increased by amounts varying from 20 percent to in many cases over 80 percent. Would the minister explain this to us?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The member asks about the amount that school divisions use for special levy, and I should indicate that the funding formula changed in 1991-92. At that time, then, the whole way in which money flows changed. So we talk about percentages; the general revenue from the province has flowed virtually unchanged all these years to the school divisions. So the amount that they can raise in the special levy is up to them. They can raise 20 percent, 30 percent, 10 percent in the special levy if they wish to address those portions of their budget that they set themselves. That whole concept of local autonomy has been highly valued. We heard this loudly and clearly when we had our hearings around the province on the changes to the teachers' bill a couple of years ago. People said very strongly they wanted that local autonomy to continue and the ability to levy taxes to continue as well.

Ms. Friesen: Would the Minister of Education be prepared today to take the courageous stand and say to Manitobans that those 3 percent increases, the 5 percent increases, the 10 percent increases, the 12 percent increases in their tax bill that they are seeing this year and in many, many previous years since 1991—be courageous, tell the truth—this is a Tory tax increase.

Mrs. McIntosh: Two points: one, those percentage increases for special levies of school divisions, the

amounts school divisions have imposed on their own people is smaller under our government than it was under their government. We can bring her the figures; I would be pleased to do that for her.

Also, you have to take a look at what does that percentage mean. The percentage in Portage la Prairie, for example, which is a high percentage, translates to \$26 a household. So you have to talk in terms of—[interjection] I can assure the member that in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, for example, they are faring very well this year compared to what they had to raise by special levy during years when the New Democrats were in government.

Ms. Friesen: Would the Minister of Education tell us what action she has taken on the very serious warning she has received from school boards and municipalities that "the quality"—and I am quoting, Madam Speaker, and I shall be tabling this—"of education has deteriorated to the point where the primary responsibility of Boards to provide a satisfactory level of service to the students charged to their care is being compromised by the Provincial Government's failure to provide adequate financial support."

I will table that letter from the Antler River School Division, represented, I believe, by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) of this province. I will table also a similar letter with the same sentiments from the Beautiful Plains School Division represented by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), a similar letter from the town of Rossburn, the municipality represented by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are more, but I understand the government does not want to see them.

* (1355)

Mrs. McIntosh: I can indicate to the member exactly how many more. Fourteen divisions met to discuss the problems they were having with the impact of reassessment this year. Those 14 divisions have written a joint letter to me, which I have received, and they have also sent individual letters stating their own particular circumstances. Those 14 out of the 57 divisions—and she is quite free to table the rest. Please table the rest; I have no objection. I will bring them

in—if you have them, bring them in and table them. Madam Speaker, I have no objection to her tabling the rest. I do not think she has any more, but that is beside the point.

The problem they had with reassessment this year was because their homes were reassessed, and that is part of the formula. That same problem was evident in other divisions four years ago. Those divisions that felt the impact of reassessment four years ago experienced the reverse effect this year. There is an equalization factor in the formula that flows much as the funding from Ottawa does to the provinces. Those with higher assessment flow to those with lower assessment.

Ms. Friesen: On a new question, I would like to ask the minister to listen to the question that I posed before, which was to say what action has she taken. These are very serious allegations from rural municipalities as well as from school divisions. What action has she taken?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member should be careful not to use rural divisions as if it means all rural divisions. I specifically indicated to her that there was a 14-division regional meeting where those divisions who had problems with reassessment met to share their problems with me. I have already met with some of those divisions to talk about their unique circumstances, Brandon, for example, which was the one that did the initiation, and so on. Brandon now realizes they have another \$256,000 for early literacy training, which they did not realize they could count this year. They also recognize that \$200,000 they lost because of a drop in student enrollment will come to them automatically if their enrollment goes back up. They also will recognize and acknowledge that they received an 11.1 percent increase in the succeeding four years and that their tax rise, which they will have to put in place because of reassessment, will amount to some \$80 per household.

Madam Speaker, each division will be gone through that way. Four years ago when divisions faced a similar change, they managed to get through it.

Education System Funding—Property Taxes

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The

Minister of Education can also feel free to leap into it if she so chooses. It is with respect to a chronic problem that this government has had. We have seen a government that has in essence starved the funding of public education over the last number of years and that is quite upsetting. But what is absolutely unacceptable is the way in which this government has turned a blind eye to the individuals who are paying a disproportionate amount of property tax dollars to finance education in the province of Manitoba. My question to the government is: when is this government going to deal with the inequities of how people are being taxed to finance public education in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): First of all, Madam Speaker, I do not accept any of the preamble from the member for Inkster. We have put in excess of a hundred million dollars more into education over the last several budgets here in our province. The whole issue of utilization of the property tax base for education funding has been a system that has been in place in our province for many, many years, many decades. It is the same system that has been there through various governments over many years. He and I have discussed this issue at length, that there are the two components of the education levy on our property tax bill. One is the special levy of which the local divisions have complete autonomy; one is the education support levy which is levied by the provincial government. We have held that amount flat in terms of the amount of money coming from the education support levy. What we are seeing in terms of the special levies is we are seeing various adjustments on an individual school division basis based on the individual decisions that those school divisions are making in terms of how they utilize the dollars that they raise and what they require to deliver their services.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. How does he justify in his own mind the inequities that Manitoba property taxpayers will tell him that exist today and have been there for years, and because it has been there is not justification for allowing it to continue? How does he justify his inaction in trying to deal with a very important issue when you have a certain percentage of

the population paying millions more dollars every year in education tax because of this government's failure at addressing this issue?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, what the member for Inkster fails to recognize and does not address and certainly has not offered any constructive alternatives is that this money does have to come from somewhere. It does have to be provided for education. I think we can all agree that the resources are required in education, so there has to be a funding source to provide that support on an individual school division basis. That is a system that has been in place in our province for many years. It is a system that is also fairly consistent in many other provinces. When we look at what we have been able to do in providing support for education, it is up over a hundred million dollars over the last 10 years. In this last budget alone, it is up over \$16 million or 2.2 percent.

As well, when you look at our support for municipalities, almost every budget has provided more money for municipalities, unlike what we have seen happen in many other provinces where municipalities, the municipal governments have had significant reductions. That has not been the case in Manitoba because we share our personal income tax, we share our corporate income tax and so on in our province.

Madam Speaker, those are the facts. That is the system that is in place, and we are certainly providing very reasonable support this year in our 1998 budget.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me make it as simple as possible for the Minister of Finance. How does he explain to the senior living on a fixed income in the north end of Winnipeg having to pay a higher percentage of school property tax because of this government's inability or ill-desire to try to resolve this particular problem than someone who lives in another area of the province? How does he justify that in his own mind or to that senior?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, again, the member for Inkster fails to recognize that there are some 56 school divisions across our province. They have individual responsibility for their collective bargaining with the teachers, so there are some differences in terms of teachers' salaries. They have individual choices in

terms of the kinds of programs, the kinds of services they are providing in their school divisions, and those all create differences in terms of the special levy that those school divisions have. In terms of the education support levy, the one levied at the provincial government level, it is uniform right across our province, but you do have differences on a school division basis because of some of the choices that they make.

We have also tried to help school divisions. They have indicated to us that they needed more opportunity in terms of dealing with some of their expenditures when it comes to collective bargaining. We have changed some of the process in collective bargaining for school divisions. That should help them in terms of some of the issues they face, but the reality is there are 56 school divisions; they make those choices, and they levy ultimately the special levy at their own individual school division level.

Education System Funding—Inflation Rate

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, earlier this winter, by the kind provision of the Minister of Education, the Education critic of our party and I were able to meet with senior officials of her department, her deputy minister and head of the Public Schools Finance area of Education to discuss the matter of whether or not her government had kept up with inflation in her Education funding. She maintained over and over again that her government had more than kept up with inflation in this House.

Will she now confirm that her officials said very clearly, no, you have not kept up with inflation and in fact on the basis of operating and capital support you have fallen behind by some \$94 million since 1990-91?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member opposite says that, knowing that we have just announced \$29 million for capital construction, \$30 million on top of that for the next three years, \$10 million a year, to specifically address those known problems with aging buildings. We believe that \$30 million that goes over and above the 29 that has already been assigned, which is an increase over the year before to begin with, will in fact

address all of the aging problems that come with those buildings built in the late '40s, early '50s and into the '60s.

So, Madam Speaker, his references to not keeping pace with inflation and not addressing capital needs fall in the face of that reality of our recent announcements in this area. [interjection] No, I will not confirm—in short-answers questions, I will not confirm that.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. The question was: will she confirm what her senior, her most senior officials have said, that whether she takes operating in capital, whether she takes operating alone, whether she takes operating capital and TRAF, which has nothing to do with support in the classroom, teachers' pensions, it does not matter; she has fallen behind inflation by tens of million of dollars: \$80 million on operating; \$94 million on operating in capital; \$70 million on operating capital and TRAF? Her own officials confirm it.

Will she at least today acknowledge that she misled this House when she stated she had kept up with inflation over and over again?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I very clearly did in my first answer say no, I will not confirm. He could check Hansard; perhaps he could hear that—see that, if he did not hear it. But if you take out of the Department of Education budget almost everything that is in it, then perhaps what the member says is true, but the truth is that we do provide money for capital; the truth is that we do provide millions and millions of dollars for the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund. That money all does come from us to the public school system. So if he wants to take out aspects of the budget and not include them, money that flows from the department to public schools, then he could make any kind of case he wishes, but if you put in all that we put in and count it truly and honestly, then you will see that his figuring is perhaps not quite accurate.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will this minister confirm that during the same period of time that property taxes have escalated to Manitobans by a total of some \$134 million, which is 64.9 percent, which is a Tory tax increase no matter how you slice it, because her government has underfunded the public school system

by \$94 million during their time when inflation is taken into account? Those property taxes are real taxes paid by real Manitobans and you have raised them.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member opposite constantly puts on the record a stated cut to education during our term in office and, Madam Speaker, I think it is critically important for the record that it be noted accurately that, since we took office, funding from this government to public school education has increased by \$131 million, and by anybody's calculation, that is not a cut. He takes into account some years where there were three years of 2 percent cut. The \$131-million increase includes those years. It includes those fluctuations. That is a sizeable increase, and our funding to education on a per capita basis holds its own very well with any other province in this nation.

Mystery Lake School Division Funding

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, it is a good thing the Minister of Education does not have to take some of the standardized tests that high school students take in math because she would fail. She shows that on a daily basis. She can also play games like she has done earlier with our critic in terms of the reaction of school boards, the repeated cuts they have been faced with in terms of funding under the current funding formula, but the fact is that many school boards are getting shafted and the School District of Mystery Lake in Thompson is probably the hardest hit in this province.

I want the minister to confirm that the school board in Thompson has faced more than 10 percent in cuts the last six years; the property taxes have increased 25 percent; and under her increase this year they got .4 percent which will lead to further tax increases and further cuts.

* (1410)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am delighted that the member for Thompson has acknowledged that there is a good purpose for standards testing, because he is keenly showing that he wants to be able to measure

competencies by standards exams, the first he has ever acknowledged it.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: A point of order, Madam Speaker. I made no such comment about the testing. I just suggested that the minister is the one whose competency should be questioned in this House because she would not pass her own tests.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, an admission the tests work for measuring is exactly what he made, and I am pleased that he made it. I will obtain for the member the specific statistics for Mystery Lake—I do not have them with me here in the House—and I will get back to the member with a response to his question.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, that was not my question. I know what the statistics are. I was at the meeting, the public meeting of angry parents who are upset with this government for cutting back on public education. My question to the minister is: will she confirm on the record that the School District of Mystery Lake in Thompson is once again faced with double-digit school tax increases, with further cuts to teachers after a legacy of underfunding and cuts in education that led our school district in my community, of which I am proud to be a graduate now, to have been cut by 10 percent since 1992 under this government.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I apologize, but what I heard in both this question and the first question was a request from the member for Thompson for me to confirm his figures, and in order to confirm his figures I will have to go and get my statistics which I do not have here. So I, interpreting his question the way it was literally worded—if he meant some other thing by it than what he said, perhaps he could clarify in his third remaining question.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Madam Speaker, I am wondering when the minister will take the time—which she obviously does when it comes to people like Chris Millar and Elizabeth Carlyle—to find out. The School District of Mystery Lake is the school district in the third-largest city of this province. She has not visited Thompson, obviously, since she has been Minister of Education to talk to them directly.

Why is she not aware of the impact her education policies are having on school districts throughout rural and northern Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member has asked me to confirm specific detailed data—and I can address general trends and concerns, and in many cases I do have committed to memory what is happening in certain divisions—but he has asked me to confirm specific data which I do not have here. I will be pleased to get that data and provide and confirm or deny for him what he has requested me to do.

That does not mean that I am unfamiliar with Mystery Lake or that I have not talked with the trustees there. It simply means I do not have committed to memory the specific percentage increases he is talking about over a 10-year period. A 10-year period is a long time.

Grant Park High School Student Protest—Investigation

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education said her letter to the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 regarding an incident at Grant Park High School was for informational purposes only. We now know that was not the case.

My question to the Minister of Education: can the minister tell the House why she made those comments yesterday when, in reality, the letter basically demands the school division to make an example out of one student, that being Chris Millar?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I believe if the member reads my letter she will see that the letter was a request for information specifically about whether or not the information we had been given that day by the school that a student from Grant Park had unlocked a secured

door and allowed entry of unauthorized people, whether or not that was true. If that were true, and the words "if that is true" are very prominent in the letter, that if that is true that a locked door was broken, could they please inform me what the facts of the case were and what disciplinary measure would be put in place. It was a request for information, and in fact it was. I would appreciate receiving the information was the wording or words to that effect. It was not a demand.

In fact, I have since received information from the Winnipeg School Division that in fact no locked door was broken. So the information the school provided us with that day was not correct, and it was a very good thing that I wrote to confirm that, in light of the calls I was receiving to my office on that incident.

Minister of Education and Training Apology Request

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my second question to the minister: will the minister now apologize, given the whole situation in a clearer day that she overreacted? Will she apologize to the school, the principal, the superintendents, the trustees, the board for violating the rights of those professionals and interfering in the legitimate role of board policy?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the minister, in requesting information about anything that happens in a school, particularly regarding security, has every right and indeed has a responsibility to be informed and receive information on issues that have been brought to her attention by members of the public so that answers can be clearly provided. The proper vehicle of communication is through the school board. It was to the school board I wrote; it was the school board that responded to me.

So I feel that there is nothing more to be said on the topic in terms of whether or not the minister has a right to request information of that nature.

Grant Park High School Student Protest—Investigation

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My final supplementary question: will the minister confirm that

her letter says: What disciplinary measures will be taken regarding the student that will serve as an example to others? The good citizenship, basic courtesy and the safety of others are expected in our schools.

Did she write this letter or did she not, and is that not a direct order from the Minister of Education?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Of course what the member is not reading into the record is that that particular request for information, which was a request for information, was preceded by: if it is true, that a locked door was broken. Again, it is a request for information; it is not a demand. It is a request for information, seeking assurance that I can pass on to those who had contacted me as Minister of Education, questioning the provincial and local commitment to security in our schools.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House. I am ruling on a matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) on December 2, 1997. I thank honourable members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

The motion put forward by the honourable member for Inkster is that the Speaker convene an intersessional meeting of House leaders and a representative of the independent MLAs to resolve the issues facing the Speaker's Chair. I believe the key point in the case put forward by the honourable member in his matter of privilege is that the business of the House was being improperly interfered with or obstructed because of matters being raised by members of the official opposition and the ensuing ringing of division bells.

As Beauchesne sets out, when considering a matter of privilege a Speaker has to consider two principles: one, was the matter raised at the earliest opportunity; and, two, is there a prima facie case for a matter of privilege.

Respecting the principle of timeliness, I would say that yes, the matter was raised at the earliest

opportunity because the honourable member for Inkster rose on this matter of privilege immediately following a division on a challenge to a Speaker's ruling.

* (1420)

With respect to whether a prima facie case exists, I would rule that no, it does not. By way of precedent, I refer to rulings of June 2, 1995, and May 23, 1996, and in particular to references from the Canadian authority, Joseph Maingot, in his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*: "While it will be seen that the Member enjoys all the immunity necessary to perform his parliamentary work this privilege or right . . . is nevertheless subject to the practices and procedures of the House. Thus, allegations of breach of privilege by a Member . . . which amount to complaint about procedures and practices in the House are by their very nature matters of order."

Maingot also states that questions of order are not generally considered to be matters of privilege. While our Rule 14 indicates that persistent and willful obstruction of the House could lead to a Member being named by the Speaker, I do not believe the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has made a case that the official opposition in raising a matter of privilege on December 1 and in challenging a ruling of the Speaker on December 2 have obstructed the business of the House. Speaker Walding in February 1984 pointed out in a ruling that "since our Rules and precedents have not been disobeyed, it is difficult to argue a matter of privilege . . . the use of the rules cannot be considered a matter of privilege."

I must therefore rule that the honourable member for Inkster has not established a prima facie case and his motion is not in order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Provincial High School Hockey Championship

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, last night lightning struck twice as the Lorette Scorpions won a second provincial high school hockey championship in as many years by defeating the St. John's-Ravenscourt Eagles five to one. The provincial title was decided last night in front of 1,200 enthusiastic

fans at the St. James Civic Centre. The Scorpions followed the same path as they did last year in retaining their championship crown. After suffering a defeat in the city high school hockey semifinals to the team from Ravenscourt, the Scorpions rebounded to win the provincial championship.

The brilliant goal tending of Alex Haas, who made 27 saves, backstopped the Scorpions victory. Alex's championship form was recognized as he was named both Scorpions player of the game and all-star goaltender in the provincial tournament. Goals for the Scorpions were scored by Ryan St. Laurent, with Murray Carter, Martin D'Auteuil and Jason Hyde. Scorpions coach Jude Boulianne said he was very proud of his team's play.

I would like to congratulate the coaches and the players from the Lorette Scorpions as they celebrate their well-deserved victory. By refusing to allow a defeat the previous week to affect their game, they demonstrated the spirit of true champions. I would also like to extend a congratulatory note to the players and coaches of the St. John's-Ravenscourt Eagles for their tremendous effort and for winning the city championship title. Thank you.

Mystery Lake School Division—Funding

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I wish to put on the record the very clear frustration of the people of Thompson about the continued underfunding of public education in our province, in particular in terms of the cuts that we have seen in our school district under this government. I want to put on the record, I am particularly frustrated that the minister, when asked three questions earlier, tried to duck from dealing with a bottom line of what has happened in Thompson and other school districts throughout this province, and the fact is that we are losing teachers, we are losing programs, we are losing educational assistance, support staff, and property taxes are increasing.

I have, Madam Speaker, the statistics. I know the statistics. I was at the public meeting with hundreds of parents. Their message to the provincial government and this Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) is stop shafting our school district and start supporting public education. I find it absolutely incredible that the

minister tried to duck any response to the substance of the question I asked earlier in Question Period.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I want to put on the record that the School District of Mystery Lake and the people of Thompson have difficulties with the funding formula. They have difficulties in particular with the impact on school districts such as Thompson where right now we have 200 layoffs in our community and yet our property tax bill is going to be going up because we are getting .4 percent, not the 2.1 percent that was announced for the province as a whole.

I say to the Minister of Education, who apparently will be spending half an hour to talk to each school district at the MAST convention, perhaps what she should do is invest a little bit more time in talking to school districts and a little less time in such incidents as the Chris Millar incident and the Elizabeth Carlyle incident. I suggest she might also want to take us up on our invitation in the community of Thompson, to come to Thompson, the third-largest city in Manitoba, to talk to the teachers, to talk to the parents, to talk to the school board and find out directly the impact that her cuts are having on our school district. We want support for our public education system in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We want action from this minister and this government.

St. Patrick's Day

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Once a year I think we are all a little bit Irish. St. Patrick's Day has become over the centuries much more than a celebration of the life of the patron saint of Ireland. It is a celebration of a culture, language and a people of distinctive character.

One of the communities that I represent, Killarney, Manitoba, is steeped in Irish culture. This past weekend the community got together and celebrated in many ways the coming of St. Patrick's Day, which is today. It starts out on Friday night with a social evening and a diamond night, another social evening on Saturday. Hockey tournaments ran throughout the weekend. The high school students served Irish stew

on the streets of the community for the entire weekend. Just a note that many of the community businesses and properties have taken on the Irish flavour with names such as the Emerald Isle, the Erin Inn, Erin Drive, and many more.

The park in Killarney is appropriately named Erin Park. Inside that park you will see a leprechaun sitting close to the Blarney Stone, which I suggest some members might want to visit and make a wish.

One of the other unique features about the community of Killarney and the Irish association is the fact that we have one of the only, I believe, green fire trucks in Manitoba. It was designed specifically for that purpose. The community has a great time when they get together to celebrate this event. As I said in my opening comment, it is a day when we can all be Irish, all be proud, and get an opportunity to wear green whether we look good in it or not.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to close with an Irish blessing. It states: may your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow and may trouble avoid you wherever you go. Thank you.

CIBC Branch Closure—Lynn Lake

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): The closure of the Lynn Lake CIBC bank branch at the end of January has caused major problems for the nearly 1,000 residents of the community. This 45-year-old branch was closed not because it was losing money, but because more money could be made elsewhere. So while CIBC made \$1.55 billion last year, its directors feel that the profits are still not high enough. Lynn Lake residents are now forced to make a three-and-a-half-hour round trip in the winter over the notorious PR 391 just to deposit money or cash cheques. Some businesses are often forced to carry large sums of cash on these trips. The trip, of course, is itself an extra cost for everyone living and working at Lynn Lake and surrounding communities. It is a major hindrance for everyone, including the many small businesses that operate in the region. The Black Hawk gold mine at Lynn Lake itself has an annual payroll exceeding \$6 million. Many small businesses are now being forced to keep large sums of cash on hand simply to operate.

With the local economy estimated at \$15 million annually, it is a major setback that Lynn Lake no longer has banking services in the community. Tourism will be seriously hurt if action is not taken shortly. The area is well known for first-rate sport fishing. Mayor Ollie Dulewich and council are to be commended for their efforts to find another financial institution to serve Lynn Lake. Sherron Loewen and the Lynn Lake Chamber of Commerce have also been active in the campaign. One credit union has expressed serious interest in locating a branch at Lynn Lake but needs assurances that there will be enough money on deposit to make it feasible.

The provincial government can play a positive role in this matter. We encourage the province to make every effort to see that any business they have in the community and region—from the hospital to government services—makes use of local banking services. A commitment from the province could go a long way towards maintaining banking service in the community of Lynn Lake and other communities facing the loss of a bank. At this point, it all points out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the importance of the provincial government being active, where feasible, to prevent communities from losing their banking services.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the proposed motion of the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, the honourable member for Point Douglas, who has 11 minutes remaining.

* (1430)

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I just want to wind down my speech with some of the alternatives that we have raised. We hear from this side of the House all the time that you are the party of doom and gloom, no new ideas, old-think, and all that. I just wanted to share a couple of good ideas that were raised

by my party, as an example, putting children first, which was raised a few years ago, and the Gang Action Plan.

I want to talk a little bit about the fair tax system, in my view. When I saw the reduction in our taxes, our personal taxes, I was very pleased to see that, as all Manitobans are, because there is not a citizen in Manitoba that is going to argue against a tax decrease because it helps everyone. The only thing that I look at is a different way of doing it, and what I would propose and how I had hoped it would have happened was a \$75 cut to the property tax and also to eliminate the PST on baby supplies, personal hygiene products, and school supplies, and also books and looking at the elimination of the PST on meals under \$6.

The reason I say that is because the people that would benefit the most from those kinds of reduction in our tax system would have been our youth, young adults and our seniors because people who are making \$60,000 and over would not have had that great of a negative impact or a greater benefit than the benefit that could have been given to our youth, young families. We hear all the time about the importance of our young families starting out, and all we have to do is reflect back on our own lives when we were starting out after our education and in our teens, and then getting into our early 20s when we got married, started raising young families. Just think how difficult it was then. It was not easy, and we were at that time right out of school, hardly any experience and the kind of employment opportunities we got were probably \$20,000. Compared to today, it would be about \$20,000, \$30,000, and that does not go a long way.

So, when we look at buying our first house and all that stuff that goes with it, having our babies, if we eliminate those kinds of taxes, I think, my own personal feeling is that we would have helped a lot of Manitobans that needed the help the most by reducing those kinds of taxes. I said earlier that nobody is going to argue about any kind of tax relief, but I just was hoping that it would have been done in a different way to help more of our youth, our seniors and our young families that are just starting out.

As young families, as I said, you are just starting out of school, or one is trying to work, trying to put the

other through our education systems, trying to raise a baby and maybe buying the first house, every penny counts at that stage; but, if we look at individuals right across Canada that are making \$60,000 and over, I do not know if they would have been hurt as much. You know, we take our seniors; our seniors have been hit dramatically by increases. We just look at the increases to bus services. A lot of seniors use the bus services. A lot of our seniors go out for a nice outing with their partners or their friends, and a lot of times they do get meals that are under \$6.

I know that a lot of seniors whom I know would appreciate that cutting back that PST on meals \$6, same as our teens. I mean, a big night out for a lot of our teens is going out with a bunch of friends and stuff and getting a hamburger and chips, and it is under \$6. If we are going to help, let us look at helping the citizens that I feel we can help the most.

With those, I just wanted to say that I appreciated the opportunity to share some of my ideas, and I look forward to the rest of the session.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to be able to have my opportunity to speak to the 1998 budget and to be able to reflect on what is now the 11th budget that has been brought in by this administration and, in my view, by far the best of all the budgets that we have brought in our time of office.

I say that for many reasons, reasons that I think should give all of us on this side a great deal of pride, because this budget represents a continuum of 10 years of successive steps towards a goal, a goal of being able to give the people of Manitoba a sense of confidence, a sense of optimism and a sense that we are in a stable environment in which our economic prospects will continue to grow and provide opportunities that have long been asked for by the people of this province for themselves and for their families. This reflects, I believe, a lot of difficult choices that have been made, certainly over the past five years or more. It reflects a great deal of dedication on the part of Manitobans, and I want to thank just some of the people along the way because I think that this budget is one that not only do

I take great pride in, but I know from discussions with a number of my colleague premiers across Canada, it is one that many of them would give their eyeteeth to be able to introduce in their Legislatures, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I begin with congratulations to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). I begin with congratulations to all of the ministers who worked so hard on Treasury Board, to spend the hours and hours and hours—indeed, it is dozens of hours, probably into the hundreds, that are invested by each and every member of Treasury Board and the senior staff that is engaged in this very, very difficult process of attempting to create a set of priorities that broadly reflects the values and the goals of the people of the province and fits within the ability of our province to pay for those goals and those desires.

* (1440)

I certainly want to commend all members on our side of the House because they, too, had a great deal of input into this process. They reflected the views of their own constituents. They went out and listened carefully and advised, I think, the Finance minister, as well as members of the Treasury Board, as well as the various different senior officials of the priorities, the goals, the things that were being conveyed to them by the people in their constituencies. I think they did an excellent job of that, because this budget does represent in many ways a very broad cross-section of the views of all Manitobans.

Indeed, there were 12 sessions that were held in consultation in which members of the public came out to give their views, to give their ideas to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and his people, and I think that they all shared with us very deeply their sense of dedication to creating a better world here in Manitoba for the future, and I want to thank all Manitobans for their hard work. I want to thank them for their dedication. I want to thank them for the sense of values and balance that they showed in coming to those meetings and sharing their advice and suggestions and recommendations with us.

I thought it was interesting that when you looked at the results, because the Minister of Finance handed out questionnaires at each of these 12 meetings and at other

public gatherings in which he spoke and listened in the period leading up to the budget, and it resulted in I do not know how many thousand forms being filled out, but there were certainly many hundreds of them. If you looked at them, there was a remarkable consensus—it did not matter whether the people lived in the North or the south, whether they were rural or urban—that pointed towards a desire to have us deal with what appears to be a consistent opportunity to produce surplus budgets because of a strong economy and a growing economy and more and more people working, contributing to the ability of government to finance programs for people throughout the province.

They wanted that fiscal dividend, as we sometimes refer to it, distributed in a way that reflected many different things that they were looking for. It was not only a balanced budget in terms of having the revenues exceed the expenditures, but it was a balanced budget in the approach that it takes to reflecting the priorities and the needs of Manitobans. Manitobans from every area said unquestionably that they wanted us to be able to pay down the debt as quickly as possible, and this budget adds to the statutory requirement of a \$75-million payment on our total accumulated debt. It adds another \$75 million to pay down the debt even faster than the balanced budget legislation requires.

They said that they felt that Manitobans had worked hard, had created opportunities for growth, and that they wanted to see perhaps an opportunity to peel back and roll back a little of the tax load that they had. They recognized that we had inherited the second highest overall tax regime in all of Canada back in 1988 when we took office, and they recognized that we were now very competitive; in fact, we were in the upper echelon, perhaps in the top three or four provinces in total tax load. They recognized that a lot of good work had been done there, but they said it is still time for us to look at our tax load and find ways in which we can find even more tax savings for individuals and people who live and work and invest in this province, and there is some of that in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They, of course, did ask for us to consider putting more money into a variety of areas of government services that they depend on. They wanted more money being spent in the critical areas that they depend upon. Indeed, overall spending is up over 7 percent in

this budget, which is a significant amount, but more particularly, it invests in the long term. It invests in areas of health care. It invests in education. It invests in the family services that address the needs of Manitobans who are most at risk and most in need of government support.

It also calls for significant investment in capital works, capital works that vary from the standard needs of our economy and transportation, so there are highways and roads and many areas of street work that are covered here. It invests in areas of infrastructure that provide for a clean water supply and proper sewage treatment for many of our communities in this province. It invests, of course, in capital works in our health care system, and I will speak more about that shortly. It invests in capital works in our education system, and, of course, it provides for capital for areas of economic development needs and all of those things are very, very important to people throughout the province.

These are the priority areas of Manitobans, and I want to talk specifically. Unfortunately, members opposite do not seem to want to learn about these things. You know, they spend a lot of time talking and criticizing, but they are not willing to listen. Of course, as long as that prevails, I have great confidence that we will always be on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have many critics over on the other side who do not feel they can learn anything from anybody, and that is exactly why they will remain critics and we will see them treated as they are oftentimes by editorial writers and others who see them as wanting to do nothing but criticize, having absolutely no positive alternatives and who have absolutely no way in which they can contribute to improving things in our province, in our economy and in our society. But if they were willing to listen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that they would learn something by reviewing the things that are in this budget to help Manitobans in the long term, things that I believe will build the kind of society that all of us want and that Manitobans will feel very, very confident in the future about.

Firstly, of course, on health, the budget continues a long-term government priority to fund quality health care, particularly in responding to the changing needs

of Manitobans. Since last year's budget was tabled, additional funding has been put in place to address bed shortages and to reduce waiting lists through supplementary funding in the 1997-98 fiscal year and carried through and enhanced in the 1998-99 fiscal year as demonstrated in this budget. Health spending in 1998-99 will be over \$100 million higher than the amount allocated in the 1997 budget reflecting, I think, the early action that we have taken to address the issues that have been raised in the budget and oftentimes called for by members opposite, but we are delivering on not only the concerns that have been expressed by Manitobans but on the criticisms that have been articulated by members opposite and by others throughout our society.

* (1450)

In particular, the 1998 budget addresses bed shortages and maintains quality care by providing \$94 million in new debentures for health capital to support some 27 new projects that will add beds to the system and free up acute care beds. It provides \$23 million more for home care. It provides \$10 million more for medical equipment to support critical care, surgical, medical and diagnostic services and \$6.9 million to staff and support additional intensive care beds and personal care home beds.

This budget, of course, addresses the area of need in waiting lists. It will provide, for instance, \$11 million more for additional dialysis machines throughout the province. It will provide ongoing initiatives to reduce waiting lists for joint replacement surgery, for radiation therapy, for other diagnostic testing for the commitment of an additional \$2.5 million and \$670,000 for mobile breast cancer screening services.

I was out the other evening at an event at which there were a great many women from a whole cross-section of the province, and several came up to me and they just said thank you. This measure of bringing in a mobile breast screening, two units, they said that the wires were buzzing—this happened to be some people who have been involved in a variety of different projects for women's health, particularly breast cancer, and they said that the phones were buzzing within a day of this announcement from people throughout the province who just said, thank you, the government

listened, we are so delighted. We feel in rural Manitoba, or northern Manitoba, that our needs are just as important as the needs of the people who live in the cities and that our standard of care and the facilities available to us provide us with the same opportunities. That one single announcement reverberated throughout the province.

In total, of course, there is no question that health care spending remains absolutely the top budget priority, \$1.93 billion being allocated for health care for Manitobans. That is, firstly, the second highest proportionate share of the budget being allocated by any province in Canada and it is the third highest per capita allocation to health care of any province in Canada, \$1,700 for every man, woman and child every year being spent in this province on health care.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see the confusion, the chaos, and the desire for criticism at any cost coming through from the members opposite when they try and argue about whether or not the money is in this budget or last budget.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) just three days ago talked about the cutbacks over the last while, while his critic the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) was alleging, well, the money really was not in this year, it was last year. If it was in last year, why is the Leader of the Opposition saying that there were cutbacks last year, if his member for Crescentwood is saying that the money was in last year?

You cannot have it both ways, but they attempt to do it day after day after day on every forum. The Leader of the Opposition was in Brandon on the weekend talking about cutbacks in health care. His member for Crescentwood is saying, no, there is more money, but it was in last year and not this year. They are so confused.

The reality is, when you compare the amount of money in this budget versus the amount of money in the last budget of the New Democrats, \$600 million more in 10 years. That is a 45 percent increase in the face of, what, the second worst recession this century Canada experienced earlier this decade, federal cuts of 35 percent in the transfers for health over the last three years. This is the kind of response, as I said earlier,

that my colleague Premiers across Canada would only dream of having, of being able to make this kind of investment in the highest priority areas of all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

What I find really difficult about this is the way in which members opposite are absolutely turning their back on reality when they talk about health care as an issue. I will give you just one small example of that, and that is comparing what they are saying here about health care versus what their former deputy leader, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, is saying about health care now that she is in Ottawa. They are alleging here that the responsibility for any lack of funding in health care is because we, as a provincial government, have not done our share.

We, as a provincial government, not only have done our share, but we have made up for the loss of 35 percent of our federal transfer for health to this province. There is nothing better than this little folder that was issued by the—and I compliment the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) for doing this with the budget, because it shows that at the very same time, over the last three years, '94-95, '96-97, '98-99, as we were experiencing that 35 percent reduction from Ottawa we were continuing to increase and increase and increase our spending on health care, making up entirely for their cutbacks and adding to it our own additional funding to ensure that health care remained the No. 1 priority and remained there for people when they needed it.

Here we have, as I say, a group that will twist themselves into a pretzel rather than recognize the truth and state the truth.

Here we have from the Winnipeg Free Press on Friday, February 20, a story that says: Health horror stories emerge. System stress across Canada. In it, of course, we have the comments of the former deputy leader of this New Democratic Party in the Legislature, the member for St. Johns, as she was, the now Health critic for the federal New Democratic Party in Ottawa, and I quote: federal NDP Health critic Judy Wasylycia-Leis lays the blame squarely on the federal government for cutting billions out of provincial funding for health

care. In the House of Commons yesterday, the Winnipeg North Centre M.P. went as far as to charge that Health Minister Allan Rock now has blood on his hands. She said: will this government stand up for medicare and ensure that no more deaths occur as a result of emergency lineups and cutbacks in hospitals? She says: those massive cuts have had a ripple effect across the country and put stress on all provincial governments.

Now, that is somebody who still has some honour. That is somebody who still has some integrity, not like her former colleagues who sit here in this House and deny that there is any federal responsibility for the circumstances that not only do we face, but every provincial government in Canada faces, Madam Speaker, and that is the kind of irresponsibility that we have to listen to day after day after day in this House.

I thought it was interesting as well when we had an article, again in the Winnipeg Free Press, by Tom Kent, who was a former editor of the Winnipeg Free Press and who later became very much involved with the development of social policy in Ottawa and was, in fact, a Liberal mandarin, I believe, over many decades and was expressing his great anguish at what he saw was the destruction of the medicare system as he had known it and helped to develop it over the decades by the actions of successive governments.

* (1500)

I will just quote just a couple of things from the article, because I think it verifies exactly where the responsibility ought to be applied, and it certainly confirms what Judy Wasylycia-Leis is saying, and it certainly shows how shallow and how dishonest members opposite's criticisms have been in this House.

He begins by saying: constitutionally, the provinces are responsible for health and education and most other social programs, but the provinces are diverse in needs and even more different in resources. By themselves, they are bound to have greatly different programs. They cannot provide the similar standards for Canadians from coast to coast but are essential for our sense of nationhood as well as for the efficiency of our economy and the equity of our society. Provincial responsibility must, therefore, be allied with a degree of

national leadership and that cannot be effective without a measure of federal financing in some of the major programs. He goes on to say how that became the theory behind and the underpinning for the medicare system that was developed in the '60s.

Then he goes on to tell how beginning in 1977 federal politicians tired of their 50-50 commitment, because they did not feel that they were getting adequate recognition for their contribution to medicare. So in 1977, the Pierre Trudeau government revoked the principle of cost-sharing. A succession of cuts followed until in 1995, when the present government killed off all cost-sharing, the only replacement is a transfer, the CHST, arbitrarily fixed by the federal government and entirely unrelated to the province's costs. It is not the original 50 percent, but it is equivalent now to only 15 percent. Now, that is in cash transfers, and it is an absolute tragedy.

If you have, as you will have, federal politicians, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and Allan Rock jumping up to say, well, of course that does not include the transfer of tax points that was made in 1977 as part of that deal, even if you include the transfer of tax points from 1977, it is now under one-third of all the costs that they are paying in Manitoba. That is a tragedy.

This is what Tom Kent says: This is the worst betrayal in Canadian political history. Ottawa induced the provinces into expensive programs with the promise of 50 percent sharing; it has let them down. Medicare is too popular to be torn apart. The provinces can only chip away its costs in ways varying with their finances and their ideologies. The consequence in most cases is a diminishing quality of care with much of the political wrath falling unfairly on the provinces rather than Ottawa.

The only thing that I can say to that, Madam Speaker, is that this is one province that chose not to undercut the value of the system and has chosen consistently to put more money into its health care system despite those costs. Even this year in this budget, it is a 5.5 percent increase in the operating side with an even greater increase in the capital side for health care, because we will not allow the quality of the system to deteriorate. We are committed to providing the best

health care that we can afford in this province, and we regard it as such a high priority that we are prepared to spend over 34 percent of our entire budget on it to make sure that it is to the quality that Manitobans depend upon and need.

Just to give you some example of what we are able to do as a result of sharing the fruits of a burgeoning, growing economy, this year there will be about \$378 million more revenue received in our province. On accumulative basis, over the course of '97-98, '98-99, I am sorry, two-year period, we will have received \$378 million more revenue than 1997-98 budget levels. From these additional resources, \$194 million more will be spent on health over that two-year period. So in percentage terms, we are taking 51.3 percent of all of our additional resources and directing it to health over this two-year period. That is the kind of commitment that I believe exceeds the commitment of any province in Canada, and we are proud of it.

I might say that the budget provides \$770,000 for the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre which combines the model of western medicine with more traditional approaches to health care, as well as providing additional funding for the provincial diabetes initiative to prevent the disease that disproportionately affects First Nations people, something again that is not found in most provinces.

Some of the other areas in which we provide funding that we believe is important to all citizens: crime and community safety. The 1998 budget provides \$625,000 to enhance Victims Services. It continues the \$2-million annual commitment to put more police officers on the streets of Winnipeg. It provides \$1.9 million to implement the action plan to deal with domestic violence. It provides funding for specific ongoing initiatives such as youth justice committees, urban sports camps, Choices Youth Program, to provide youth at risk with alternatives to a life of crime.

Yesterday, we met with the Catholic Women's League executive for Manitoba, something we do at least once a year. We appreciate their advice, we appreciate their recommendations, and we respond to the resolutions that they pass at their annual meeting provincially and federally. They said that they were very proud of many of these programs because they are

unique in Canada, and they are able to stand up nationally and look upon Manitoba as a leader in so many different ways, a leader in some of these initiatives for restorative justice programs for youth in the community, some of our specific health care programs. We spoke with them, as we have with others, about the fact that our Home Care program is being talked about as a model for all of Canada, the best in the country.

Those are things of which we are very, very proud, Madam Speaker, and those are things that are able to be done because we have a balanced budget, because we are committed to continuing to provide the finances in this province for the things that are most in need and the things that are the highest priority for the public, and we can only do it because we passed the balanced budget legislation and we made a commitment to Manitobans that with the balanced budget we would give them the greatest possible security that their key, valued services would be provided on a continual basis as long as we have the opportunity to do this in government.

How about education and the future of Manitoba's children? We hear criticisms from members opposite who selectively quote statistics. They will take divisions that may have the lowest mill rate in the province and have enjoyed some of the highest increases in the past three or four or five years and say, well, this year they did not do as well; therefore it is a terrible formula. What shortsightedness. I cannot believe the approach that they take.

I remember very, very well with great frustration as chair of Treasury Board having the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) who at that time was a public servant, one of the political leftovers from the former New Democratic administration who used to come in to Treasury Board and try and explain how he had arrived at the distribution of the budget on a school division by school division basis, given that a formula that had been developed by Dr. Glen Nichols—the GSE formula had been developed by Dr. Glen Nichols somewhere in the mid-80s. By this time, five years later, there were 56 school divisions, and only three of them were still on the formula. Every other one was just being given an ad hoc political contribution by the members sitting around the table, the New Democrats deciding, well, let

us give this division more; I like them or their teachers are more supportive or whatever the case was.

* (1510)

It was the most chaotic circumstance you have ever had in your life, and that member used to give us bafflegab and gobbledegook every time he came before Treasury Board. It was unbelievable to listen to him trying to explain how he had decided on our behalf how much money to give to each division because the formula no longer applied to 53 of the 56 divisions. That is what he calls good management. That is what he calls good financial planning. That is what he calls principle-based decisions.

Well, good heavens, that reminds me in terms of speaking of him, because the only thing that really stuck out in my mind of his comments on budget day was when he was asked by John Bertrand, what do you make of the fact that they raided the rainy day fund, and he said, well, I think it is atrocious to raid the rainy day fund. Can you believe that? For three years he and his Leader and every one of his members has been saying do not put the money in the rainy day fund; it is raining now. Do you remember that? It is raining now. Take the money out of the rainy day fund, for heaven's sake. Put it into services; put it into government departments.

Has he no shame? Has he no conscience? Well, I can tell you the one thing he does not have is credibility. When he can just switch from one side to the other of the argument, he does not have any conscience and he has no credibility, to take what was their consistent position for three straight years, take the money out of the rainy day fund, put it into services, and the minute we do that, he says, I think it is atrocious to take the money out of the rainy day fund.

This guy is unbelievable, Madam Speaker, but that is typical, unfortunately, of what we have to deal with on that side of the House, and, as I say, it is regrettable that they have no interest in learning, and that is why I hope that we will be able to share Hansard with them at some point.

On the future of Manitoba's children and education, spending on children, youth, and their families has increased in this 1998 budget by over \$20 million.

That includes \$2.8 million for ChildrenFirst Initiatives; \$5.2 million for more flexible and accessible daycare; \$1.5 million for more training for lower income families; \$1.9 million for early intervention literacy programs; \$2 million for positive parenting programs, the Baby First, which I believe the minister just got started today; \$3 million for adolescent pregnancy prevention; \$2.1 million for early childhood nutrition programming.

We continue to support things like Making Welfare Work. I think some of the most heartwarming experiences that I have had over the last while have been speaking with people who have gone into opportunities for work as a result of the Making Welfare Work program. I have met them at new businesses that have been opening. I have met them in a grocery store where they will stop me and tell me about this. I have met them in church.

People have said to me, this is a wonderful thing. They went from despair of ever having a job to now being in a productive situation where they are able to work and contribute to their families and their homes. It is a wonderful opportunity. Some of them have even started businesses, Madam Speaker, as a result of the initiative that they got, the confidence they got, the training and education that they got, and the ability of the program to match needs with opportunities.

There, of course, was a great deal of direct support to students and post-secondary institutions, overall \$14.1 million, or 4.6 percent, increase in total direct support to students and post-secondary education in this budget; \$3.6 million, or 11.8 percent, increase in student financial assistance; \$1.6 million for new interest relief and debt reduction program; \$4 million for scholarship and bursaries initiative; \$11.3 million, or 5.2 percent, increase in the support to universities; \$8.9 million, or 4.3 percent, increase in operating grants. These are things that are important to every one of these institutions, important to the students who are in those institutions, important to those who work in those institutions.

Support to schools, there has been a \$13.8-million increase in financial support to schools based on, firstly, the 2.2 percent basic public school funding announcements. In addition to that, of course, there

were the capital works including both new schools and the renovation of some time-dated buildings for the new needs.

The Native Education Directorate got an increase of \$162,000; Bureau d'Education Francais, an increase of \$4.2 million. All of these things are important.

Northern priorities include half a million dollars for funding creatable, sustainable communities; \$3.6 million, which is a million more than last year, for northern infrastructure development; \$6 million over the next two years for harbour dredging at Churchill and continued mining assistance program; and, of course, as we have said before, a \$10-million increase in highway spending, \$7 million for capital, \$3 million for operating.

What I thought was interesting again, as I talk about the balance, is the fact that this budget is being recognized by people all across the province for what it has done for them, for their needs, for their communities.

I just say that here are some comments. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) I know will be very interested in this, because he gets up here, the duke of doom here, and day after day comes up with all of these negative-[interjection] No, he is the deacon of despair, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). Day after day after day, the duke of doom from Brandon gets up and he has criticism for this budget. He has criticism. Here is what was said in Brandon. [interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says what does The Brandon Sun say. They said we applaud the province's plan to double the size of its in-school apprentice program over the next three years. As well we applaud the plan to provide stable funding for community colleges. As well, they said city and Chamber of Commerce officials reacted favourably to the provincial government's budget on Friday.

In the budget Finance Minister Eric Stefanson announced a 4 percent increase in the Provincial Municipal Tax Sharing Program. The increase translates into an extra \$155,000, Mayor Reg Atkinson said. The mayor said he was also happy with Stefanson's announcement that the province will double its annual debt repayment to \$150 million, quote: I am

encouraged with the commitment shown to pay down the debt because then there will be much less interest to pay. What that does is free up money to be better spent elsewhere, Atkinson said.

The Brandon Chamber of Commerce President Todd Lombard echoed Atkinson's comments on the province's commitment to debt reduction, quote: The extra \$75 million is really positive. That is something we marked as a priority, he said.

Here is something, Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College, they liked the budget, too. The provincial government has increased its financial share in scholarships and bursaries to post-secondary students. Brandon University President Dennis Anderson welcomed the work on the student financial assistance in Friday's budget, quote: There is good news on the student financial assistance side, Anderson said. Anderson was also pleased with the overall grant to the province's university system being increased by \$8.9 million.

Incoming community college President Brent Mills thought the budget contained a strong commitment to post-secondary education in the province, evident by the desire to put more money into bursary and scholarship awards. These are clear signals that they are wanting to expand post-secondary education, Mills said.

What did some people say in Winnipeg about the budget. City officials said this is the first time in years new money for street repair has come from the province outside of agreements that require matching funds. Councillor John Angus, chairman of the fiscal issues committee, said council was hopeful when it put in the matching request last fall, quote: They listened to what we were talking about, he said. The city's \$5 million was allotted to take care of 21 residential streets. The money from the province means another 25 can now be improved. Norman Lindop, who lives on Lindsay Street, which in on the list to benefit from the news, says it is good news.

It is important because Councillor Angus is right in making the point about having more money outside of normal agreements, because unlike other Canadian provinces, Manitoba has given its municipalities stable

and predictable financial support through very difficult economic times in recognition that Winnipeg plays a major role in the province's well-being. For instance, Manitoba is the only province in Canada which has for some time provided its municipalities with direct access to provincial income tax revenues through their Provincial Municipal Tax Sharing. This arrangement allows the municipalities to directly benefit from an improving provincial economy.

In 1997-98, Winnipeg is receiving a total of \$35.6 million unconditionally from PMTS, a 1.4 percent increase from the year previous. Now, that was '97-98, and they are getting a further increase, of course, in '98-99. In '97-98, the province provided operating grants excluding municipal social assistance of \$95 million to the City of Winnipeg and its corporations. This amount was an increase of \$3.2 million over the previous year. It reflects a 21 percent increase in provincial funding over the last seven years.

* (1520)

Other provinces, right across the board, had been reducing their operating grants to cities: 41.5 percent in British Columbia, 42.1 percent in Saskatchewan, 25.7 percent in Ontario. These are all the reductions that they have been making to the operating grants to their cities in recent years: 9.3 percent in New Brunswick, 4.8 percent in Newfoundland, compared to a 21 percent increase from this province to the city.

We are the only province in Canada, of course, that distributes a portion of its gaming revenue directly to the municipalities. Since 1994-95 Winnipeg has received a total of \$25.8 million in unconditional lottery grants from the province, an average of over \$6.4 million annually. In addition to that, the province has significantly supported other special initiatives, investing more than \$30 million in The Forks. The province has committed more than \$25 million very recently to the Winnipeg Development Agreement, as well as what I talked about earlier, the \$2 million annually for seven years to provide the city with 40 more police officers. So not only do we provide them in unconditional grants more generously than most provinces in Canada provide their cities, but we have been examining and responding to special initiatives, Winnipeg Development Agreement, and now the

special \$5 million for city streets. Those are all very significant.

What have some of the other people been saying throughout the province about this? The president of the University of Manitoba, Eموke Szathmary, said: "The province has come through, and that's wonderful. I look at this as the first step in the right direction."

Klaus Thiessen, the CEO of Winnipeg 2000: "The key is that this budget was very balanced. There was some increased spending, tax reductions and debt repayment."

Mario Santos, chairman of Winnipeg School Division No. 1, lauded the government's plans. "He said by the time many children in Winnipeg No. 1 start grade school, they already have learning problems due to difficulties in the home or an improper diet. 'Obviously, the government is moving in a good direction here,' he said."

What do people in rural Manitoba say? Incidentally, what is the priority for the rural Manitoba representatives over on that side of the House? Well, here is one. On Wednesday, January 28, two of the members opposite, the NDP Agriculture critic, who is the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and the NDP Environment critic, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), along with their assistant, Shaun Loney, went out and held a meeting on the hog industry at Oakbank. They advertised this, and they publicized it. They went out to try and stir up people's anger against the expansion of the hog industry, and they got two people out.

One of them was a member of the Department of Agriculture, who decided he should come out and see it and see what was going on, and he wrote a report to tell us that nobody was interested in them. They tried to fly by them all sorts of things about regulation and monitoring, that there should be better development planning for siting hog barns and there should be more—all these kinds of things—that we should be looking at other livestock sectors, not just hogs, and trying to fly anything. Of course, nobody is interested in what they have to say, because they have no credibility. They are just like the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), zero credibility.

Anyway, fortunately, Manitobans from throughout the province have other ideas, better ideas, and had a great deal to say about this budget that did have credibility. For instance, Jerome Mauws, the executive director of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, said new money for infrastructure programs, agriculture and health care is among the highlights for rural and northern Manitoba in this year's provincial budget. "I think there are some positive things for rural Manitoba," he said.

"Mauws was particularly pleased to hear about the additional \$10 million the province plans to spend this year on highway construction and maintenance."

What else is being said? Oh, here is another one. "Judith Sawatzky, president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, was surprised with the level of debt repayment. 'We got more than we bargained for,' she said."

Of course, we had an interesting article in the paper on the weekend. It is entitled Manitoba's rural boom. The article says: "Not only have populations stabilized, but nearly half of rural municipalities and towns have increased in population, according to new census figures.

"The reason?

"The rural economy is going crazy," says Jake Kosior, research associate of the University of Manitoba Transport Institute.

"Winnipeg is booming itself, and is still the economic engine. But on a per-capita basis, the rural economy is expanding faster."

"In an amazing reversal, half of Manitoba's 72 registered towns increased in population during 1991-96, including 10 that increased by more than five percent."

"The reversal is nearly phenomenal considering the bleak outlook for rural communities in the mid-1980s and early 1990s."

That is what they got from members opposite—bleak outlook from bleak people, I might say, Madam

Speaker. These are people who are constantly looking in the wrong direction, who are constantly negative, critical, whining, complaining and trying to convince people that things are much worse than they really think they are. Well, fortunately for us, Manitobans do not listen to New Democrats. Fortunately, they know when things are going better, and they know that things never went this well when they were in office.

Judith Sawatzky, the president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, said that those lean times back then in the mid-'80s "taught families and business people how to survive. They learned to do whatever it took to make a few dollars, or improve their existing business, and that sharpened entrepreneurial skills.

"People worked really hard when things were bad," said Sawatzky.

"Now, with the economic turnaround, they're reaping rewards."

"Since 1961 Winkler has grown 200 percent, climbing to more than 7,200 residents, from about 2,500."

"Today RV manufacturer Triple-E Canada employs more than 300 people."

Peter Enns is just one example. "Of Winkler's 36 manufacturing companies, 34 were started locally, a figure that produces some astonishment in business circles.

"In fact, Winkler's unemployment rate is about zero right now, Sawatzky said."

Now, that is the kind of turnaround that has occurred because of the change in policies of this administration, and I might say that this prevails everywhere in the province. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is about as good at gloom and doom as anybody in this House, Madam Speaker, but, you know, he is not speaking for all the people in his area for sure. In fact, it is doubtful that he speaks for very many people.

* (1530)

Here is another story that comes out of a December 10th edition of the Winnipeg Free Press. Stats say

Thompson thrives despite Inco's scaling back. It says statistics from the Thompson economic development department show there have been building permits issued for over \$10 million worth of construction within the town so far this year from which 15 new businesses have been born. Figures also show city and provincial investment has resulted in over \$1.7 million in improvements in the downtown area since 1991. Quote, we have seen steady growth in the last few years, said Thompson Mayor Bill Comaskey.

I can tell you this, colleagues, things were never this good in Thompson when the NDP were in office, and yet they complain and complain and complain, the New Democrats. Things were never this good when the New Democrats were in office, and the people know that.

But you know what I find interesting is that the New Democrats opposite talk about health care a lot. Let us talk about what health care was like under the New Democrats. Here is one. Winnipeg Free Press, December 20, 1983, a story about the fact that in Brandon there is a waiting list of 1,000 patients for surgery. Even their Minister of Health knew that they were creating difficulties in the hospitals. This is what he said in a letter that he wrote in 1985 to all of the health care institutions, quote: Over the past few weeks, I have been meeting with many organizations to present an overview of the challenges facing the health care system. Chief among these is the need to plan for change.

What do these people oppose all the time?

Some Honourable Members: Change.

Mr. Filmon: Change. But this is their Minister of Health. I will go on. He says: In view of our present fiscal outlook, we simply cannot continue to finance health at the same rate of increase as has prevailed in the past and still be able to provide quality service for all Manitobans, particularly with the expected increase in the numbers of our elderly. In the presentation, I asked for consultation, assistance and support to help meet the challenges that face us.

Well, what ended up happening was that he was providing them with increases that were woefully

below the rate of inflation, and by the time we got around to early 1988, just before they were defeated, a survey was done by Winnipeg pollster Arthur Gillman showing that Manitoba's health care system was in trouble and the NDP government was to blame. The respondents to the survey said they were afraid their health care system was disintegrating. They believed the Manitoba government directed health care by partisan politics, that is the New Democrats. Most respondents saw shortages of cancer treatment facilities, eye doctors, heart surgeons, nurses, physiotherapists and public health nurses.

There we have, just for example, what health care is like under the NDP. We know, because in Saskatchewan they closed 52 hospitals, in Ontario they closed 3,000 beds. That is what they did when they were in office, but you listen to them where they are in opposition, and you would think that they were living in a different world. That is the problem that we have. They have absolutely no credibility on any one of these issues that they are criticizing.

But the good news is that most Manitobans know and understand that things are better today than they have been in three decades. They know that we have the ability now to control our choices. Let me just say something about our labour market because members opposite, particularly the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and sometimes the duke of doom or the deacon of despair for Crescentwood, they try and suggest that somehow the type of jobs is not as good or the percentage of the labour force or whatever.

Here is something that came out just at the end of the year. This is more proof about Manitoba's strong labour market. Recently, Statistics Canada has been coming out with a variety of ways to analyze just exactly how we do in comparison across the country. Firstly, among other things, it shows that the 1997 unemployment rate in Manitoba was the lowest since 1981. We had to go all the way back to another Conservative government to find an unemployment rate that was as good as this. It never was during the New Democrats. But the interesting thing is that the participation rate in the workforce is higher this year than it was in 1981. It is up at 67 percent versus 65.4 percent. If the current participation rate were the same as it was in 1981, unemployment would be just 4.4

percent. So we are getting more and more percent of the population into the workforce and working, Madam Speaker.

Another way to look at this is to focus on the employment rate; that is the share of the labour force age population which is employed. Manitoba's employment rate for the first 11 months of '97 was 62.5 percent, the second highest rate in our history, just a shade below the 1990 peak, well above the national rate of 58.8 percent. It translates into 19,900 more jobs in Manitoba in the increase in participation rate. The gap between our rate and the national rate is the highest it has ever been, and we are second only to Alberta in terms of the employment rate in Canada. That is characteristic of so many different things.

If you take a look at the recent forecast that was put out by the Toronto Dominion Bank, the Toronto Dominion Bank said that there are two provinces in Canada that have an excellent outlook in fiscal and economic terms—two provinces—Manitoba and Alberta. If you take a look at the credit rating, who borrows at the best rates in Canada? Only Alberta borrows at a better rate than Manitoba. We are in the upper echelon with Alberta.

In terms of economic growth over the last three years, the top two provinces in Canada, Manitoba and Alberta. This is consistent because this province has done its job in creating an economy that people want to invest in, that people want to come and live in. In fact, yesterday I had the great pleasure of being at a very happy event celebrating five Manitoba companies who are among the 50 best-managed companies in Canada. I want to say what is important about that is that Manitoba represents just 4 percent of the Canadian population, 5 percent of the GDP, yet 10 percent of the best-managed companies in Canada in this national survey come from Manitoba. Invariably, all of these people who were there talked about the fact that this economy is doing well. It is one of the best economies in all of Canada—[interjection] Absolutely.

The member refers to an individual who last night told my wife that they are doing big things. They are on an expansionary mode. He says that, when they talk to people from eastern Canada and Toronto these days, they say, well, maybe you had better come to Manitoba

if you want to talk to us about business because this is now becoming one of the best business centres in Canada.

I heard another interesting story yesterday, and that was with respect to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). One of the people who was being honoured in the 50 best-managed companies said that he lives or at least he lived in Crescentwood during the last election campaign. The member for Crescentwood came around to the door, and he asked him what he thought of the payroll tax. The member for Crescentwood said, well, I think it is a wonderful tax, because now it only is being paid by the very big businesses, and they are the rich banks and all those people, you know, that should be paying it.

So this person, who has a relatively small high-tech computer software company and only employs about 35 people, said, well, I have got news for you, I am a small company, and I pay \$78,000 in taxes on the payroll tax. He said, that is impossible. That is what the member for Crescentwood said. I mean, this is the financial ignoramus that we are dealing with who has the nerve to criticize our side of the House.

* (1540)

Just a couple more little comparisons about our labour force that I find very interesting: Statistics Canada has published a new study that uses three additional measures to estimate underemployment. The first measure of underemployment is nonpermanent jobs as a share of total paid employment. At 10 percent, Manitoba is tied with B.C. and Ontario for the lowest ratio.

The second measure is involuntary part-time employment, that is, the percentage of workers who would prefer to have a full-time job. Manitoba's 26 percent rate is the lowest in the country. The final measure is involuntary self-employment, people who are self-employed only because they cannot get another job. The national rate was 12 percent, but in Manitoba the amount was too small to be expressed. So on all three measures, Manitoba is providing more jobs and those jobs are the real McCoy.

So I just want to say, Madam Speaker, how proud I am to be able to stand here today to speak in support of the budget that has been brought in by the minister, a

budget that, as I said earlier, has had the efforts and the support of many people throughout the province and a budget that I believe we can take with pride to any area of Canada, because among the most important things that this budget does is it continues the sense of confidence that people have that this province is a great place to live, it is a great place to work, it is a great place to invest, it is a great place to raise a family.

I see people, young people in particular, who used to think that they had to move out of the province because the NDP were in office, that when they graduated from university that the only thing they could look forward to was moving out of the province.

You know, I met last year with the graduating students from engineering and, even in the time when I graduated back in the '60s, about 55 percent of the graduating class found employment in Manitoba. Today the dean was telling me that last year it was just about 80 percent of the engineering graduates found work in Manitoba.

If you look at areas like business, the business faculty, commerce and business administration, you will find that virtually a hundred percent of them would be employed in our province because of the growing financial services industry and the growing opportunities in all of these new businesses that are here. The fact is that some of them do go out to get experience elsewhere.

I had a chat recently with a young lad who is a graduate of our Commerce faculty who is very specialized as a currency trader. Currency trading is a very specialized environment these days. He has worked here for a couple of years and he is going to Toronto now to get experience with a bigger currency trading operation. His one goal is to get enough experience to just add to his resume to come back to Manitoba and to work out of Manitoba, because most of it is being done electronically these days. He says when I get enough of a name for myself in this particular field I am going to work in Manitoba, because that is where I want to be. That is exactly what we are hearing time and time again.

I tell you, the biggest difference between these bright, young, aggressive, active people, well educated,

knowledgeable, between them and the critics that we hear opposite is that these people have confidence in the future, that these people have a positive outlook, that these people are not afraid of change. These people believe in themselves, they believe in the province, they believe in the economy, and they know that the sky is the limit for them. They look at the members opposite, and you can imagine why they cannot even relate to them. These people opposite are, you know, the past. What they really represent is the past that everybody wants to get rid of, forget about and never ever have to deal with again.

I just thought that the Winnipeg Free Press had an interesting article back a little while ago that talked about—and it said the looney left just cannot get it right, and it talked about a new book that was put out by Professor John Richards, a professor in British Columbia, former member of the Allan Blakeney government, New Democrat, and he has sadly concluded that much of the left and the NDP in particular has abandoned its responsibility to help in the process of developing new ideas and better ways of dealing with our challenges, leaving the field of reform wide open for elements of the political right. He characterizes the looney-left wing of the NDP as being defined by three characteristics. One is hostility to market behaviour, the second is debt denial, and thirdly a willingness to promote the claims of interest groups over the collective good, and, of course, Brian Cole said the interesting thing here is that one of the last vestiges of the looney left in evidence in Canada is right here in the NDP caucus of this Legislature, and he is absolutely right. They demonstrate it day after day after day in what they do, day after day.

Madam Speaker, I have to tell you that I am absolutely delighted at all of the signs of the strong economy that are reinforced by yet another balanced budget and a budget that provides confidence and optimism in the future in every area you look at. In 1997, farm cash receipts reached a record high of \$3 billion, manufacturing shipments reached \$10 billion for the first time in our history. Growth in foreign countries exceeded the national increase for the fourth consecutive year, and, of course, best of all, in 1998 Manitoba will record its seventh consecutive year of rising private capital investment.

So I say to you this is a budget that deserves the support of every member of this Legislature. This is a budget of which all of us can be proud. This is a budget that will continue Manitoba's progress as one of the best places anywhere in Canada for whatever purpose you want to live, to work, to invest, to raise a family, this is the place to be and this budget will continue that process.

* (1550)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments to this provincial budget.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Reid: I want to add some comments based on what I have heard here today by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) a few moments ago, and I am actually disappointed in what I saw by the Premier's speech here today. For the first time in my, well, nearly eight years in this Legislature, I saw this Premier reading and quoting from document after document. He did not have the integrity to even make his own speech about what was actually happening around him. He spent most of his time—[interjection] For the first time in my nearly eight years in this Legislature, I saw the Premier of this province read his speech from editorial after editorial. He did not even have the integrity to come here with his own speech from the top of his head and speak from his heart about what has been happening in this province. Maybe perhaps he does not have a heart. That may be true, and judging by what is happening in health care in this province, I sense that would be the reality.

What I want to talk about, Madam Speaker, is what the people of my community are telling me about.

An Honourable Member: The Tin Man.

Mr. Reid: Yes, perhaps the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is the Tin Man; he is searching for his heart. I want to talk about what is happening and what the people of my

community are telling me about the budget. I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of people since the budget was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and I have made a point of asking people questions that were very neutral because I want to get a real sense of what has been happening. I can tell that the people of my community, regardless of age, are talking about health care still being the primary concern in this province. In fact, the people of my community are saying over and over again that this government has betrayed the health care system of our province and have allowed it to continue to deteriorate as a result of bad management.

Now, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance, when he stood up and made his Budget Address, a week ago Friday, talked about \$100 million in new health care spending for the province of Manitoba for this budget year. As speaker after speaker on this side of the House has pointed out that this Minister of Finance was false in his statements that we have put \$100 million into the health care system of this province, we know that the reality is less than \$2 million of new money have gone into health care this budget year. Now I can tell you that the people that I speak to in my community are very, very worried, and I want to give some real life examples of what is happening in health care. People that have come up to me, whether it be in church or in the shopping centre or in the food stores or on the street or in the library, wherever you encounter people of my community, they are talking to me about the health care system and what has been happening to them and their families.

I can give you an example of one young family that called me. The child had to go to the hospital with breathing difficulties, double pneumonia, and that child was on two units of oxygen and was in the intensive care unit of the hospital. The hospital was so desperate for those bed spaces that it moved that young preschool-age child out of the intensive care unit into a regular ward, where there was less nursing support for that child and it was up to the family to ensure that that child's needs were met in that particular hospital room.

I want to tell you about the family whose father was in the hospital with Alzheimer's. That particular individual, who was a doctor in our city here through his working career, now is hospitalized with

Alzheimer's and does not know what is happening in his surroundings. What the nurses have told that particular family—and they have related it to me—is that they are free to go out and hire extra nursing staff to tend to that father's needs to make sure that he does not wander away from his hospital bed in that particular hospital, because the nurses say they are overworked and cannot tend to that particular individual on an hourly basis like you might expect in the health care system. That is what that family is telling me.

There are many other concerns that I can relate about health care in this province that people have told me about. Whether it is the young families, whether it is the individuals, or whether it is seniors, health care is the primary concern, and they are talking about the mismanagement of the health care system in this province.

But while the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) is here, I want to talk a few moments about what has been happening in education, as well. We have seen a significant decrease in provincial support to the school divisions in this province. In fact, my own school division just last week had to raise the education taxes upon the community of Transcona by around 3 percent.

An Honourable Member: Why?

Mr. Reid: Because of you and your cutbacks to the education system and transfers in this province, that is why. The enrollment in my school division has not gone down, and yet the funding has decreased from the province to those particular programs. I can give you an example, just having had a meeting with the school board people, the administration people just last week. They asked me to come there and listen to the concerns they had with respect to the training programs that they had because they offer off-campus programs in the particular school division, Transcona. That school division, Transcona-Springfield, is telling me that you, through your system, will not offer or allow off-campus people that are taking vocational programs, skills-upgrading programs in the school division, to apply for and receive student financial assistance. They are disqualified because it is a school division that is running the program.

If it was a private vocational school running the program, you would be eligible, those students would

be eligible for student financial assistance, but because it is a school division, they are not eligible, any student that enrolls in that particular program. So there is a discriminatory factor that is built right into your system that makes it more difficult for people to receive their upgrading.

I listened to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) here today in Question Period when she was responding to my colleague, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), talking about the letter that the minister had written to the school board here in the city. The Minister of Education found time out of her so-called busy schedule to write a letter to that particular school board asking the school board to take disciplinary action against a particular student at that particular school.

If the minister can find time to write letters like that when someone is freely expressing, through their democratic rights, their opinions, I do not see why this Minister of Education cannot take time to study and to make improvements to the special needs programs in this province. I have raised this issue in this Legislature time and time again with the Minister of Education, asking this minister to review the bar that she set for Level II funding needs for special needs children, and nothing has happened.

The Curé family, who has come to me time and time again for assistance and have raised their case in this House, the minister refuses to deal with it and has again, just this week, denied the application for Level II funding for Breanne Curé, for a child who is falling through the cracks of the education system of this province. This minister and this government should be ashamed on the way they are treating the Curé family, Breanne Curé in particular, and the other special needs children in the Transcona-Springfield School Division and the other school divisions of this province suffering the same fate.

I listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) talk about money that he is putting into the health care system, the so-called dollars. I have had the opportunity in my eight years in this Legislature to travel with my colleagues. I had the good fortune to travel with many of my colleagues to northern and rural Manitoba, to go beyond the borders of the Perimeter

Highway and to see how other Manitobans live and the conditions under which they live. I have been to several First Nations communities in this province, and I thank my colleagues for giving me that opportunity to travel to those communities and to speak with the residents firsthand. When the minister announced that he was putting money into the diabetes program, which is epidemic in this province in First Nations communities—the minister put in, I am told, some \$600,000 which is a mere drop in the bucket that you would need to solve and to tend to the health care needs of the First Nations peoples in this province. So \$600,000, while it may be a first step in your minds, does not go anywhere near addressing the problem that we have with the diabetes epidemic in this province.

I listened to the Minister of Finance when he talked about putting \$5 million into city of Winnipeg road improvement programs. Well, I can tell you, travelling around my community, we could spend that \$5 million just in Transcona alone and still have roads left over to fix. So I am not sure how this \$5 million—and I know there are several projects in Transcona that are going to be undertaken with some of this money, but \$5 million does not come anywhere close to meeting the needs of the city of Winnipeg for upgrading of roads. You just have to talk to the residents of each of our communities to find that out.

* (1600)

I listened to the comments of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) when he was making his remarks with respect to the budget in this province. I asked the Minister of Labour some time ago whether or not he was going to strike the Minimum Wage Board. In fact, I think I asked him in '96 and '97 when he was going to be striking the Minimum Wage Board, and he said, no, we are not going to be doing it. The minimum wage was satisfactory at that time—[interjection] The former Minister of Labour was making those comments that we are not going to strike the Minimum Wage Board.

Lo and behold, what did we see recently? The current Minister of Labour strikes the Minimum Wage Board. You have got to know that there is a provincial general election around the corner, because it was the same trick that you used in 1994 when you struck the Minimum Wage Board just prior to the election. You

increased it to \$5.25 an hour, I think it was, and then subsequently raised it six months later to \$5.40. Well, I can tell you, you are still 20 cents an hour below the Saskatchewan minimum wage. I suspect that after you have your four-year annual review of the minimum wage, you will come back with another 20-cent-an-hour pre-election minimum-wage adjustment.

Yes, 20 cents an hour, that is what it will do, just buy you a little time to skate past the election on the minimum wage act instead of tying it to the real economy of the province of Manitoba, as we have suggested time and time again that the government do. This minister only wants to skate by the election with respect to the minimum wage and put it by so he can say, well, I at least have raised it up to the Saskatchewan minimum wage, which is \$5.60 an hour, as I have already indicated.

I listened to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) when he talked about—and I should get back to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) a few moments ago when he said in his speech too that he is quite proud of the Workers Compensation Board, when he made his comments here. In fact, he said that and he has announced that you are going to reduce the premiums for employers in this province 5 percent a year over the next three years. [interjection] At the expense of injured workers, my colleague indicates, and I agree.

What have we seen? What has the reality been with respect to the rates in this province? Well, there was an 11 percent decrease in premiums in the first year when it was supposed to have been five. Then this year, the minister has decreased it by 8 percent, and he said he is quite proud of that. I expect that with another \$40-plus-million surplus coming at the board, we will see a further percentage increase similar to that.

What about that young man that fell in the acid at Pine Falls? His employer was prosecuted in the courts and received a slap on the wrist for the offence that happened there. Is the minister proud of situations like that? What happens to that young man's future? Yes, he gets his wage-loss benefits for a short period of time before he is forced back into the workforce. The man is blind, technically speaking and legally speaking. What happens to that young man? Under the old system, he would have been entitled to 75 percent as a

settlement. So what you have effectively done is taken that money out of that young man's pocket, out of his future, to give it back to the employers of this province by way of your rebate, and you say you are proud of that.

Well, I hope you can live with your conscience, if you have one, about the effect that you are having on that young man's life and his future, because that is where that money is coming from. It just happened to be that that legislation was brought to this Legislature by the MLA that represents the Pine Falls community, the current Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik).

An Honourable Member: Ah, who is that?

An Honourable Member: The most invigorating speaker of the House.

Mr. Reid: Yes, the so-called most invigorating speaker of this Legislature, self-proclaimed, who has brought in that legislation that is taking that money out of the pocket of that young man and giving it back to the employers of this province. I hope you are proud of your accomplishments in that regard, because I can tell you that young man is going to suffer for the rest of his life because of your actions, and the many other thousands of this province who are suffering the same fate by your taking money out of their pockets and putting it back into the pockets of the employers.

I can tell the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), and I say this in all seriousness, you have already had two suicides at the Workers Compensation Board in this province involving the board's actions, and I can tell you, judging by the phone calls that I am receiving to my office, there are other desperate individuals out in our communities in our province who may suffer the same fate as a result of your actions involving legislation and the Workers Compensation Board of this province. God help us. I hope it never comes to that, but I can tell you judging by the phone calls I am getting and the sleepless nights I have having to deal with those individuals, we may be facing another situation like that in the near future.

So I raise that for the minister's attention to make him aware that he has a serious problem at the comp board, and as long as you continue to underfund and underpay

and disregard the interests of those injured workers, you run the risk of having another suicide involving the Workers Compensation Board of this province.

Now, I do not know whether the minister has put new inspectors into the Workplace Safety and Health branch of this province. Judging by the budget document here, you have about another \$90,000. That may be just strictly for adjustments to the wages as a result of the contract settlement. If that is the case, I say to the minister again under Workplace Safety and Health, you are seriously underresourcing that particular branch, and you need to take a serious look at what is happening with your investigations and your inspections in workplaces.

You have over 40,000 businesses in this province for the number of inspectors you have, whether you are using your numbers that you sent to me because you did not agree with me, or the numbers that I use when I am being told by people that work in the branch. Whichever ones you use, you are still underresourced for the Workplace Safety and Health branch of this province. So I hope you put further inspections into that.

Yes, education is important, and the previous Minister of Labour of this province has said that the only component that Workplace Safety and Health was responsible for was education. Well, I can tell this Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the previous Minister of Labour both that the purpose of The Workplace Safety and Health Act of this province, by the father of that act, by one of the people who put that act together, the sole purpose was not just education, but it was also to make sure that those people that were responsible were held accountable. So education is not the only component, as the former Minister of Labour has said in this House, and I got that directly from the person who was the father of the act.

Now, I look back at how this branch has handled your fire commissioner's office, and you took it out of the Department of Labour and turned it into a special operating agency. Your sole mandate for that particular fire commissioner's office now is profit. Looking at the fire that happened in Pine Falls again, you have put at risk children of this province by turning that into a profit centre. You know, Mr. Minister, that your office,

the fire commissioner's office, now charges those daycares, every one of them, in the province. They have to request first that they have a fire inspection, if you do not have a municipal fire force—like you have offloaded that responsibility unto now—or then they have to pay a fee if the fire commissioner's office goes in and does inspections, of a daycare, children.

You say you want to look after the children of this province to make sure that they are well taken care of and their safety is uppermost in our minds, and yet you charge the daycares where those children go a fee to have a fire inspection, a hazard inspection.

You have got an inspector that did an inspection of that Pine Falls facility and then did not go back and do a follow-up. What kind of a fire commissioner's office are you running if you do not do follow-up inspections when you found deficiencies in the first place, putting at risk those children and now there has been a loss of life as a result? I do not think that is an appropriate way for a fire commissioner's office to run. It should not be on a for-profit basis in the first place; and secondly, the public safety, especially for children, should be uppermost in our minds. You have a deficiency, you should be doing follow-up inspections to make sure that those deficiencies are corrected within a short time frame or close the facility down. You should not put anyone's life at risk. There have to be other alternatives found than just your pure profit motive.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on about the deficiencies in this budget. I listened to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) when he was talking here today about increased numbers of people employed in the province of Manitoba, and yet when I look at the employment statistics for the province of Manitoba, just month over month, the numbers that just came out last week, we see a decrease in the number of people in the workforce in this province.

So I do not know where the Premier is getting his numbers. Perhaps he is averaging out over a period of time, whatever makes you look good, I guess. Whatever looks good for you, I guess those are the figures you pluck out of the air, whatever suits your purpose at the time. But our workforce—and I hope, but looking at the falling prices of commodities, looking at

the falling prices of metals, looking at the falling prices of grain—

An Honourable Member: The falling popularity of the NDP.

Mr. Reid: The popularity of the NDP is doing just fine, thank you. We are doing just fine, and any time the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) wants to call an election, I am prepared to go to the polls right now. I am sure everybody on this side of the House is prepared to go to the polls. You can call the election anytime you want. In fact, if you want to call it today, I will go put my running shoes on and I am out knocking on doors again. But I guess one of the great unknowns—perhaps this is why the government is not calling the election right now—is they are not sure whether they should have the PC Party in bigger letters this time or perhaps maybe just disappear from the sign altogether.

An Honourable Member: It cannot get any smaller.

* (1610)

Mr. Reid: Well, I know my eyesight is getting a little bad as my eyes age, but that PC lettering on your party signs is getting a lot smaller and perhaps will disappear right from it this time.

An Honourable Member: Then they call themselves the health care party.

Mr. Reid: Yes, well, they can try the health care party, but I can tell you that you will not be doing yourselves any favour in the community of Transcona.

This budget is a budget that attempts to deceive the people of the province of Manitoba. This budget is not a true and accurate reflection of the finances of the Province of Manitoba and the expenditures of the finances of the Province of Manitoba. I believe you are building up a slush fund towards your pre-election and your election purposes and that you will, by way of your next budget, attempt to match the Province of Alberta with respect to their personal income taxes. If you do not attempt to go that route, you will look at the sales tax, and there are going to be financial implications there. At the same time, you are going to risk that health care will not be a future liability for you

because you think that your personal care homes will come on stream before that election.

I can tell you that it ain't going to work—and to Hansard people, pardon my English for using the word “ain't”—but it is not going to work because the people of Manitoba were fooled once by you. They believed you on the Jets, and the Jets left the province of Manitoba, and look at them now. They believed you when you said you were not going to sell the Manitoba Telephone System, but they do not believe you now, and they do not believe you when you say you are not going to sell Manitoba Hydro because they do not trust you anymore. Based on those two facts alone and what you have done with health care, your days are numbered in this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, with those few comments, I will turn the floor over to my colleague the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) to add some other comments that he would like to add with respect to the budget as well. Thank you.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I just have a few brief words. So much of the concerns, that we have, have been expressed already by my colleagues on this side.

I want to say that this is a government that has isolated itself from the needs of Manitoba to the extent that the issues that I hear most at the doorsteps and through phone calls and letters have either been ignored or have been worsened by this budget that has been proposed. First of all, health care is on the minds of every Manitoban. We all know of how badly the health care system in Manitoba has become under this current government. We know the effects on people. We know how the health care system in Manitoba now is multiplying the terrible effects of poor health on Manitobans. Yet what do they do in health care, Madam Speaker? They say one thing about how much they are going to increase the spending. They say to Manitobans they are going to increase spending by \$100 million, and, in fact, that is untrue.

Second, we hear Manitobans every day express their concern about the education system under this current government. What does this government do in response to those concerns? It continues its pattern of

squeezing and squeezing the public school system to the point where, on a per-pupil basis, funding for education has decreased by \$472 since 1993.

The third issue, Madam Speaker, and what I want to address in particular, is an area of great concern to Manitobans. That is the rapid rise and threat of criminal street gangs in this province. For some reason not only have they ignored the needs of Manitobans when it comes to health care and education, but they cannot even learn a lesson from the deaths, the tragic deaths of people like Jeff Giles, Eric Vargas, and Beeper Spence, to name but three. Those were three young Manitobans with promise, from differing backgrounds, who very early in their life were struck down by this new threat of street gang activity.

It is not just a concern anymore in the city of Winnipeg. The threat of street gangs has spread throughout this province—indeed, this last weekend I was down to Kenora—and has spread from Winnipeg into northwestern Ontario. Communities are living in fear like never before. Families are living in fear. Students, I hear, do not want to go to school because of this fear of gangs in their neighbourhood.

I urge the members opposite to meet with the people that are expressing concern publicly about gangs, meet with the survivors of victims of gang crime. It is so tragic. Manitobans feel that that friendly Manitoba that we have come to love is fading, slipping away from us, and it is largely because of this threat of criminal street gangs.

What does this government do? Nothing. Does it so much as mention street gangs in the throne speech? No, Madam Speaker. Does it so much as even mention street gangs in the budget? No. G-a-n-g-s. Gangs. It is one syllable. That is not a tough one. Do they not get it? Have they so bunkered in, have they so isolated themselves from the needs of our communities that they continue to deny the existence of this threat to our safety? Not only have they buried the government's own report from the Youth Secretariat on gangs, but they are burying their own heads. They are in a state of denial.

When the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) a while ago was asked, why did they bury this report on gangs,

he said: gangs are a top priority for me. It is no priority for them at all. Not only were street gangs not even mentioned in their budget but not a single program directed at gangs was announced. While there may be some programs that incidentally may impact on gangs, that will do nothing to overcome what has happened under this government. This is a government that has overseen the growth and entrenchment of street gangs in Manitoba.

When you look at the numbers in the city of Winnipeg alone, the number of gang members has grown from 400 to 1400 in just over three years. There is no indication that the number in Winnipeg alone is decreasing.

Last week I spoke to the gang unit. They said the number is staying around 1400 as far as they know. If anything, it has increased.

But why this denial of the existence of street gangs? This is a government that is so concerned about the image of Manitoba across Canada. They look at their tax rates and they say, well, we have got to get in sync, we have got to make sure we are competitive with other provinces. But do they not understand that to be competitive that they also have to have an attractive province here? Do they think this is an attractive province when The Globe and Mail, in issue after issue, says Manitoba has the most violent crime in Canada, Manitoba is the murder capital of Canada, Manitoba is the gang capital of Canada?

What investment do they expect from that? Just on their own measure of success that is attracting investment, they are not going to do it if they continue this denial of the existence of street gangs. But, Madam Speaker, we say the issue is really this—do not turn your backs on Manitobans, do not turn your backs on the youth. It is one thing to be trashing the current generations of Manitobans but do not trash the next generation by allowing this horrid cancer to continue to grow without a comprehensive response. It is in the budget where that comprehensive response has to be set out because it is an investment that is required, the kind of investment that in our Gang Action Plan we have urged on this government.

* (1620)

Again, today, Madam Speaker, I urge this government, please steal our plan. We have 18 points in here. It is not everything to everybody, but it is a start. And there is a cost. We estimated the cost at \$11 million, but what a wise investment because what is happening out there in terms of lost lives, in terms of fear is devastating, devastating to this province. Note this is the government that in this budget turned its back on the North, turned its back on aboriginal peoples, aboriginal youth once again. It is so out of touch.

What is another reason for this denial of the existence of street gangs, Madam Speaker? Is it because it might lead to questions by Manitobans as to why it is under this government that this street gang problem has arisen? We have said over and over again that this is the government that has in no small way created the conditions that have bred the gangs that we now have to deal with. Gangs are organized; we do not believe this government is organized to counter it. It is neither organized in itself nor is it trying in any way to organize the communities that can counter gang activity in this province. So there is nothing in this budget that we see that will change things for the better in terms of public safety for Manitobans. There is nothing in here that recognizes the role of crime prevention in Manitoba.

Even in the face of the Hughes report that said to this government, of all governments in Canada, you had better get serious, Mr. Hughes said, about crime prevention. He says the time has come for governments to move safety of person and property onto the sacred pedestal alongside education and health. It is Ted Hughes who said the cost of moving toward solutions to the problems identified in the examples given would be very, very substantial.

Would the dollars it would cost to implement a program of assistance to those wanting to opt out of the gang syndrome be a justified and worthwhile expenditure of public funds? Would pouring millions of dollars into economic and social programs that would allow poverty-stricken people with no marketable skills, no job and no job prospects to participate as law-abiding citizens in Canadian life be a justified and worthwhile expenditure of public funds? Someday, he said, the Canadian public has to accept that the answer to those questions is yes. We all have to realize that we cannot forever afford to turn our

backs on the problem as it exists and avoid reaching out to the real solutions.

He warned, Madam Speaker, that what must be appreciated is the serious consequences that will occur if that movement does not commence, and he concluded: for failure to respond will threaten the continuance of control of our streets by lawful authority.

Why do they not look at their own reports instead of burying them? This is an irresponsible budget when it comes to public safety.

So, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, on this basis alone, let alone the deceit that is set out in this budget about their spending, let alone the fact that there is very little, if anything, in this budget that will improve the quality of life of my constituents, and given that indeed in the budget when you look beyond the rhetoric of the minister, there is in this budget regressive change.

This budget, Madam Speaker, is not a document that is supportable by this side of the House. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): In a recent interview, the noted Canadian author Lawrence Martin was interviewed by the Hill Times, and the subject was If I Were Prime Minister. He was asked the question—

An Honourable Member: Paul Martin?

Mr. Kowalski: No, it is not Paul Martin. It was Lawrence Martin, the writer of eight best sellers. He was asked the question: What is the greatest problem facing the Parliament itself? He said that, by definition, opposition are there to oppose, no matter what the wisdom of the government's direction. Ergo, any semblance of integrity in the system is, by definition, nonexistent. I have always tried to operate with the greatest integrity that I can here, so I felt that to vote on this budget without explaining the vote would leave an unclear message.

For example, if I voted against this budget, does that mean I am against tax relief? Does that mean I am not in favour of paying off our debt? Does that mean I am not for increased spending in many areas of the budget? If you do not get up and say, it could be interpreted.

If I vote for this budget, does that mean I support what has gone on in the past eight years, what has been done to our society, the social deficit that has been built up? If you do not get up and say, you know. So that is why I rise today.

I will be voting in favour of this budget. The reason that I am voting in favour of this budget is because, as many constituents have told me, it is time for tax relief. Okay. They say that it is a time for increased health care spending and, yes, is it enough? How much is it really? But, like an errant child that maybe has been going in the wrong direction, when they start going in the right direction, you want to amplify the good behaviour. Although I have disagreed with many of the government's actions, what brought us to this point today, how they have gone about it, right now there are good things in this budget.

It is not perfect. No budget ever will be, but I see things like a reduction in income tax. I see increased spending in health care. I see repayment debt. I look in the budget and I see public safety, something that is a concern to me, that there is an increase in spending on that. Something that is very important to me is children, and I see in the Youth Secretariat that there is increased spending in that in many areas.

So, no, I still do not support actions that the government has taken in the past, how they have gotten us to this point, the social deficit that has been built up, but I believe we now have started going in the right direction. Yes, it should have been done sooner. Yes, there is room for them to do more, but I am going to be voting for this budget because it is headed in the right direction.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Before I go into my somewhat detailed discussion on this particular budget, I did want to indicate to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), whom I have had the opportunity or the privilege to know for the last couple of years in a very personal way—in fact, he has been one of the most loyal friends that I have had in my somewhat short lifetime, but, having said that, I think at times we agree that there is need to disagree, and this is one of those times, even though I know the member for The Maples is doing what he feels in his heart is right for the constituents of The Maples. He has always put his

constituents first, and I respect that of the member for The Maples.

Like the member for The Maples, I, too, aspire to serve my constituents first. Having said that, there are a few things that I wanted to say with respect to the budget, that is, when I think of the budget, there are many positive things. The member for The Maples makes reference to some of those things.

When I try to get some sort of a common theme in terms of what is really happening, one of the things that I do in my constituency is I constantly try to get some feedback. I had asked a question back in 1990 of my constituents. The question was: Do you feel that the best health care possible is available to you? The response I had was 55.4 percent said yes. Well, some might say, well, it is the way in which you phrased the question and it has an impact on the way in which someone might actually answer.

Well, back in 1990, I asked that particular question, and again I asked in 1996 the identical question: Do you feel that the best health care possible is available to you? The response I got this time was 38 percent said yes. I believe that the government has not managed the change that is necessary in health care as good as it could have been managing. Instead, what I have seen is a government that is more focused in doing health care change strictly to save dollars. I do not see the administration or the management—and it is not necessarily to reflect on the civil servants because, ultimately, it is the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) who has to give that guidance and give the direction in order to manage that change in such a way in which we do not have the crisis situation that we have experienced over the past while.

* (1630)

What I do take great exception—and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) made reference to it in his speech. He talked about the importance of health care, and he talked about how the feds were offloading. I stood up in the month of June of last year, and I believe also in May, and I challenged the Premier to talk about the importance of the cash transfer over the tax points, and the Premier sidestepped the question.

I agree with the Premier there is an obligation, a moral obligation, for the federal government to provide cash payments. I am glad to see that at the very least what we have now seen is a federal government that is guaranteeing that cash, so there will always be cash payments. But this Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), because I asked them all this question, have never spoken in favour of enhancing the cash payments over the tax points, and there is a significant difference.

So on the one hand, they criticize the blame for what is happening in health care on the federal government, yet on the other hand, I would argue the key to any successful change in health care has to be in the way in which you administer the change, and the provincial government has the sole responsibility to administering the change.

There have been areas in health care reform that have worked quite positively. The member for The Maples and I and others and particular community members got involved in a very grassroots way to save the Seven Oaks Hospital—the former Minister of Health is quite aware of that—where it was being suggested that the Save the Seven Oaks Hospital was, in fact, or I should say, the Seven Oaks Hospital was on the block to being chopped as an acute care facility.

It was because of the work of community activists, it was because of the work of members such as the member for The Maples and other MLAs—the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was involved, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), and with all modesty, even myself was involved in it.

Anyway, we saw, I believe in that particular case, a government that was being sensitive to what, in fact, was being said. It made sense to leave the Seven Oaks Hospital facility as a first-class acute care facility with 24-hour emergency services. So there is reason for us to have hope, that the government, at times, does have an open mind and is trying to do the right thing with respect to health care.

But there are equal—if not, I would argue even more—signs that the government is moving in the wrong direction with respect to health care. I talked about the tax points versus the cash with the feds. We could

review some of the other things that they have actually done. The whole way in which they attempted to put together a reform package of health care through the American experience, referring to Connie Curran, to some of the more recent things, things such as the attempt to privatize home care and the cost and the social turmoil that was caused as a direct result of that. All of that could have been and should have been avoided. When we talk about the privatization of labs in health care, that concerns me.

I believe the province of Quebec is publicly financed, and there you have a very efficient, first-class system. When we talk about health care, every aspect of it does not have to be privatized. Manitobans want to feel that there is a sense that there is good quality health care being delivered. Where there might be an opportunity, I would not begrudge the government in doing it. But, when you talk about home care services, when you talk about lab services, I have some real concerns and, quite frankly, completely disagree with the private sector.

At the time, I had suggested that we might want to get some of the nonprofit community groups such as the health clinics involved. When I talk about health clinics, this is nothing new. I have talked about health clinics consistently and the important role that they should be playing in our health care system. Today, they do play an important role, but they could be playing a lot more of an important role. I would have liked to have seen the government concentrate more efforts on enhancing those community health clinics because when I think of health care reform or change, it is that sort of change that has to be put into place. You build the structures. You build into it an infrastructure in which, when you change it at the one end, you have people moving into it, and it makes sense then. So you do not have an individual senior sitting in a hospital facility when, in fact, they would be better off being in a personal care home but because you have not used the money in order to build that home care facility, that person is still in the hospital which costs more money.

It pleases me the extent to which the government has contributed to home care services outside of personal care homes. They take great pride in how much they have increased it, but one has to question whether or not, in fact, we could be doing more to provide

independent living for seniors and others to remain in their homes. I believe that there is room for significant improvement. I look to the government to try to be able to demonstrate that. What I see in most part is a government that is somewhat frustrated on how it should be moving ahead on the whole issue of health care reform.

Before I leave health care, another suggestion that I had made mention to the government—and I think for the first time I heard the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) implying the other day that this is something which they are actually looking at in a more tangible way, and that is the whole way in which we pay our doctors, the fee-for-service concept, Madam Speaker.

I think that what we need to do is move more toward salaried doctors. I am not talking two or three or four percentage. I would suggest to you that the government should be looking at getting 50 percent of our doctors on salary. We should be looking at having G.P.s in some of the health care clinics on salary in a much broader way, thereby increasing the quality of service being delivered in health care to our community.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to move on to our public education. I have always believed that there needs to be a quality public education system throughout the province, and what I have seen is that there has been a chronic underfunding of that public education through general revenues and, as a result of that, there are more inequities that have been created. When I talk about the inequities we take a look at different school divisions, the government's cop-out line always is that there is local autonomy with the school divisions, that they are the one that raise the taxes and it is those property owners that determine these are the services that they want for the school division.

* (1640)

Well, that might be something which they can say in the Chamber, but that does not address the issue. I have constantly and consistently brought that particular issue up. Why should residents that I represent, the people that live in Meadows West, people that live in Shaughnessy Park, Mynarski, in Garden Grove, in Tyndall Park have to pay more, a disproportionate amount of money more than others towards the

financing of public education? Do not give me the argument because that is, in fact, what the property taxpayer or my neighbours want, because that is a bogus argument. It does not carry any credibility.

When you have someone who has a \$100,000 home that lives in my area and they are paying \$400 more a year in property tax just because they happen to live in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 over someone that lives in another area of the province of Manitoba, that is not fair. Manitobans believe in having government services and so they believe in paying taxes, but what they expect of government is to pay their fair share of taxes, not that so-and-so has been collecting this amount and so-and-so only has to pay that amount.

Madam Speaker, I had asked our research person downstairs to come up with some numbers. He had found I believe a Brandon Sun article where they went and they took a local school tax comparison based on a \$75,000 house. The numbers that were provided for me indicated that in Brandon you are looking at \$440 a year; Minnedosa \$590 a year; Portage \$490 a year; Virden \$677; Steinbach \$415; average in Winnipeg \$646; Winkler \$486. Those are the numbers.

Well, what do you think the public's response would be if we said we are now going to finance health care in the same way in which we finance public education so that the people that are over in the Concordia Hospital have to finance in part that hospital facility through property tax? We should be looking at education and the financing of education in the same way that we look at funding health care.

Madam Speaker, I hope I do not get misquoted on this particular issue. I think it is unrealistic for us to believe that we are going to be able to transfer that property tax into general revenue, and that is not necessarily what I am expecting. At least what I would like to see from the government is movement, something that stops that drift in a movement, in a direction that shows that we are addressing that particular issue, but in the last decade I have not seen that at all.

Madam Speaker, that is something in which I would like to see more direction. I like to think at times I can be somewhat constructive in my criticism towards the

government, and I would suggest to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) that there is also a provincial levy for the school tax, and you are far better off to increase that provincial levy in order to compensate reducing the school board levy. At least this way, what you are going to see is people paying a fairer amount. That is one of the things that has been suggested, and there are other things, but the government has not taken any movement towards that.

Madam Speaker, when I think of the budget, I think of what it is that the government was putting before Manitobans, and there are a number of positive things. You have the increases to health care, increases to education, you are paying off the debt, you are giving a reduction in personal income tax and so forth. One of the things I would agree wholeheartedly with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is that this is no doubt the best budget that this government has brought into being in its 10 years, but in my opinion, there is a lot of room for improvement.

I anticipate that over the next period of time, I will be watching very closely how the government is spending those dollars and how they are reacting to the criticism that is out there, because in the two biggest areas of expenditure, health care and education, the government has not done well. If they were managing that change or invoking change where it was necessary, then it would be a heck of a lot easier for someone like myself to be more inclined to vote in favour of the budget. On a more personal note, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) has really gone out of his way in terms of assisting me with a very special project, and I have indicated to him that that is completely up to him in terms of when it is he wants to make it known. I just wanted to publicly acknowledge the Minister of Justice for his apolitical way of dealing with what is a very important issue with me; that, of course, being the youth in the neighbourhood, Madam Speaker, and I thank the minister for that.

Madam Speaker, there is another issue of gambling in the province of Manitoba, or gaming, which I believe I should at least make some reference to. I think that the government has to start looking at a gaming policy that is more based on tourism as opposed to revenue generation. I have used that line, and I have

commented extensively in the past on that particular issue.

There are so many aspects of the budget that one could actually comment on, and I know that I am going to be given many hours during the debates in Estimates to be able to go into much more detail, in-depth discussion on the budget, so that I can convey what my constituents have to say with respect to the government's agenda.

That is something that will be very important for me, is to ensure, in fact, first and foremost, that my constituents—because, you know, we are somewhat hopeful, but there are some things that might cause some concern for me personally that are occurring today, but I ultimately believe that I will be able to overcome, and we will have, and I would assure that my constituents—something which I believe I have said in the past, and I guess one could never say it enough, that my constituents have been and will continue to be my first priority.

In fact, Madam Speaker, as all of us attempt to service our constituents in the best way that we can, I have made the commitment that over the next few weeks my intentions are to knock on in excess of 2,000 doors. So, as members might be doing other things, if you do not necessarily see me around as long as much as I maybe have been in the past, rest assured that what I am doing is getting feedback from my constituents. That feedback will, in fact, be brought back to the Chamber because that is the biggest privilege that I have, which is that individuals have entrusted me to represent their interests. On the broader picture, I think it is important that all of us address the many issues facing the province, and that is why it has always been important to me to be inside this Chamber as much as possible. That is something in which again I would commit to doing because I believe very firmly in the democratic principles.

I would close to a certain degree by just acknowledging a few individuals who have been wonderful for me personally over the last week or so. First and foremost, my wife, followed by Mr. Terry Woodard and my colleague Gary Kowalski. All three have been simply extremely supportive and very much appreciated. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, just an announcement respecting House business prior to the next speaker. We are designating Wednesday, March 25, as an Opposition Day.

I believe there is agreement that Easter Monday, April 13, 1998, would not be a sitting day for this Legislature.

The government's intentions respecting tomorrow and Thursday of this week would be to deal with the resolution on the Order Paper standing in the name of the First Minister. If, however, proceedings should wrap up before that time has expired, the House would move to consideration of Interim Supply. That would take us for the balance of the time left—that, and the Opposition Day. That would take us to the time for the spring break that we previously agreed would take place.

* (1650)

Madam Speaker: To reiterate for information purposes, Wednesday, March 25, will be an Opposition Day. Easter Monday, April 13, the House will not sit. Tomorrow and Thursday will be dedicated to dealing with the resolution in the name of the Honourable First Minister, and if that should be dealt with prior to the termination of the House sitting on either of those days, we will commence with Interim Supply.

* * *

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to close debate on the 1998 budget. On March 6, I had the honour of presenting the 1998 Manitoba budget. I believe that it is a budget that I was certainly proud to present, and it is a budget that all Manitobans can, in fact, be proud of. I certainly want to thank—and I appreciate the comments made by, and the support of—the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) in terms of his comments about the 1998 budget.

Madam Speaker, the 1998 budget balances Manitoba's books for the fourth year in a row. It makes

a sustainable payment against Manitoba's accumulated debt. It provides over \$100 million more for health care here in our province, and the 1998 budget devotes significantly more resources to educating our children and young people, to supporting families in need, and to protecting our communities. It also significantly increases our investment in improving Manitoba's infrastructures, our highways, our residential streets, our sewer and water requirements, and so on, and the 1998 Manitoba budget cuts taxes here in our province.

I will let historians try to find another Manitoba budget that had all of these elements, but I know that the people of our province understand and appreciate the significance of this budget. Since delivering the budget, I have listened to many Manitobans. I have met with them individually and at public meetings. People have given me their comments on radio talk shows, through letters, phone calls, e-mail and the like, and people from across our province have also spoken with all of my colleagues over the course of the last several days. The response from right across Manitoba has been overwhelmingly positive to the 1998 budget. To Manitobans, this budget is proof that balanced budgets generate diverse and lasting benefits, benefits that continue to grow larger each and every year. They recognize that this budget shares these benefits fairly with the people in every part of our fine province.

Our government asked Manitobans about their priorities and choices in 12 budget consultations held throughout our province last fall, and many people who did not attend the meetings expressed their views by calling or writing my office. We certainly greatly appreciated the thoughtful advice that we received from over 2,000 Manitobans who took the time to participate in the consultation process, and most important of all we listened to that advice in the 1998 budget. Manitobans shared their priorities and told us that they wanted their government to make measurable, sustainable progress in a fair and balanced way, and that is exactly what our 1998 budget delivers.

Madam Speaker, the 1998 budget leaves no doubt—and I say again it leaves absolutely no doubt—that the era of deficit spending, ballooning debt and interest costs and ever-rising taxes are far behind us. That was a time when each tax dollar paid for fewer services to people and more for interest than the previous budget.

Manitobans do not remember those times very fondly, and they are pleased that we are leaving that era far behind us with every new budget that we introduce in this province. Manitobans want value for their tax dollars, and they want our government to have the financial flexibility to address their priorities. From our first budget, our government laid the groundwork to give Manitobans exactly that, and now that we have achieved a series of balanced budgets our province has more options and more opportunities in each successive year.

Manitobans understand the significance of this accomplishment, but sadly however, there are some who do not understand. They are led—if that is the appropriate word—by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the rest of that unhappy group across the floor of this Assembly. As I listened to the budget debates in the past few years, I have learned to moderate my expectations for constructive, forward-looking criticism. This year, hoping to be pleasantly surprised by the main opposition party, I set my hopes for an informed, reasonable debate even lower than ever but evidently not low enough. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have managed to let me down once again. They have used this debate to explore every conceivable avenue of error, contradiction and confusion. I hardly know where to begin to disentangle and respond to all of the errors and all of the contradictions made by opposition members during the course of this debate.

The Leader of the Opposition's comments on the 1998 budget were especially long on outrage and very short on facts. It was almost impossible to find even one small kernel of fact or reasoned argument in his comments. So, Madam Speaker, I was intrigued, delighted even, when the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that 1996 was a good year for the Manitoba economy and for job creation. Perhaps in another year he will conclude that 1997 was also a very good year, and all I can say to his comments are better late than not at all.

But I am afraid that the road to enlightenment for the Leader of the Opposition will be hard indeed. He has a great distance to go, and he is likely to lose his way in the blizzard of numbers emanating from the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). Worst yet, his other friend,

the member from Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), believes that high deficits and debt are good for the economy and job creation. That is a very dim policy light indeed, and the Leader of the Opposition would do well to find one that shines much more brightly. With friends like those, I can only feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition.

So let me give him some facts, something that he can safely rely on, Madam Speaker. As we have heard before, and I think they are worth repeating, last year the total number of jobs in Manitoba jumped by 2.4 percent. That was the largest increase in 11 years, and it pushed the unemployment rate for 1997 down to 6.6 percent, the lowest rate since 1981. That means that it was lower than during any full year that the previous NDP administration was in power, and even better is the fact that in 1997 there were more people working in Manitoba than ever before in the history of our province. I might also add that most economic forecasters expect Manitoba's unemployment rate to be even lower this year. In fact, it was well below 6 percent in both January and February of 1998.

Madam Speaker, balanced budgets are good for the economy. That is certainly something we recognize. I hope the various independent members and so on recognize that. Unfortunately, members of the NDP do not recognize the very fundamental point that balanced budgets are good for the economy of Manitoba. It is no coincidence that the long period of reliance on deficit financing was also a period of very high unemployment. It is no coincidence that the unemployment rate has fallen sharply as we have followed through on our commitment to balance our budgets here in our province.

* (1700)

Now, here is a very important lesson for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). He was a part of an NDP administration that purposely ran large deficits. I suppose that they thought that they were stimulating the economy to create jobs. But clearly they were mistaken, Madam Speaker. It is hard for opposition members to admit that they were wrong on so fundamental a point. That seems to be the only purpose behind the unremitting stream of convoluted statistical hocus-pocus produced by the member for

Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). I need go no further than to quote the member from Crescentwood himself, as I believe was done the other day in our House. During the Estimates of Industry, Trade and Tourism in May of 1997, the member from Crescentwood said, and I quote: "Mr. Chairperson, I claim absolutely no knowledge in the area of statistics. I have a great deal of difficulty interpreting statistics without somebody on hand to help, so I am not suggesting I know what we ought to do." Well, we are certainly prepared to help the member from Crescentwood, and all he need do is listen to members on this side of House to get the facts straight when it comes to the economy of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it is also very important to note that all of the new jobs created last year were full-time positions, and every single one of those jobs was in the private sector where they do not need to be supported by tax dollars. In fact, there were 16,800 new jobs in the private sector—just think of that, the magnitude of that, a gain of 4 percent. What is very interesting about that gain of 4 percent is that it was the largest gain, the largest increase, in 18 years here in our province, so it puts in perspective the tremendous growth that we have had in private sector jobs here in Manitoba and the best growth in all of Canada, exceeding provinces like Alberta and other provinces that have had a very hot economy.

Madam Speaker, while jobs, I believe, are the most important measure of economic health and economic progress, I also believe that investment is a very close second as a measurement. Our province's outstanding investment record in recent years confirms exactly what the employment data indicate, that the Manitoba economy is fundamentally very strong and its capacity to create even more jobs is still growing very rapidly.

In 1997, Madam Speaker, total investment rose by just under 15 percent, and this exceeded the national increase for the fifth time in the last six years—again, an excellent record—but more important than that, private sector investment jumped by 15.5 percent. Just think of that. Private sector investment last year jumped by 15.5 percent, and the Statistics Canada survey of investment intentions indicates that private sector investment will be up again this year in 1998. That will bring to seven consecutive years Manitoba's string of annual increases in private investment here in our province.

Only one other province in all of Canada has that kind of a consistent record, and I will ask members in this House what province they think that is. That is the province of Alberta. Alberta and Manitoba are the two provinces that have seven years in a row where private individuals have shown confidence in their economy by investing more money each and every year. What a record that is. This consistency is proof of the high and rising level of business confidence right here in Manitoba. It is not hard to find the basis for this confidence. The basis of this confidence, balanced budgets and declining tax rates. That is what the confidence is being generated by.

Manitoba's record of growth in manufacturing investment is especially exciting. Since 1991, manufacturing investment in Manitoba has grown at an average annual rate of 15.5 percent. So since 1991, investment in manufacturing in our province is going up at 15.5 percent each and every year, Madam Speaker. To sustain such a high growth rate over six years, I believe, is absolutely remarkable, especially when you consider that that growth rate is 10 times higher than the growth rate in all of Canada, than the Canadian average.

In fact, manufacturing is doing so well that even the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) could not help but acknowledge the strength of this sector in his comments, but once again the Leader of the Opposition is only now catching up with the many international observers and investors who have noted Manitoba's impressive manufacturing performance.

I noted with some satisfaction that the Leader of the Opposition has personally recognized New Flyer's accomplishment as a private sector firm. Not only does Manitoba produce more buses than any other jurisdiction in North America, but buses are also our No. 1 export commodity.

Madam Speaker, there is more. Manitoba farmers have also achieved record levels of farm cash receipts in each of the past six years. In 1997, the increase of 9.9 percent again was two and a half times greater than the increase for Canada. Most of this growth in both manufacturing and agriculture is due to the success of Manitoba businesses in the export markets. In 1997, total foreign exports rose by 13.6 percent, the fourth

time in five years that Manitoba's increase has once again exceeded Canada's increase, but most impressive is the very strong growth in exports to our largest trading partner, the United States. Since 1990, Manitoba's exports to the United States have tripled. That, again, is a tremendous accomplishment and is certainly a tribute to all of the Manitobans that are producing products here in our province.

The steady increases in retail sales over the past few years are further proof that most Manitobans are better off and most Manitobans are feeling much more confident. The increase in retail sales last year was the largest that it has been in 12 years. As well, housing starts rose almost 13 percent last year and our forecast, a rise, another 11 percent this year.

It is clear that the benefits of a strong economy are being widely shared. Members opposite do not want to admit this, but they cannot deny that the unemployment rate is lower than at any time during their unfortunate period in office. So, Madam Speaker, they attempt to downplay this achievement with feeble references to undercounting or out-migration. These are worse than lame excuses; they are simply wrong.

I would invite members opposite to look carefully at Chart 16 in Budget Paper A on Manitoba's economy. The chart shows the employment rate for Manitoba and Canada since 1988. Now the employment rate is a very useful indicator, because it tells us directly what share of our working-age population is actually employed. If it were true that our low unemployment rate was due to discouraged workers dropping out of the labour force, then this would show up in a falling employment rate. But, in fact, Manitoba's employment rate in 1997 was just slightly below the peak in 1990. It was higher than at any time during the 1980s when the members opposite were in power, and it is a lot higher than for Canada as a whole. In fact, only the province of Alberta enjoys a higher employment rate than the province of Manitoba.

Furthermore, Manitoba's employment rate is continuing to rise. In the first two months of this year, our employment rate rose to 62.9 percent, a new record for our province. The undeniable truth is that Manitoba has a very low unemployment rate because Manitobans have jobs. Our 1998 budget includes important new

measures that will help ensure that even more Manitobans secure good jobs and share in the benefits of a strong economy.

Our government recognizes that more must be done to reduce youth unemployment. Our 1998 budget provides \$7.1 million for youth employment programs, but it also allocates \$3 million for an expanded apprenticeship program with our intentions to double the number of apprentices from 2,000 to 4,000 over the next three years.

We will continue with our successful efforts to help income assistance clients prepare for the workforce. Madam Speaker, \$9.3 million is directed toward the Making Welfare Work program. The graduates of these programs are finding and they are keeping paying jobs and, as a result, our income assistance caseloads are in decline. In today's economy, successful businesses must constantly improve their products and they must also develop new ones. That is why our government introduced the research and development tax credit in 1992. According to the most recent available data, research and development spending in Manitoba has tripled in the decade up to 1995, and our 1998 budget continues to support increased research and development with \$25.5 million for new and enhanced initiatives in our province.

* (1710)

Our government has always understood the importance of improving and maintaining our province's infrastructure. Our budget includes \$170 million to improve our highways, resources, which is an increase over \$10 million, by the way, from last year. Resources are also being directed to residential street repairs in Winnipeg with an allocation of \$5 million in this budget and a number of sewer and water projects right throughout Manitoba. In total, our 1998 budget provides \$363 million for capital spending on infrastructure throughout our province. These are projects that will improve the quality of life for many hundreds of thousands of Manitobans all across our great province.

During our budget consultations, Manitobans also told us to keep our tax rates competitive. I would hope that we can all agree lower taxes spur investment and

lower taxes create jobs. Lower taxes help employers attract and retain the very best of people, and lower taxes leave more money in the hands of Manitobans to spend as they need or they see fit. Incidentally, I was actually interested to see that the members opposite called for a tax decrease in their alternative budget. That is interesting because during their sorry term in office, these same members acquired for Manitoba the tragic distinction of being the highest taxed province or state in all of North America in the 1980s. They turned this province into a sort of taxation laboratory where they experimented with many new and creative but detestable taxation measures. In fact, I think some people would describe their Finance minister as the Dr. Frankenstein of taxation. I have a long list that I could certainly read into the record, and I will not take the time to read the entire list, but I think we should all look back at what kind of tax measures were brought into our province under the NDP from 1982 to 1988.

Madam Speaker, to give you some samples of the kinds of things that they were doing during their time in office, one example, in 1982 they increased the tax rate for diesel fuel, they increased tobacco tax, they increased and introduced a personal income tax surtax, they introduced the Manitoba payroll tax. In 1983 they increased the retail sales tax from 5 to 6 percent, they increased the gasoline tax, they increased the diesel fuel tax. In 1984, they increased the locomotive diesel fuel tax, they increased tobacco tax again. In 1985, they increased gasoline tax, increased aviation gasoline, increased locomotive diesel fuel. In 1986 they increased the corporation capital tax, they introduced a motive fuel tax on natural gas, they increased the motive fuel tax on propane. In 1987 they increased the Retail Sales Tax again from 6 to 7 percent, they increased the payroll tax rate, they increased the tax again on locomotive diesel fuel, they introduced a new land transfer tax. That is just a small sampling of the many dozens and dozens and dozens of tax increases brought into this province under the previous NDP administration.

Only they, only the NDP were surprised that Manitobans were rightly outraged by the frequency with which new taxes were created in this province and by the magnitude of tax increases that were introduced under that dreadful NDP administration. Only the NDP, only they, were surprised when Manitobans

turfed them from office, and now, Madam Speaker—this is what is absolutely unbelievable—and now they want to pretend that they have changed. They promise a little tax relief in the hopes that Manitobans will forget their record in office, but Manitobans do not have such short memories. Our government has always understood the importance of keeping taxes affordable, something the NDP and the opposition have never understood, and their record speaks to that issue very clearly.

That is why our 1998 budget cuts the personal income tax rate by one percentage point this year and another point next January. Madam Speaker, well over half a million Manitoba taxpayers—half a million Manitoba taxpayers—will see their personal income taxes reduced by over \$60 million annually in 1999 and beyond. Let us not forget, we were one of the first provinces to reduce personal income taxes back in 1988-89 when we reduced the personal income tax rate at that point in time along with all of the other tax reductions and tax measures that we have introduced over our last 10 budgets. There is a very clear distinction between our policies and what we believe in and the policies of members opposite and what they believe in. Now to be pretending that they are supportive of tax decreases certainly does not fit with their record and their past performance.

Madam Speaker, beyond the personal income tax, the 1998 budget also reduces the rate of the payroll tax, encouraging employers to create more jobs and to hire more Manitobans. This budget also raises the corporation capital tax exemption from \$3 million to \$5 million, thereby eliminating that tax for 900 smaller companies here in our province.

Madam Speaker, I will say it again. Balanced budgets are good for our economy. I state the obvious, but I am not sure members opposite understand it. A strong and growing economy generates more revenue for governments to provide additional public services, to pay down the debt at a faster rate, and for further tax reduction. Those are the benefits of a strong economy; those are the benefits of balanced budgets. In fact, taxation revenues for 1998-99, after our tax cuts, are anticipated to increase by over 5.5 percent over last year's budget; again, signs of a very strong economy.

Madam Speaker, as an aside, I am always mystified at how the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), sometimes in the same breath, which is even more bewildering, can switch from accusing me of exaggerating Manitoba's economic performance to also then charging me with understating our revenues in light of Manitoba's booming economy. I am not sure how those two fit. They certainly do not seem to make much sense to me, and I would welcome anybody being able to explain that. The member for Crescentwood takes both of those sides of an issue in the same breath and shows again the inconsistency and the lack of understanding of economic and fiscal issues.

That aside, more and growing financial resources are an important benefit of keeping our budgets balanced. The 1998 budget ensures that these benefits are shared widely and fairly right across our province.

Health care is the top program priority of the people of Manitoba, and it is the top program priority of our government, Madam Speaker. Our budget provides an additional \$100 million for health care. Since 1987, total health expenditures have increased by almost \$600 million, or 45 percent, over that period of time, and the added resources are focused on the most pressing health care needs of Manitobans.

I think it is worth reminding members opposite of what some of these initiatives are in this budget: an additional \$10 million for advanced medical equipment; \$11 million more for dialysis services; \$23 million more for home care programming, bringing the total program spending in home care to \$123 million or triple what was spent when our government took office back in 1988; \$2.5 million to reduce waiting lists; \$2.4 million to support additional intensive care beds and expansion of neural surgery; \$7.3 million more for Pharmacare; \$94 million for 27 health capital projects, including personal care homes in Oakbank, Hartney, The Pas, and right here in Winnipeg.

Perhaps most importantly, the 1998 budget ensures that the health care reforms our government initiated earlier will continue, and, along with Canadians in every other province, Manitobans face important challenges in improving and sustaining a high-quality, accessible and responsive health care system.

I think sometimes members opposite lose sight of the many changes that are taking place in the health care system. First of all, when you look at our budget, Madam Speaker, as I have already said, we are spending \$600 million more than back in 1988. If you go back to that period of 1988, about 31 percent to 32 percent of the budget went to health care. Today approximately 35 percent of the budget goes to health care.

* (1720)

What is really interesting are some of the changes that are taking place. If you go back to 1988, we had 58 dialysis stations; today we are targeting up over 100. If you look at an issue like hip replacements, comparing 1988 to 1995, there were just over 700 in 1988; today there are over 1,000. [interjection] There is living proof right there. If you look at knees, back in 1988, there were 309 knee operations; today we are up at 700. That gives you a sense of the kinds of things that are being done in the health care system. If you look at issues like bone density tests, you go back just a few years, we were doing about 800; today we are up over 1,000 and we are targeting to do 4,000 in 1998. If you look at breast screening procedures, from July '95 to December of '97, there were over 35,000. With the additional resources and the two units that are being put in use in 1998, in 1998-99 alone they are targeting doing almost 34,000 tests in that very important area in 1998. That gives you a sense of some of the changes that are taking place in the health care system and the improvements in services and access to the care that Manitobans want and need.

Madam Speaker, these challenges also include an aging population, but they also include a federal Finance minister and a Prime Minister who, I believe, have rejected co-operation with provinces in the vital area of health care. The federal government has withdrawn close to \$7 billion annually in funding for health care, education and family services under the Canada Health and Social Transfer.

The drop in support to Manitoba alone is close to \$240 million annually, \$240 million each and every budget year, and you would surely think that that would be an area where the opposition could play a positive and constructive role on behalf of their fellow

Manitobans. But, again, they do not. They choose not to. Instead, opposition members have initiated a phony numbers dispute that plays into the hands of a federal government that is openly opposed to helping improve health care in Manitoba.

When we say the 1998 budget provides over \$100 million more for health care than last year, the members opposite accuse me and us of deceit. Why do they do that? They do that because over the course of '97-98 we are providing more resources for health care than was budgeted back in 1997. In fact, we might potentially provide up to \$93 million more for health care in 1997-98, certainly something we are proud of as we provide the resources required to meet the health care needs here in Manitoba.

The 1998 budget shares the benefits by providing more money for children, including funding for pre- and early school programs, nutrition initiatives, positive parenting and child care. There is also \$60 million for school capital construction and upgrading. The budget also provides more money for students, including \$4 million more for scholarships and bursaries and \$1.6 million for interest relief and debt reduction. As well, Manitoba is still the only province in all of Canada to support post-secondary education through a learning tax credit. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer)—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I am having considerable difficulty hearing the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) even with the new system. I do have a bit of an ear infection, but I think it might be something also to do with some of the side conversations, so I am wondering if we could ask those be kept to a minimum.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, there was a lot of background noise, and it was becoming most difficult to hear the honourable minister.

* * *

Mr. Stefanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) told us, and I quote, he knows that he believes Manitoba's tuition fees are in "the latter half of the pack." That is a quote from the Leader of the Opposition. I am not sure which of his friends is advising him on this matter, but Manitoba's net tuition fees after tax assistance are the second lowest in all of Canada. Those are the facts.

Our 1998 budget also responds to the advice of Manitobans that we should pay down the debt faster. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is clearly out of step with most Manitobans. They told us very clearly that spending over \$500 million each year on interest payments is an issue that needs attention. Even the Leader of the Opposition, somewhat reluctantly, to my ears, came around to the view that \$75 million should be allocated toward the debt retirement. Once again I say to the Leader of the Opposition, better late than never. Of course, the natural inclination of members opposite is to run up the debt with no regard whatever that this burden places on the next generation, but even they can no longer ignore the overwhelming demand expressed by Manitobans that we should pay down the debt.

The members opposite are the people who needlessly borrowed billions of dollars in the 1980s. They are the same people who voted against our legislation to balance the budget, pay down the debt and protect taxpayers. They are the same people who voted against three balanced budgets, and they are the same people who voted against last year's debt repayment. But, suddenly, they say, the Leader of the Opposition says, in his tepid way, that it is okay to make a payment against the debt, he now says. The members opposite know which way the wind is blowing, and it is a strong wind. Even they cannot help but bend a little.

Once again the facts speak for themselves. In the 1980s, the average annual increase in Manitoba's debt was 25.6 percent a year. They let the debt grow at over 25 percent each and every year in this province, and I say to them, shame, in terms of the legacy they were leaving Manitobans. For 22 consecutive years, Manitoba ran deficits, and as a result of rising interest costs, that squeezed money available to provide services to Manitobans. Reliance on the deficit

financing left governments with less flexibility and fewer policy choices.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans do not want their children and their grandchildren still paying in the year 2025 for public services that were provided back in 1985. Following this advice, our budget doubles the \$75-million debt repayment that is required under our balanced budget legislation. We all know the power of compound interest and what that will save for Manitobans over the next many years.

Along with my colleagues, I am extremely proud of Manitoba's fiscal and economic achievements. All Manitobans have reason to be proud of these achievements as well, and I know that most of them are. It is also satisfying when the outside observers see what is happening in Manitoba and continue to speak very positively about our province.

This, Madam Speaker, summarizes the real difference between our government and the members opposite. Here is the difference between the 1998 budget and their last budget in 1987. We are investing more in health care, more in education and more in services for families in Manitoba. We are doing this while we are cutting income taxes, not increasing them like was done back in 1987. We are providing more money for Manitoba's infrastructure, and we are building on a sustainable base that will see Manitobans better off year after year after year and not deeper in debt as what was happening back in the 1980s.

That is why sharing the benefits is the theme of 1998 budget. Balanced budgets generate large and diverse benefits, and the 1998 Manitoba Budget ensures that Manitobans right across our great province will share in those benefits as we move forward. It is the budget that I believe all members of this Assembly should stand up and support with pride, Madam Speaker.

* (1730)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., in accordance with subrule 27.(5), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the

honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and all amendments to that motion.

The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Do you wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the official opposition,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "House" and substituting the following:

Therefore regrets this budget ignores the present and future needs of Manitobans by:

- (a) failing to address the crisis in health care;
- (b) failing to relieve the stresses in our education system;
- (c) failing to provide new hope for Manitoba children; and,
- (d) failing to provide new opportunities for aboriginal Manitobans.

As a consequence, the government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the proposed amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, L. Evans (Brandon East), C. Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Jennissen, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Faurschou, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 24, Nays 28.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance:

THAT this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the proposed motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Faurschou, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Kowalski, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Jennissen, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk: Yeas 29, Nays 24.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 17, 1998

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