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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 14, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Walter Wozny, Eleanor Hall, L. Stevenson and others requesting the Family Services minister consider restoring funding for friendship centres in Manitoba.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Mark Richard, Patrick Chartrand, Steven Chartrand and others requesting the Family Services minister consider restoring funding to friendship centres in Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Rick Barnard, Cory Barnard, David Berg and others requesting the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider restoring what was an excellent program, the student social assistance program.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Dewar). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon, from Churchill High School, thirty Grade 9 students, under the direction of Ms. Terri Gartner. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Education System Violence Prevention Programs

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

All members of this House have unfortunately been attending community meetings, where parents, teachers, administrators have been talking about the rising violence in schools, both perpetrated by people within those schools and people operating from outside within the school system. We have even raised this question as late as December 9, 1992, in this House, when we asked the government for their action plan dealing with kids across all disciplinary lines in government departments.

The government received a report in June of 1991, talking about the challenges of kids and the challenges of children, working across many

departments in government, Mr. Speaker, and calling on the government to take an action plan for these children across the many government departments that impact on their lives. This report was prepared by the school trustees, The Teachers' Society, the Association of School Superintendents and the Association of School Business Officials and presented to the government in June of 1991.

I would like to ask the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey): What specific action has the government taken on the many concerns and recommendations that are contained within the report that was presented to the government some time ago?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Acting Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I rise as the Acting Minister of Education and, too, want to note this incredible vexing problem and tremendous concern that the government has with respect to the increasing violence within our schools.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Education and Training has initiated the following measures to assist school divisions to combat the incidence of violence in schools. I will just introduce three of those items at this point.

* (1335)

Mr. Speaker, anger management initiative, I am led to believe at least 80 persons within the school system serve as resource persons in the area of dealing with behaviourally disordered disruptive students. Discussions also will be held with the Departments of Health and Family Services to plan a series of interdepartmental workshops on service networking, collaboration and delivery of programming for children with special needs. Lastly, the Curriculum Services Branch is preparing a violence prevention curriculum support document for the middle years, Grades 5 and 6, which is expected to be available in the spring of 1993.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, this report was prepared in June of 1991—an early warning system on the problems across disciplines of government, an early warning system that I think has been amplified by meetings all members of this Legislature have attended with literally hundreds of parents and teachers prior to the incident being reported this morning.

Mr. Speaker, the government yet has not responded to the bodies that have developed this report. It has not yet responded. In fact, the report recommended a response from government by

December of 1991. It has not responded a year and a half after the request for a response by the government.

At the same time, parents and teachers are calling for greater relationship and partnership between the community and the parents dealing with the kids. As recently as last week, Mr. Speaker, the Philippine Association called for liaison officers to work with violent kids, violent gangs, nonviolent kids with many challenges in the schools—called on liaison people.

Why has the government not publicly responded to these proposals? Why do they not have a public action plan, a public protocol to deal with these issues? Why are we having interdepartmental committees when the whole community, including education professionals and parents, are calling out for a partnership solution, not an interdepartmental committee?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, we agree with the member. Certainly, this is a community problem and therefore should be dealt with with the community at large.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) informs me that we have 63 Youth Justice Committees across the province that are attempting to deal with this and other problems associated. As I indicated in my previous answer, the three examples that I offered were not exclusive. There are many other actions that are taking place in this area. Sixty-three Behaviour Management and Violence Prevention Programs have been funded in 15 divisions through the Student Support Grant Program. Twenty-two schools in 10 divisions received funds to provide additional guidance and counselling services to assist at-risk students.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Child Care and Development Branch has recently developed a leaders manual entitled Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive Students, and rural and urban school divisions will have had training with this topic complete by April 1993.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken into account many of the recommendations of the report. The department has put into place a significant number of action recommendations and has acted.

I, again, agree with the member and Leader of the Opposition, this is a community issue. Indeed obviously, as I am reminded by my colleagues, there

is some responsibility also of those who are the keepers of the home to try and provide guidance to their children and indeed all of the youth who enter our public school system.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, that is why many of the communities are calling for a public action plan, so they can become part of the solution. They do not believe that an interdepartmental committee is dealing with the recommendations that this government has had for close to two years now.

Many of the other recommendations in this report go on to cite the challenges of kids who have been involved in the justice system, kids who have been involved in handicap problems and call for a greater sensitivity to a pupil-teacher ratio, which, of course, has been eroded by the funding decisions made by the government and particularly eroded this year with a 1.2 percent decline in support to our public education system.

I would like to know from the minister: With all the cutbacks that are taking place, including in the public education system, what will be the greater challenge of these cutbacks on the already stretched resources in our public education system?

* (1340)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, the member does not quite know the facts, and although he is aware, because we have announced that there has been a reduction with respect to the public school grant, I remind him that the department spent \$2.9 million on support programs for violence in schools in 1992-93.

Furthermore, I am reminded by the minister, in discussion with her, that our funding model has been changed this year so that this type of student—and I am talking now about those within Levels II and III who sometimes carry more of the violent characteristics, that that level of support will receive significant increase by the changes that have been introduced by the minister with respect to that level of funding.

Mr. Speaker, we have, within the tremendous pressures of funding within government and also within the Department of Education, tried to make the changes necessary to help in a more direct fashion, on a day-to-day basis, within this area.

Ford of Canada Employment Losses

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, this government has talked a great deal, in its last couple of budgets and throne speech, about the investment climate in Manitoba and talked about how that was going to solve the problems that our economy faced, notwithstanding that we have lost 9,000 manufacturing jobs '92 over '91. Today we learned that Ford of Canada is transferring some 22 jobs from Winnipeg to Edmonton.

My question is to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey): Can the Deputy Premier explain to Manitobans why Manitobans continue to lose jobs to other provinces and why, in this particular instance, the government has not had consultations with Ford of Canada, if they can explain perhaps to the public why Manitoba is losing these job opportunities if our environment has improved so significantly?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, certainly we are concerned any time there is any job consolidation in other parts of Canada. That is the announcement that was made by Ford this morning in terms of transferring some 22 jobs to a combined facility in Edmonton, resulting in an opportunity for those people currently employed to relocate there or find job relocation.

I will deal partly with the preamble of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) when he talks about jobs and remind him—this is August of 1992—there are 14,000 more jobs in Manitoba today, and comparing January to March of 1993 to January to March of 1992, there are 13,000 more full-time jobs in Manitoba than there were at that particular point in time.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, we never get a question when CIBC acquires a company like Comcheq and makes a decision to locate their head office right here in Manitoba and transfer payroll division jobs from Ontario to Manitoba. I could go on at length if the honourable member is interested.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, that was a poor, after-the-fact rationalization, as was the minister's defence yesterday, or lack of defence, of the jobs that may be in jeopardy at MCI as a result of corporate dealings in the United States.

Motor Coach Industries Dial Corporation Holdings

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter that was tabled on Monday with the Ontario Securities Commission, at which time it was learned that Dial Corporation is in discussions with MASA, which is the Mexicana d'autobus S.A., among other things, to review the distribution of each other's products in North America, technology information and sharing, and finally, the manufacturing at MASA—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon, kindly put your question, please.

Mr. Storle: My question to the minister is: Will he now acknowledge that there is something more serious going on behind the Dial Corporation's purchase of a bus manufacturing plant in Mexico than he lets on, and will he tell Manitobans what he is going to do to make sure that this manufacturing plant stays in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, we know the position of the NDP when it comes to trade issues. We know the position that they want to build the walls and boundaries around the province of Manitoba. They do not want to break down interprovincial trade barriers. They do not want to have trade with the United States, and they do not want to have trade with Mexico or any other parts of the world. They want to build walls and boundaries.

Dial Corporation, back in January of 1993, acquired a 10 percent interest in a bus manufacturing operation in Mexico. They have a 69 percent interest effectively. They own 100 percent of Greyhound, 69 percent interest in Motor Coach Industries here in Manitoba. Obviously they have a tremendous interest in any operation that they own 69 percent of.

* (1345)

We had discussions again yesterday with Motor Coach. We have had ongoing discussions with Motor Coach, and they are quite confident in terms of the performance of this facility and the job opportunities staying at the current levels and representing other opportunities.

The kind of fearmongering that they do when it comes to trade issues does not do the employees of Motor Coach any good. It does not do the owners

of Motor Coach or Dial any good; it does not do any Manitoban any good, and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that should come to an end.

Mr. Storle: These vague assurances from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism do not do anything to inform or make Manitobans feel more secure.

My question is: Can the minister explain to this House what this agreement between MASA and Dial means when it says manufacturing at MASA's Mexico manufacturing facility of the MCI MC-12 Coach, currently manufactured by MCI in Canada, is part of the ongoing discussions and negotiations? What does that mean?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I have already outlined for the member for Flin Flon exactly the discussions that we have had with Motor Coach Industries, the senior personnel here in Manitoba who are in ongoing contact with officials from Dial and Greyhound in terms of the impact in Manitoba.

Obviously senior management in Manitoba is concerned about any changes. Obviously employees are. So they are involved in a part of that process, and we have ongoing discussions with them about the opportunities here in Manitoba.

They have received assurances in terms of the opportunities here, and I have already outlined the position of Dial in Mexico. They have a 10 percent interest. Obviously they are not going to jeopardize a 69 percent interest in an operation here in Manitoba or in Canada in terms of an additional investment opportunity, but they are, like many operations, looking beyond the boundaries of Canada, looking to do business in the United States, looking to do business in Mexico and other parts of the world, which is what we encourage Manitoba companies to do, because they have the ability to do it. We have the confidence in them, unlike members of the New—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Storle: So the minister can be informed, I will send him a copy, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

APM Management Consultants Expenses

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, yesterday another 140 jobs were lost at St. Boniface Hospital directly as a result of funding cuts from the government to St. Boniface and other hospitals.

Since health care funding is at a premium, can the minister advise this House whether the \$800,000 in potential expenses for travel costs and hotel costs to be paid to the American consultant by the minister will come out of the hospitals' existing budget, or will the government provide funds to pay for those costs so that the hospital budget can pay for much-needed patient care and not for U.S. consultant expenses?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend would know that any potential expenditure that any of our hospitals would undertake would be part of the global funding that is provided by government annually.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. I will phrase it again to him.

Will the potential \$800,000 in expenses to be paid to his U.S. \$3.9-million consultant come out of the existing hospital budgets which have been cut back, or will the government provide funding to those budgets to pay for those expenses so it does not go away from much-needed patient care?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, lest my honourable friend run away with his rhetoric, let me tell my honourable friend that the two hospitals, Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, their boards, their senior management encouraged government to engage APM. It was not an initiative that government in any way, shape or form pushed upon the respective hospital institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why the teaching hospitals, St. Boniface, Health Sciences Centre, their boards, their senior management wished to engage APM was so that they could maintain the level of patient care, the numbers of procedures undertaken by each facility, that caregiving staff could increase the amount of time they spend in providing hands-on patient care to Manitobans who were ill or in admitted for surgery, and have the advantage of significant budget savings.

That is why this government agreed to take the monies from Lotteries, the casino, to provide the funds for that contract, Sir.

* (1350)

Income Tax Act Dr. Connie Curran Exemption

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) as president of Treasury Board.

How can the minister explain to Manitobans, who are facing tax increases as a result of his budget, why he allowed Connie Curran to apply for an exemption under the Income Tax Act to not pay taxes on her \$3.9 million when the minister knows full well that the 70-year-old agreement between Canada and U.S. will mean she will likely be exempt under Revenue Canada and likely she will not pay any taxes to Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again, I realize my honourable friend wants to have the issue as being "an American" and all of the rhetoric that he can attach with his union friends around Americans.

Mr. Speaker, why do you think the senior management of St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre, the boards of those respective facilities, why do you think that they wished to engage this consulting firm if they did not believe that they could maintain their level of service, increase the amount of hands-on patient care by caregivers and reduce the budget?

Now, Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend did not acknowledge that when in government, New Democrats hire American consultants. They hired them to study the home care program. I wonder what has changed—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Provincial Sales Tax Rebate

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

This government has tried to tell Manitobans that their most recent budget is fair to all taxpayers when in fact it is not fair to all taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, this government has opposed the GST, the goods and services tax, seeing that as a consumption tax. It is a regressive tax. Well, the same principles apply to the PST.

I am asking the Minister of Finance today: Is the government considering implementing any sort of rebate so that it will make the PST a less regressive tax?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we have amongst the richest credit system and support of the lower-income people who pay the provincial sales tax. It is the cost-of-living tax credit and is on the T1C-1 Manitoba form, in case the member is not aware of that.

Business Arrears Listing

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, there is the business sales tax, retail tax, outstanding accounts of in excess of \$9 million. Yesterday I had attempted to try to get information in terms of a breakdown, in terms of who is not paying the retail sales tax.

Can the Minister of Finance table in this House, and if he is unable to table, give us a reason as to why we cannot—the public does not have the right to know, according to this government, who these individuals are who are abusing the tax?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is different. What the member is suggesting is that I try and gain access, by extension, to the federal government and they tell me who is in arrears of all their personal income tax, and I provide that list to the media. Indeed, if his name were one of them, what he is saying is, share that information publicly. I will not do that; neither will I do that for any business or anybody else. I cannot believe that the member across the way would suggest that the Minister of Finance in any jurisdiction should make public all the private affairs that an individual or a corporation or a company has with government. I find it absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance saying that the public has no right in knowing who is not paying their taxes? We are talking in excess of \$9 million. He is talking about having a fair budget—

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

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the minister, Mr. Speaker, is: Is the Minister of Finance saying that the public has no right to know who is not paying their taxes?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I am in a state of shock. What the member is saying is that the public

has the right to know of every one of us who does not put a cheque in with the filing of our tax form on April 30. That is exactly what the member is saying.

Now, if he is saying that he wants to know the list—
An Honourable Member: Business, retail.

* (1355)

Mr. Manness: Oh, just the business. I see, Mr. Speaker. So there are two classes of filers in this country, one the business people. Indeed their arrears should be made public where individuals should not. Well, I hate to tell him, I hate to tell people, the reality is that when you pass tax law, it has to be made fair and the same for everybody.

With respect to his question, if he wants to know why there is \$9 million in arrears, Mr. Speaker, I can assure him that most of that \$9 million will come in because I have attached liens to property to make sure that it does come in. I can also tell him that in case he does not know it, we are in the midst of a recession, and some of the commissioned agents who have collected tax revenues have not followed their agreements and have not remitted their funds to government to the extent that they have used it for their own purposes. The heavy hand of the government will step in and try and collect those monies.

Fishing Industry

Northern Freight Assistance Program

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My question is directed to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, people in northern Manitoba, and particularly those who are employed in resource industries, were hoping for some kind of good news in the budget last week, but unfortunately, all they received was bad news. In fact, most of us here are aware that the poorest of the poor were hurt most by the budget last week.

Since fishing is a vital industry in northern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, employing hundreds of northern people, I want to ask the Minister of Natural Resources why he would not press his cabinet colleagues to restore the funding for the Northern Freight Assistance Program that existed to the level it was two years ago when it was first cut by the minister by nearly 50 percent.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have to acknowledge the information that the honourable member for The

Pas puts on the table is correct, that we did reduce the Freight Assistance Program, but in applying the remaining \$250,000, we prorated it, or proportioned it specifically to impact most directly on the northern fisheries, on the understandable theory that they faced the highest freight costs, and this was assistance on behalf of the taxpayers of the province to help in those fisheries. I can appreciate that the fisheries industry is not in the healthiest state that it should be, but I can assure you that the southern fishermen, particularly those on Lake Winnipeg who constitute a very substantial number of the commercial fishermen in the province of Manitoba, were less than happy with my favouring northern fishermen with the monies available to me.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, could I ask the same minister to tell this House how he expects those fishermen in the North, particularly those in the isolated communities such as Berens River, Garden Hill, Moose Lake and elsewhere, to ship fish to Winnipeg and be able to compete with fishermen elsewhere?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, commercial fishermen in Manitoba are primary producers, like many other primary producers in the province, be they wheat growers or barley growers or other commodities. We have different programs from time to time to assist them, support programs, whether it is through the agency of the lending institutions that provide loans to the fishermen, whether it is direct programs that have from time to time provided equipment support to fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I have never made it a secret. I quite frankly welcome the questions directed to me by the honourable member. I would simply ask that he encourage the official opposition from time to time to remind themselves that there are other vital interests of concern in the province that have a claim on the resources of this province.

I get asked a question once or twice during the length of a sessional period, before we get past the important prioritized social services items that—these items, I happen to agree with him. They impact directly on the livelihood of many, many northern producers in this case.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is, the people living in the North traditionally have been—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member, this is not a time for debate.

The honourable member for The Pas, with your question, please.

* (1400)

Northern Co-ops Auditing Services

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My question to the same minister is: Why did the Minister of Natural Resources agree to cut auditing services for those co-operatives in northern Manitoba when those additional costs of auditing will put greater pressure on many of those co-ops, particularly in the isolated areas?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, it is simply a question of applying those resources that are available to my department in the best way possible. I take this advantage again to the honourable members opposite, those who revel in the cancellation of the Conawapa project, those who show no support for Repap in the North and yet, at the same time, want this government to provide employment opportunities in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in general, let us get with it. Let us understand that wealth has to be created in this province to provide the social services, to provide the jobs that we require in this province.

Child Care Centres Space Definition

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Family Services put out a press release on cutbacks to his department, he announced a reduction of 400 spaces in child care. Now that letters have gone out to child care directors and home child care providers, we see that the director of the child daycare office is using the word "cases."

Since child care spaces are often shared by more than one child and since many children are enrolled part time, since many parents are working part time, I would like to ask the minister if he could clarify for the House the distinction between a reduction in 400 spaces and 400 cases.

Hon. Harold Gillshammer (Minister of Family Services): Well, quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, the department was funding some 10,000 subsidized spaces, and we have indicated that there would be a reduction of 400 spaces to 9,600.

Mr. Martindale: The minister did not answer the question. Could he tell us, what is the difference between spaces and this letter which refers to cases? Can he tell the House if the current situation is correct, where two or three children are using up one space, if that is going to change as a result of talking about cases?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we are putting a cap on the number of spaces that we fund, that we subsidize, and that we are working with the various daycare centres to see that in the implementation of this, it has a fairness about it as we implement it across the system.

Mr. Martindale: Will the minister then inform people in the child care community, both boards and directors and parents, as to what the actual situation is, since there is a great deal of confusion there? People are very concerned that if they lose their space, they are not going to get it back if they cannot find employment in two weeks, because this minister has cut the number of weeks searching for employment from eight weeks to two and, for people going back to university and for people who find part-time jobs, will there be a space available?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, clearly we have said we are going to limit the subsidized spaces to 9,600. We know that there may be people coming on stream who would be able to access a subsidized space because they qualify if that space existed, and we are faced with the prospects of waiting lists.

WRAP Legislation Government Commitment

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

On October 30, 1989, Michael Bessey, then-Secretary to the Treasury Board, wrote a memo to the Premier. I am prepared to table that memo here this afternoon. [interjection] And I acknowledge that the New Democratic Party has talked about this memo; they talked about it prior to this budget in which we have seen a 56 percent reduction in WRAP funding.

In that memo, Mr. Bessey said that "the legislation as drafted" was "for the most part, cosmetic." He went on to say that it was "light weight legislation." Well, Mr. Speaker, we passed that legislation because we took the minister at his word. He said it would be a catalyst for action. So far, we have a

file folder full of press releases, action plans by action committees. It is all rhetoric.

The fact is this government has cut waste reduction by 56 percent in this budget. How does that cut square with their commitments, going on three years now, of action and a plan and a strategy that would work for waste reduction in this province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the view of the Liberal critic, people from across the country do still copy our WRAP legislation as a way of achieving a 50 percent reduction of waste in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the critic would like to think that the change in the Department of Environment reflects at all on the commitment that we have in terms of getting on with the reduction of waste in this province. He knows that we are about to announce a tire program for removal of tires from waste in this province. We are working with the paper industry to retrieve their waste. By August 1, we will have a decision on the beverage container industry. He had better hope we do not get it all done.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the great government of tomorrow. Everything is tomorrow. Everything is coming up roses tomorrow with this government.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question for this minister: He talks about overall problems with finances. Why has this branch suffered the single largest cut in his department, a 56 percent reduction in funding, when overall the department had an increase in funding of 4.5 percent in this year's budget? Why have they singled out waste reduction as the least important part of what they do?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the member looks at the superficial figures in the Department of Environment. I would invite him to get into the Estimates process, where we will show him that those employees are now doing very much the same work within other sections of the department, and we are in fact accomplishing as much today and will accomplish more tomorrow as we were yesterday.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, that is no comfort. This government, in its entire WRAP history, has put forward one regulation. It is a half-baked—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member, this is not a time for debate.

Beverage Container Regulation

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Why, after three years, has this government only been able to come forward with one regulation dealing with beverage containers, which is toothless, which is the industry's preference—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, one of the strengths of the Department of Environment has been that we have been working with the community, which we are regulating in order to bring into place regulation and programs that are effective and have the co-operation of the public and the regulated body. I would think that the member should be very cognizant of the fact that the beverage container industry, while they do not like the idea of possible deposits on the 1st of August, they are going to have to be ready for that or an alternate system.

Farmers Alfalfa Products Government Assistance

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, Farmers Alfalfa Products in Dauphin has been operating since 1986 as a farmers-owned co-operative, processing alfalfa into pellets for export. This operation fits in precisely, I believe, with the Minister of Agriculture's so-called priorities on agricultural diversification and value-added processing, and provides 25 local jobs in the Parkland region, yet they will close down by the end of April, perhaps permanently, if they do not get some support for modernization and conversion of the operation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture if he will confirm today that this indeed does fit in with his priorities for diversification in agriculture and, if so, what action this minister has taken to assist the operation in Dauphin to remain open and viable in employing people in this province?

* (1410)

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that I promote diversification and value-added industries, but the bottom line always is, it has to be economically viable in the marketplace in the long run. That is an ultimate necessity.

I will tell the member that, yes, we understand there are some difficulties there. We had a mission to Japan last year that brought back a lot of information on the markets there, the quality they need. The reliability of that quality is very important for accessing that market.

The alfalfa plant at Dauphin is—there are government officials working with the people at the plant, trying to restructure the process so that they can be able to serve the export market in a viable context in the future.

Farmers Alfalfa Products Government Assistance

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the plant has explored all options, and they are now down to a week or two in existence before they are going to have to make a decision with regard to closing down.

I want to ask the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism: Since this plant has explored all options and has received not even a ray of hope with regard to financing, what action has this Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism taken in response to the letter that he received, dated February 18, from this organization sent along with—to himself, also to his colleagues? Yet, there is no meeting or response. What action has he taken on that?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, just confirming what the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) has said, officials from our government have been in contact. I would not necessarily agree with the member that there is no ray of hope, but I will certainly follow up on further matters this afternoon.

Mr. Plohman: Will the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism get together with his Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) and the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), who also received this request?

It is a desperate request. Time is short. They need to raise a substantial sum of money for conversion. They have raised \$80,000 from their shareholders already. They need \$200,000. What hope is this minister going to offer? What action is he going to take with his colleagues?

Mr. Stefanson: I have already indicated, Mr. Speaker, that we will follow up on the matter. We have been in contact, and as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) outlined, clearly the first

decision has to be whether or not the operation is economically viable in the long term. Obviously, we will do that entire assessment and make a decision on its merit at that time.

Gross Revenue Insurance Plan Information Release

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, as spring approaches and farmers prepare for spring seeding, they have to begin making plans, but they also have to know what their income levels are going to be. One of the reasons behind GRIP was so farmers could have some stability and also be able to do some long-range planning.

I want to ask the minister why there has been such a delay in getting the information to farmers. They do not know what their coverage is going to be. They cannot do planning for their spring seeding. When are they going to get their information, and why is there such a delay?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, in case the member has not been checking her mail, she will find that the interim cheque for GRIP—second interim cheques totalling some \$67 million are now in the hands of farmers as of this week.

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

Nonpolitical Statements

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

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to acknowledge the New Year celebrated by Manitobans of Laotian, Cambodian, Sri Lankan and Tamil heritage over the next few days. As integral members of our community, they take great pride in the continuation and the preservation of their ancient and honourable cultural legacies.

We, as Manitobans, cherish the freedom and the opportunity to express and to foster all aspects of our cultural heritage—our languages, customs and traditions. This freedom takes on a special significance in light of current world events. We are again reminded, other countries do not embrace the concept and ideals of multiculturalism as Canadians do.

Manitobans of every origin firmly believe that openness and acceptance are fundamental to promoting understanding, mutual respect and harmony amongst all peoples.

Manitoba's multicultural diversity is greatly enhanced by our Laotian, our Cambodian, our Sri Lankan and our Tamil communities' observances of their respective New Year's celebrations.

I ask the members of this House to join with me in extending our best wishes to all Manitobans who proudly proclaim the heritage of Laotians, Cambodians, Sri Lankans and Tamil people. I hope that the New Year brings them health, happiness and prosperity and a continuation of their pride in being part of our rich and diverse multicultural society. Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker: On the adjourned debate, the fifth day of debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) in further amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan, who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I hope that some members opposite, particularly the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has had an opportunity to review the comments I made yesterday when I commenced this debate concerning some of the positive suggestions that we have on this side of the House to offer in terms of the health care field.

Just in summary of my comments yesterday, members opposite always claim that the opposition only offers negative criticism, and I say they do not do justice to what we offer. In fact, they play games by not paying attention to the positive aspects, and I hope the minister will list the comments. I do not want to repeat them in my remaining minutes, but I hope he will go over them point by point and read the suggestions we made that would improve the health care system in this province.

It is of paramount importance and something that the province requires, and I hope he will take the

time and energy to do so with respect to the suggestions we made.

Now, where I left off yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was at the point where I indicated that the minister had engaged the services of a U.S.-based consultant, Ms. Connie Curran, an APM associates, company, enterprises, limited, inc., inc., at a cost of \$3.9 million to the provincial Treasury, probably the biggest—I do not know, but I would assume—consulting contract ever entered into in the history of the province.

In addition, there are clause provisions in that particular agreement requiring the hospitals who are contracting agencies to have to pay up to an additional \$800,000 in expenses out of their hospital budget, out of the budget that pays for patient care to those particular consultants.

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

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the concerns we have with that consulting contract is that it was not tendered. In a question asked by members on this side of the House of the minister as to whether there was any tendering process, the minister stated, and I am paraphrasing, but it is something to the effect that: Oh, consulting agencies had an opportunity to participate in this contract.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I followed up on that. I approached a senior person at a large consulting firm—and I will tell you, I cannot reveal the firm's name nor can I reveal that person's name because they fear their contracts or future contracts could be jeopardized if I were to give the name out—but I said to that firm that has done work for government of all political stripes in the past, could you have undertaken the project that Connie Curran has undertaken with Canadian consultants? I was told pointblank, yes, and that was only one firm that I approached.

At that point I had no need to approach other firms. I asked that person at that firm if that firm was asked or in any way contacted about this contract, and we were told pointblank, no.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what is wrong with the Connie Curran contract. That is what is wrong with this minister's secretive, under-the-table approach to government in health care reform.

I indicated in my comments yesterday that they do not pay any attention to what is happening in the

public, and they do not listen to the public. They do not listen to the phone calls; they do not answer the letters; they do not deal with these people, which is why they are forced to come to us. That is symptomatic of the problem out there.

They do not talk to anyone else. They contact their agency, and now they are paying \$3.9 million to an American consultant, plus \$800,000 that could go directly for patient care, to save \$45 million to \$65 million on the basis of what that consultant says, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is already after—[interjection] Pardon me, \$45 million to \$65 million after they have made millions of cuts already to those particular agencies. That is one of the major problems with that particular contract and with that particular agreement.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the members make light of the fact that we talk about a U.S. system and about this consultant coming from the U.S., but the culture and the environment this individual comes from is totally different from that which exists in Canada. Where in the United States the administrative costs of health care are 8.5 percent of budgets, in Canada they are 2.5 percent. The cuts just are not that easy. People are not products on an assembly line for TQM like they are at Ford Motors or at Burger King or at Jack-In-The-Box. [interjection]

That is right. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says the problem is we do not even know what our costs are. I agree. One of the major problems throughout the government, be it education, be it health services, is we have no idea whatsoever about the costs.

* (1420)

I do not see Connie Curran, in fact, providing us with that information either. I do not even see that in the contract for \$3.9 million. It is not even provided for. We do not even have—and that is—I agree. The minister has focused on one of the major problems. We do not have a proper database. We do not know—[interjection] We do have statistical data here, I agree, but we do not have a database on which costs are based to make our determinations. This consultant will not even do that for us. This consultant comes in with a fancy program. I hope it works. I hope we can save money. I hope we can improve patient quality care. I am very suspect, given the whole meanderings

around this particular contract and all of these negotiations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I turn from this particular issue. Although I could probably spend the rest of my remaining few minutes on it, I want to touch on other areas.

I want to touch on the fact that the minister broke his promise stated in the May 1992 action plan where he promised no user fees will be introduced. Yet, in this budget, we see user fees introduced. The minister knows, members on that side know it is very much a sore spot. I explained yesterday why we think it is a problem, why the user fees on hospital supplies, colostomy bags and the like is a serious, serious problem, why I think they will regret it and why I think it goes counter to a promise made by the minister when he said they would not introduce user fees.

There is no accountability, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the health care reform process. Yesterday, when we heard 141-plus people were being laid off at St. Boniface, the minister could not answer whether this was in addition to the 380 that had already been announced in November or whether this was part of the 380 that were announced in November. We are still not clear. Although it is my assumption—I am concluding that it is additional.

One of the problems is we have no information, no accounting from that government, no responsibility. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) talks about having no data on cost and the basis of decision making at the hospital level. We do not have it at the governmental level. This government will not come forward and tell us how many beds have been cut. They will not come forward and tell us how many jobs have been cut. They will not come forward and tell us what services are in place in the community to replace those job losses, to replace those bed cuts.

Of course, I know why the latter, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they have not put in place any programs at the community level to replace the bed cuts and to replace the jobs lost to patients in the hospital setting. I know that not only from anecdotal information that has come our way but from the statistical data that has come out.

I see that my time is rapidly drawing to a close. I implore members of the House to review the E.C. model with respect to health care. I think there is

some indicative stuff in there that would be very, very helpful to any government undertaking reform, Madam Deputy Speaker—the appointment of a provincial health council; a policy framework that focuses on disability, mentally ill, poverty, children and youth, women and seniors, areas and things that are overlooked by this government; the Ombudsman authority extended to hospital boards and functions; the client-centred services through community health centres; a provincial health council and the setting up of representative bodies in the community that advised the government on the change prior to the change being put in place—overemphasis—prior to the change being put in place, not after the process is in place, something that was sorely lacking and missed by this government.

On that note, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have much to talk about—the co-ordination of approach that our Leader mentioned today that is sorely lacking in this government, this pigeonholing and department-by-department review of functions and not bringing it together, as well as some of the alternatives that we have suggested.

Thank you very much.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Deputy Speaker, let me at the outset say how pleased and privileged I feel I am to be in the Manitoba Legislature at a time when the province is, what I would say, at a real crossroads, when the uses of public monies have never in the history, to my knowledge, have had so much attention paid to them in the manner in which they are spent; that never have I been involved or can I recall when the public of the province or in fact of the country have paid so much attention to the political process and the individuals who are involved, and the mannerisms in which they carry out their public duties.

One can give credit to, either negatively or positively, whichever today's paper or today's media has portrayed them or him or her as, but it is largely to do with the capabilities of the media and the modern technology, which in fact we all have available to us and are available to the public at large. So I say, for democracy, it is extremely, extremely important. We, Madam Deputy Speaker, should thank ourselves that we do in fact have such a system available to us.

I want to, as well, at the outset—and I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in his opening of the Budget Address, and I say, as well, I am extremely pleased to have been in cabinet and to be involved with a government that has tabled for the sixth year in a row a budget of this kind, of this time in our provincial history, a document that expresses pretty clearly a fair and balanced approach to the expenditures of what are scarce taxpayers' resources. I say how pleased and proud I am to stand with our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and with our Minister of Finance, our government, in supporting this year's budget.

The significance of a budget to the province and to the country, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something that was brought to me as a very young person in growing up. I had a very close association with my grandfather on my mother's side whom I had the privilege to spend a lot of time with, as he spent considerable years living in our home and living with us, as my sisters and brother grew up in the farm community.

As a young person, one could quite often distract, or try to, or in fact—not consciously, but would interfere with his listening to what was going on in current affairs on the radio. That was prior to television. He, particularly at a time of the year when the budget was being brought down either for the province or the country, was always glued to the radio.

Of course, if there was an annoyance or some noise from some of the grandchildren, it was very disturbing to him. He would immediately bring them to attention and sometimes used very persuasive disciplinary measures which got your attention which, by the way, I do not think in any way deterred from or hurt the individuals that the application of such measures were applied to, but it was pretty effective and I thank him for that.

More importantly, what I thank him for was the attention that he brought to me of how important a budget for a province or a country really was. It is a matter of telling the people of the province whose money is being spent, the policy directions that the government or the province are taking, extremely important in a free and democratic society. That is why at the outset I express very, very clearly how important it is that the message be communicated to the public at large and everyone understand what is happening.

If we do not, we take our system for granted and we drift and we drift and we drift. Quite frankly, we end up in a position where it can, in fact, be out of control. People blame the system and then challenge the system. You have confrontation. You have all those kinds of undesirable things taking place in a society which none of us want. So for that I say thanks, and I very much appreciate it, the upbringing that I have had and the attention that was brought to me and the importance of it.

I, as well, feel very honoured, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be able to serve with a government, with a group of women and men of such integrity and determination to carry out an extremely difficult task in extremely difficult times. I, to a person, believe that every man and woman in this Legislature believe they have a responsible role to carry out and are sincerely trying to do so.

* (1430)

I find it unfortunate—I am not going to name any members or anyone, because I believe it is important not to do that, but I hope we do not see too many activities like those which took place in Question Period a few days ago when there was in fact reference made to the children of a member who is trying to, in her best way, carry out a job on behalf of the people of Manitoba. That I do not believe has a place in this Chamber. I do not believe that personal individual attacks of integrity have a place in this Chamber. I do not believe it serves the process of debate and/or trying to make sure that we maximize our abilities as individuals to put our positions forward. It in no way, shape or form adds to the integrity, to the process.

Let me specifically say, Madam Deputy Speaker, how proud and privileged I feel I am to serve with a cabinet and a caucus group of people who have put forward one of the toughest documents that this province will have seen in some 15 to 16 years that I have served in the Legislature, tough because it is never easy to make. The integrity of individuals who put forward such a document is always an important part of it. I believe that the Treasury Board of this government, that the cabinet of this government and the caucus of this government, in the acceptance of the decisions made and the process which they have gone through is one that not many people in today's society would want to have to deal with.

It is always popular when you are handing out or giving money to individuals or to groups in society out of the Treasury of any government. You are always extremely popular but when the time has come—and it has come, because we have seen it not only in Manitoba but we have seen it nationally, we have seen it internationally—when the taxpayers have reached their capability, maximized their capability to contribute to the global pot which we all depend on to provide the services, it is extremely important we understand that. It is extremely important that we all understand that there are no simple solutions to the dilemma that the country, the provinces and, in fact, the world has found itself in.

You have three basic options when you are developing a budget. You can take the route which historically in the past quite a few years has been the route of least resistance. We have seen it happen federally under the Pierre Elliott Trudeau government. We have seen it happen under many other governments throughout the country where in fact it was easier to raise taxes and continue to spend money. That was always and is always the route of least resistance. You have the ability through law to take money from those people who are working in your society to pay for the services that are deemed essential by those people who are elected politically. That has got us into, Madam Deputy Speaker, considerable amount of trouble as a competitive situation throughout the world and we have now to face that issue.

The other option which has been equally as easy, but delaying the pain, has been that of the increase of deficit spending, that you spend today to tax tomorrow on those people who are generating the wealth that produces the programs which we all depend on. We either have the taxation of today which you can do; you can deficit spend and continue to provide the services, or, Madam Deputy Speaker, the path which we have taken and many other governments are taking—in fact, I do not know a jurisdiction anywhere that has not had to come to grips and they are dealing with that third option—and that is the one of reducing the spending for the people of the province of Manitoba and in fact for the country.

I take my hat off to those people, whatever political stripe, however it has had to come about, that they have come to grips with that because I think collectively, and I say this genuinely, I have not heard the members opposite, although we accuse

them of saying you want to tax greater or you want a greater deficit, I do not think genuinely anyone wants to continue to see the first two options followed. If they do, it is in the Budget Debate that they should stand in their places and honestly say, I mean honestly say, you should not have cut this program, but you should have in fact raised these taxes to pay for it, or you should increase the deficit.

Well, there is big debate over the deficit. The members opposite say there was something about our reporting of a deficit which was somewhat greater than we had anticipated, but it was not, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the expenditure side that caused the problem. It was on the revenue side, which we had absolutely no control over. So what we are doing, and have done, is reported the facts as they are there for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

Unfortunate as it is, we truly intended to keep our spending down and to come closer to balancing our budget. It was not doable so we passed that stage. Now we have had to face further expenditure reductions which will give us over a period of time a balanced budget, which I have not heard anyone disagree with. I have not heard one person in this Legislature disagree with a balanced budget.

Again, if they do, let them stand in their place and tell us that they do disagree with a balanced budget, but it has to come about because if we do not make that decision and drive to that goal then there are those who will drive us to that goal whether we like it or not.

So there are three points that have to be made. You can take the decision to increase taxes, which is not in the cards. In fact, I remind members again—and I do want to acknowledge the media because it is not always that we feel we get fair reporting, as the members opposite feel that they do not always get fair reporting.

I do happen to point out, and I think it is noteworthy at this time, that the approach that the Progressive Conservative Party and the government of Gary Filmon, the honourable Premier of this province and his caucus have taken on is the right approach. I say that genuinely, and I comment on the media that have reported it.

When you go back to the Free Press, I believe it was March 1, when it says, Tax breaks to fatten wallets, what that is saying—not us saying it, not anybody who is of political nature. It is what the

Conference Board of Canada said, that with the measures that Manitoba government has taken, there will be—those were their words—an additional \$600 million.

Think of it. Think of \$600 million in the pockets of the Manitoba taxpayers to spend on a daily basis. [interjection] Well, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) shouts across the floor, why are we running deficits. Why did they run deficits? [interjection] Madam Deputy Speaker, because it is not our intention and was not our intention to run deficits, but the difference in the former administration, it was their intention to run deficits. It never was anything but their intention to run deficits.

An Honourable Member: So last year's was just an accident, and this year's is just another accident?

Mr. Downey: Unfortunately, I have explained precisely why our deficit was higher than what it was projected, because of the revenue side.

Now, the member again—and I want to challenge the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) who is now critical of last year's deficit. How can he criticize last year's deficit? What would he have cut last year from the spending of the province? Would he have reduced Family Services? Would he have reduced health care funding? Would he have reduced Education? [interjection]

Okay. He said from his seat that he would have cut Education. He said he would have cut Education. Now at least he is coming forward fairly and honestly saying he would have cut Education.

* (1440)

Point of Order

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Arthur is misusing something I said from my seat. I said that the 150-percent increase to private schools in the province cannot be justified. Yes, I would have certainly saved the province some money by not implementing a 150-percent increase in private school funding.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Downey: I attempt, Madam Deputy Speaker, to speak the truth and speak it from the heart. I

would hope he would not question that. [interjection] Okay, thank you. He is now onside again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so we have said higher taxes are not the answer. Higher deficits are not the answer. Reduced spending—at least, I would ask my colleagues in opposition to agree that reduced spending is the direction that this province and this country has to go.

Can I get some indication in the speeches that they are going to give that this is in fact an acceptable principle? If it is not, please say so. Then we know and the public know what some alternatives are. But they have not, you see. That is part of the problem. They are playing this—[interjection] Well, but that basic principle, does she agree with the basic principle of reducing spending, rather than the first two options of tax increases and larger deficits?

An Honourable Member: You never mentioned increasing revenue, Jim.

Mr. Downey: Well, the revenue side of it comes from taxes. The revenues come from taxes.

Anyway, that is a point that I think at least our society has to agree on, and I think it has. I think right from the President of the United States to the Prime Minister of Canada who, by the way, I predicted in one of the speeches about a year or two years ago that it would be the next government of Canada, would be the Progressive Conservative Party and it would be led by the current Prime Minister—well, I am wrong one out of two. I would have hoped that it would have been the current Prime Minister. It is not going to be, but at least he has put the party in a position where it can win and has to win the next federal election, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can I further go on by saying as it relates to cabinet—[interjection] It might be worthwhile, eh? All I am doing is bringing to the members' attention the fact that I predicted some two years what would happen, and I think in fact that is one prediction that hopefully will come about.

Let me further add that we have a very dedicated—and I say this particularly for the people that I have working for the departments that I am responsible for, a dedication of the Civil Service that cannot be questioned.

I honestly believe the majority of the employees of government are serious and genuinely interested

in what we are doing. [interjection] The member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) says that it was big of me to say that. Well, I do not consider it anything but the way I feel, that I honestly believe the employees of government are trying to make it work. They are trying to maintain job security. They are trying—[interjection] Well, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) refers to political hacks. I do not consider the people who work for me, who work for him and work for the former government, as political hacks. I call them professional civil servants.

Yes, there are people of different political persuasions who work for all kinds of governments, and I do not consider them political hacks. I consider them having the right to express themselves politically as they so feel, not political hacks and degrading them in that kind of a manner. I say they are genuinely hard-working people who want to make this thing happen. They are not happy about paying greater taxes. In fact, I think they want to be some of the ones who have the \$600 million in tax savings in their pockets, because that is the problem.

What governments continue to do is take off the top of everybody's pay cheque without their control, without their say, the cost of running government. Management has the same deductions taken off as everyone else has. It is the government that takes the cheque and takes that amount off. Management, whatever level you are in—government takes that money.

It is our objective to take less from that line, not more, but to take less. I think, from the case I am laying before this Legislature, that it is in fact happening. I am proud and pleased to be part of a government that is seeing the kind of activities, the responses and the results that we are getting. But I do say genuinely that those people who work for government I take my hat off to because they have to deliver some tough and difficult programs and messages.

Let me proceed, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make a couple of other points that I think are important. When we deal with public issues and we have had to make the tough decisions that I have referred to for agencies and/or those individuals depending on government for funding, I think the application of the policies of this government again have been fair and equitable.

Let me use the example, and I again comment about the educational system in this province. I think it is important when the funding for our school divisions are carried forward from the provincial budget, that what we have had to do as people elected and responsible for the global tax monies within our jurisdiction, that the same kinds of principles are carried out within those jurisdictions which we fund.

Yes, there is local autonomy. Yes, there are local school divisions that are elected to give the kind of direction, the kinds of programs and policies that reflect those individual communities, but in the global sense, because the monies which we give them we are held responsible for, I think in the same context their administration of their local authorities should in fact reflect what we have had to reflect in the larger picture.

That is where I have some difficulty with the members opposite in not coming forward and speaking clearly as to where they stand. Example: We have said we would expect the school divisions of this province to carry out the same kind of opportunity, difficult as it may be, that if you are going to, in some way, reduce the costs of education to the taxpayers, that there is an enabling legislation and an ability to do so, to take the professional development days of school teachers in this province and not pay for them—not harsh, not extremely cruel, but a fair application of a policy for the general purposes of solving the problem.

You know, I, for some reason, am missing a point, but I noticed—I think it was the Leader of the second opposition party last week or someone from her party, when a comment was made that for some reason, the application of more money to education automatically means a better education, I think she took exception when our Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) made a comment along that line. Nobody has yet convinced me that automatically more money going to education or more money automatically going to health care service at the end of it equals better service or better education.

An Honourable Member: Does that apply to private schools too?

Mr. Downey: That applies in anything. [interjection] I can defend it in Antler River, or I can defend it anywhere, that more money does not equal automatically a better education, because here is where 80 percent of the money goes in

education—it goes to pay salaries and the member knows that.

Eighty percent of the money goes to pay salaries, so if you increase the money to the educational system, then you are increasing the salaries of individuals. Are they working longer days to teach the children that much longer? Are they giving them more courses in schools? Are they extending the school day or the school week? That does not automatically come.

What the member is trying to say is more money equals better education and that is not true. It is how the money is channelled, spent and targeted and the policies that are established as it is within any other government forum. It is how you spend it and the integrity and the direction that the money is given more than it is the quantity.

* (1450)

I want to deal with another area. I know that members opposite quite frankly have not been able to give us any alternatives, and that is being noted in the public. What is as well being noted in the public is the last week since we have tabled the budget which, by the way, I am pretty pleased with and I say that the people of the constituency which I represent are indicating as well that they are extremely pleased with it. It is, in today's terms, a conservative budget.

What I have not seen are the alternative decisions that the opposition members would make. In fact, we have had over a week of Question Period and debate and I have yet to pick a speech or a question in Question Period that I could say, this really shows the integrity of the opposition and the sincerity of the opposition, in a global sense, dealing with this document.

I am sorry one of the leadership candidates for the Liberal Party has not risen to what I would consider the challenge that the current Leader who is stepping down has taken upon herself to, in a global way, give the people of Manitoba some alternatives. Quite frankly, that is his challenge. That is the challenge for the Liberal Party today, to pick up.

I give credit where credit is due. [interjection] No, as an individual. She came forward as an individual. She built to a maximum of some 21 seats, and that was no easy task, because what was there I believe was some global leadership and

some alternatives. That is no longer with the Liberal Party, I am sorry to say. It is the current challenge.

The New Democratic Party I guess have not got a central focus. They really have lost—what I would have thought they would have really shone on was an opportunity to show how they would deal with the current financial issues of the province. They quite frankly have not given the people of Manitoba a clear alternative or a clear alternate agenda which would give anyone any comfort as to where they would take this province in a fiscal sense and an expenditure sense into the future.

They line up with all the groups that are prepared to come to the steps of the Legislature and say, we are with you, we would not cut that, we would not reduce any spending, we would not bring in line or reduce some of the advocacy funding, we stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

Well, what is the alternative has to come forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am sorry, it just is not there.

Could you give me, Madam Deputy Speaker, an indication of how much time I have left?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. Downey: Eleven as in one, one?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Downey: Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have tried today to not come across as extremely negative in my comments. I have tried to be constructive. I have attempted to point out how important it is as elected members of not only this Assembly but of the House of Commons and, speaking of the House of Commons, I know we have several members in this Chamber who feel they would be able to serve their constituents better in a larger arena for which it is extremely important that people are prepared to put their names forward. At the same time, I should comment that I am extremely proud as a Progressive Conservative—and I think I should say this at this time—of the quality of people who have put their names forward to take on the leadership of the Government of Canada and, hopefully, the next elected government that will lead this country into the next four years.

It is extremely important that people come forward and do that, because, as I said at the outset of my speech, there has never been a time in our history

that people have come under such scrutiny as they come under today in their activities, personally, as it comes to the spending of the funds that taxpayers put forward. There will never be a time probably that there is such scrutiny and such importance placed on the activities of individuals and how they perform in a public manner. Probably it is the toughest time ever to be in public life.

I say that from my own experience as to the last 16 years and the importance of how we all have to be not only seen to be doing the right thing but doing the right thing. That is extremely important.

An area which I want to touch on because it is important to the future of the province as well is some of the positive growth policies that have been established and some of the things that we have done. Probably the most outstanding is the fact that our policies will leave \$600 million in the pockets of taxpayers by the year 1994—probably the biggest single impact that the province will see on the expenditure side.

Let me deal with some Crown corporation issues which I think are important, as I have had the privilege of being responsible for several Crown corporations. I am pleased, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I had the responsibility to be responsible for ManOil, not so happy that ManOil was established initially because it cost the taxpayers, under the former administration, some \$16 million, but I am pleased that we were able to divest of the Manitoba Oil and Gas Corporation to a private company, which has turned that company into a major economic generator and job creator for the province, and it is a Manitoba company.

I am extremely pleased and proud of the fact that we have the McKenzie Seeds organization. I give full credit to the management, to the the board of directors and to the employees of that company for making two years in a row in excess of a million-dollar, bottom-line profit for the Province of Manitoba. Projections are that it should even grow from that particular point.

Let me as well say that I am pleased with the performance and the activities of the Manitoba Mineral Resources corporation, which has worked hard to try and encourage and foster in the development of new mining activities and mine operations in Manitoba.

The Communities Economic Development Fund, I say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a tool to

assist northern and native remote communities in the financing and activities that are related to daily operations and lives. It is, in fact, operating and performing in as difficult a situation as it is, but it is doing a good job for the people of northern Manitoba and for the mandate which it has.

I am pleased with those, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the speed at which we were able to put them through committee without a lot of questions and a lot of difficulty.

Let me say as well that I do not think it was wrong public policy when the government moved to divest itself of Channel Area Loggers and Moose Lake Loggers. It turned over to those communities the opportunity to direct their own self-operated corporations without government having to be involved in their daily lives and the operations.

Time will tell, but, at this point, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am satisfied, as the minister who is charged with the responsibility, that it has been the right thing to do. I am extremely pleased that I have been given the mandate and the support of our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and my colleagues to proceed with the settlement of some of our Northern Flood outstanding flood issues. I am pleased that the Split Lake community are now off and running without having to continue to worry and haggle over the settlement of that outstanding issue. That to me is a major accomplishment.

So when the members from the northern portion of this province stand and say we have not done anything for the North, in fairness I would like them to recognize that there has been some things done. We are very close to completing—hopefully, the community will accept it in Nelson House—a settlement of the same agreement. York Landing have indicated their desire to end the long-term outstanding issues, and we have had indications from the other communities that they would like to proceed.

The Grand Rapids forebay issues which have been resolved by this government were no small task, were major, major accomplishments in my mind, not me as the minister, but the direction given by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and caucus and cabinet. There have been major accomplishments. I ask members to be fair in their criticisms when we go forward with these kinds of policies.

I am extremely pleased that we have been able to start the process for the introduction of overland

Hydro service for the nine communities in the northeast corner of the province that have been denied the same kinds of services that you and I have enjoyed, Madam Deputy Speaker, in southern Manitoba. It is not only right, it has to be done so those individuals can enjoy the same kinds of services that we enjoy. Those are the kinds of things that I ask to be judged on.

I want to talk, and I will conclude my remarks, on Hydro because it is extremely important that I do so. Hydro has been a major generator of wealth activity for the economy of Manitoba in several fronts. I want to point out that it was revolutionary, and I mean revolutionary for the economy of Manitoba, when D. L. Campbell spearheaded and led the rural electrification program in this country. That was monumental in the economic course that gave this province the ability to bring it forward, to produce the kind of agriculture products that made us the province that we are in the sense in which we are.

* (1500)

I believe, and I say this without political tarnish or without political credit to anyone, that the further development of the Nelson River by the Duff Roblin government was the right thing to do. The timing may have been questionable, but I do not disagree with the initiative that was carried out by the former administration in the building of the Limestone generating station and the jobs and the economic events that went with it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I fully supported the development of the Conawapa project and the sale to Ontario. However, let us be honest and straightforward. [interjection] Yes, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) shouts across to me that I am responsible for Hydro not proceeding and going ahead.

What I have difficulty with is the members opposite not being honest with the people of Manitoba, putting their position forward as to whether they wanted Conawapa and the sale or whether they did not. I can go through litanies of comments and speeches made by the members opposite where they in fact wanted to take credit initially for it. Then they were opposed to it. Then they were for it. [interjection] Well, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) should in fact then stand in his place and put his position forward.

But it was the government—I am sorry, it was the corporation of Ontario Hydro that came forward and

said they wanted the delay, and it was Manitoba Hydro who said, these are the conditions if you delay that you have to meet. They said they would not meet those conditions and, in fact, cancelled out of the deal. I had no choice. It was not the government's choice. It was Ontario Hydro and Manitoba Hydro that carried out that particular decision.

Something equally as important that has to be debated in this Legislature, as does the Crow rate have to be debated, is it in the best interests of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to continue to bill and promote the movement of hydroelectric power out of this province to create jobs in other jurisdictions? I say that we have to put every effort forward, and will be, to develop employment and jobs in Manitoba through the use of Manitoba Hydro.

As D.L. Campbell put in rural electrification, as the further development took place on the Nelson River for job creation and training for our northern and native people, it is important that we continue to develop our electric source using it to generate jobs and economic activities in Manitoba.

One of the things that Manitoba Hydro has done to do that is to keep the lowest costs for hydro rates in North America right here in Manitoba. They have frozen the hydro rates for this year, Madam Deputy Speaker, something that the members opposite, in their wisdom, should stand in their place and say thank you to Manitoba Hydro for the work that they have done.

The projections are that Hydro has been our big economic generator, it will be our big economic generator, and I am pleased to be the minister responsible for it.

I conclude my remarks by saying, we live in a global economy, we have to position ourselves to compete in that global economy, and it is this government that will put us in the right economic position to do that. I am proud to be a member of the Legislature in this government that will do it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, like everyone inside this Chamber, I too am concerned about the future of education, training, retraining, health care and the other issues that are out there. I take a look at the budget that the government has brought forward. They talk a lot about fairness. They talk a lot about the deficit

and the reason why they are doing what it is that they are doing is based on deficit control.

Well, I was wanting to start off by talking about the deficit and go through what I believe government should be doing in order to ensure that we have the services that we have today for tomorrow.

I will acknowledge that the deficit itself is in fact a problem. You know, it was not that long ago when Maclean's had an article that kind of caught my eye when it talked about awash in red ink. In this particular article it talked about the government debt as a percentage of gross provincial product. You have from coast to coast a percentage of debt which will have to be paid at some point in time, the lowest being B.C. at 14 percent to a high of Newfoundland at 49, and Manitoba based at 22, even with the Province of Ontario.

I personally believe, very much so, in Keynesian theory. I had the opportunity to take economics in the two short years that I was at university, and I took a look at the Keynesians' approach to deficit and the impact or the role that government has to play in society, in the economy and so forth.

You know, Keynesian theory would say that during good times, governments should withhold spending, that that might be the opportunity to be able to put aside some of those priorities in terms of potential projects that could be delayed, and that during bad times, during recessions, government should be spending, Madam Deputy Speaker, to try to create some activity, economic activity. I believe that all political parties, different levels of government, did not necessarily do what was in the best interest at the time of all of us, not only in the province of Manitoba, but across Canada.

When the revenues were coming in, in particular in the '70s and early '80s, mid-'80s, actually throughout the '80s, when we saw revenues coming in, there were governments that continued to spend money, of all political stripes, so that now we are in a situation where we see that the deficit itself has to be addressed. It is one of the fastest growing departments, not only in the Province of Manitoba, but in all provinces. The government itself, the provincial government here, talks a very good line. They talk in terms of—well, last year, they estimated the deficit to be at \$330 million. That was the projection. The actual was \$762 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I recall when the government brought in its first budget, when they

created the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. That was at a time in which the government could have in fact had a surplus budget, but chose to borrow the money in order to manipulate the deficit, the annual deficit of future governments, in particular, future Conservative governments, in a relatively short time period. When the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was first introduced, these were the type of comments that I made at that time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that the government, in fairness, has to be more open with the public and this Chamber. For the last 40 minutes, I listened to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) talk about the responsibility of the opposition parties in providing that alternative. One detects from what he is saying that he is disappointed in the opposition parties. Well, I, too, am disappointed—in the government. I feel that the government should be more open in terms of what is actually going on, but rather we see a sleight of hand here and a sleight of hand there, whether it is the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, whether it is forecasts that make them look better at the time the budget is being presented or not.

* (1510)

The current deficit fight, in part, is going to be taken in from the VLT revenues. I have been watching the whole VLT issue and commenting on it when I had the opportunity to. The government has demonstrated very clearly that they do what they feel is in the best interest of the government and not in what is in the best interest of this particular Chamber or the people of Manitoba.

The government did make a commitment. The commitment was to take the VLT revenues, and put them into rural Manitoba. They withdrew that commitment and in this budget, we see 65 percent of all the VLT revenues going towards deficit finance. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, why is it that they decide to use the VLT revenues now towards deficit financing? The reason why they are tying it into deficit financing now is that it does not matter how much money is generated through the VLTs, there is always going to be enough of a deficit in order to take care of those particular revenues.

One has to ask the question why they do that, Madam Deputy Speaker. They do that because they want to mislead Manitobans with respect to the whole issue of gambling. The gambling has been an issue which this government has never really

addressed inside this Chamber, because they continuously tie it in—I personally think it is sad to see a government have to rely on VLT revenues in order to now, they say, reduce the deficit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the VLT revenues, for all intents and purposes, was never really generated to help the hospitals or to help rural Manitoba or to fight the deficit. It was there to generate more revenue, nothing more than that. Now they have flagged something which they can tag it on to.

The government always asks for answers, that they want to know in terms of, well, what would we do if we were in government; it is easy to criticize. I would suggest, in particular to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that if he listened to what was being asked during Question Period, if he would listen to some of the speeches that are in fact being given inside this Chamber, he would find that there are a number of ideas that are coming from the opposition benches.

There are lots of buzzwords that the government likes to use. They talk about TQM or Total Quality Management or spending smarter. The buzzwords are all fine and wonderful but, unless we start addressing some of these issues that are out there that would in fact make a difference—and it does not have to be spend, spend, spend, to the minister. I am sure if she is patient she will find out a number of ideas that I will be pointing out.

I want to comment with respect to the taxation, because it is a question which I had asked today. There are different types of taxes, as we all know, progressive to regressive tax policies. A progressive tax would be a personal income tax. A regressive tax would be a consumption tax.

Madam Deputy Speaker, how does this government relate to regressive versus progressive? Is this a fair budget in that context? If we take a look in terms of what it is they have done, the government is quite pleased to stand and say for five or six consecutive budgets now, we have not increased personal income tax. That might be the case, but you have offloaded taxes to municipalities, to school boards which rely on property tax, which is not a progressive tax. It is not based on ability to pay.

If we take a look at the specific question I asked today, the government opposed the GST, at least in part, I believe, because they said it was a regressive tax. The PST is just as regressive. If you look at

what the federal Tories did, at least they came up with a system to make the GST that much more of a fairer tax. What the government has done with the PST is to expand it, to broaden it, and that is not a progressive tax. It is, in fact, an unfair tax.

At least they could have had the integrity, as a government, when they stand and say that it is a fair tax, to have some sort of a rebate or to ensure that those who do not have the same ability, because it is a consumption tax, are given some consideration. Madam Deputy Speaker, that has not been done.

We have seen, in terms of gas, the gas tax. Actually I was fairly impressed when the government came up with the gasohol idea. I think it is a good idea. In fact, it is one of the ideas that I had mentioned at the party's annual general meeting. If government wants to promote from within, gasohol is an excellent idea, and if we follow it through—you know, it was indicated to me that if the state of California went to gasohol, 20 percent of the production of the prairie wheat would have a market.

We produce gasohol in the province of Manitoba, so I think there is some merit when we hear an initiative that the government has adopted. I give credit for the government, but these are ideas that are out there if you check with people. This is how we incorporated it into the statements that were being made from our camp at the end of the general meeting.

I want to talk a bit about the property tax because again if you look at regressive versus progressive, you find that the government is once again favouring the regressive tax over the progressive tax. Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, I find that is unfortunate.

We are again talking about individuals that are being treated not according to ability to pay. I find that is somewhat unfortunate. I find a few days back I had asked a question about the property tax. Something that this government, the provincial government, can only address.

I represent a riding which happens to be in Winnipeg School Division No. 1. If the government was wanting to do something positive, I highly recommend that they listen not to what I am saying, but I believe to what a majority of Manitobans are saying. That is that you have to look at the property tax, and there is a way in which this provincial government can restructure it in such a way that we are paying a fairer tax.

What I am referring to is the school tax portion on the property tax bill. I use the example of a \$70,000 home. If you happen to live in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, in a \$70,000 home, your tax is \$1,034.52 from what I understand. In Winnipeg school division No. 2, the same valued home at \$70,000 is \$756.19.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you look at the demographics, in particular in the city of Winnipeg, you would find that the average income is much lower in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 than it is in Winnipeg school division No. 2. This is not an issue that the school trustees can deal with. This is only an issue which this provincial Chamber can deal with, and this government is refusing to deal with that issue. What they are doing is they are even making it worse. From a \$350 credit, they are now saying it is going to be a \$250 credit. Again, no basis on ability to pay.

* (1520)

This government argues that their budget is fair. When you deal, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the taxation policies of this government, it is not fair. When it comes to dealing with issues that could make the taxation fairer, what is this government doing? It is doing nothing.

Today I asked a question about the collection of the business retail sales tax that is left outstanding, in excess of \$9 million—and a note to the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), I understood what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) said. I do not believe that the Minister of Finance gave justice to the question because if you listen to what the Minister of Finance said, he contradicted himself. He said, why, we cannot make this information public. Would you make it public? Then he says we are going to push to collect those taxes. We are going to put a lien on those businesses.

The Minister of Finance should know if you put a lien it becomes public, so if it is a question that it is public information, why does this government refuse to let members, the public, who have a right to know, why do they refuse not to allow that to occur, Madam Deputy Speaker? The Minister of Finance understood the question, he just refused to answer it. I am disappointed that he does not feel that Manitobans have the right to know in terms of these businesses that are not paying, remitting the provincial sales tax.

As I started at the beginning of my speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, I talked about education and the preservation of education. I wanted to start off in terms of dealing with some of these reform issues by talking about education, because I believe that the way Manitoba deals with education and training and retraining at our post-secondary institutions will determine the future fate of our province for the turn of the century. If we have—or I should not say if—we have in excess of 350 school trustees scattered throughout the province. We have some school trustees who are appointed from bureaucrats because there is no interest to fill some of these positions. In the city of Winnipeg alone we have 11 school divisions, when you have Winnipeg No. 1 again, 33,000 students; Norwood, 1,400.

There are many different inequities in our educational system from nursery school to high school and through high school, and this government is refusing to deal with that issue. They have put it on the back burner. For whatever reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are refusing to deal with that issue. That is irresponsible.

The government says they are going to cut 2 percent flat from our education, and I am going to comment in terms of what the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) had to say about quality of education a bit later. But 2 percent—if the government wanted to save money and improve the quality and equity in education instead of being so artificial, why do they not look at restructuring the number of school divisions in the city of Winnipeg and in fact in rural Manitoba? We do not need to have 11 school divisions.

We have the highest administration costs in Canada, and we will continue to until this government comes to grips with dealing with the problems of education and starts addressing it in terms of bringing in the legislation that is necessary, because this is the only body that can deal with it. Unfortunately, we, not being in government, have to rely on the current government if in fact we are going to see something in the very, very near future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of private schools, one of those issues that it would probably be best to not comment in terms of too much detail, there are some things that could be done and should be done dealing with the private schools. I will get other opportunities to deal with that particular issue.

I wanted to comment on the quality of education. This is something that I personally had taken offence to the other day, and I do not know why the government took it as so offensive in terms of what it is that I had to say.

I wanted to say what the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) said, and I am going to quote from Hansard. It reads: "The member does I believe make an error by suggesting that the number of dollars put into Education is strictly what maintains the quality of education or dictates the quality of education, because we know that that is not necessarily true."

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, if the Minister of Education, as opposed to saying that, said, we are going to put a cap or we are not going to spend more money on public schools or make statements of that nature, I might disagree with her in some areas, but to say that it does not have an impact or to imply it does not have an impact on quality of education I think is wrong.

I could bring in the private school issue here. Why do people bring their children to private schools? For a number of different reasons—religion, for prestige and for quality. [interjection] Well, to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), now is she being cheap? Is she being cheap with her cheap shots? The other day when I stood up and said just something similar to that, the government thought I was being cheap.

An Honourable Member: Did you think what I said was cheap?

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, no, I did not. No, I did not.

Some individuals do say the reason why they send their children to a private school and pay—[interjection] I just went through the three of them. It is because of the quality of education. That is at least in part why they pay the thousands of dollars that they do. So for the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to say that quality of education has nothing to do with money, or to imply it, is wrong, and this is what she implied.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some things that could be done. I have an educational work group in my own riding. We talk about the quality of the education and things that could be done—things such as discipline within the schools, things such as the curriculum, what should be included, what may

be spent too much time on, the number of hours that are actually being put into the classroom and so forth.

I know that I have actively surveyed my constituents through different means, and I can say that they generally feel the quality of education is deteriorating in the province of Manitoba. I believe if the government were to start to deal with some of these issues, that in fact what would happen is we would see the quality of education starting to improve.

* (1530)

I want to comment briefly on post-secondary education. You know in our colleges in the province of Manitoba, we have fewer per capita individuals attending our colleges than virtually any other province. In fact, it was a while back I had asked a question about an individual who quit a job because he was going to be starting a course this spring at Red River College. He quit a job, got ready—

An Honourable Member: When did he come?

Mr. Lamoureux: I do not know the actual date, but I can get that information if the minister approaches me later and asks for it. But in fact this particular individual came back to Winnipeg to go to this course at Red River College. What we find, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that this particular government has not put a priority on our colleges.

This misplaced priority from this government is going to cost the province of Manitoba jobs in the future. I believe that they have to re-evaluate what it is they are doing to our colleges in the province of Manitoba. In fact, the one reform that they did, they made it a bit better but they could have gone the extra step, and that is with respect to the board of governors.

What they did is they gave each college the opportunity to have their own board of governors and those—[interjection] The Minister of Consumer and Co-operative Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) is quite exercised, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I wonder if she might be able to contain herself for a bit. Anyway, the colleges and the board of governors probably would have worked a bit better had we had one board because then there would have been more co-operation—[interjection] Well, if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs had been listening, she would not be asking.

With respect to our universities, the same thing could apply. If the government wants to do something, why do they not look at things such as our boards to foster better co-operation amongst our universities?

You know, Lloyd Axworthy had an idea with prairie integration. If you go a bit further and you talk in terms of the universities and you say that in the prairie provinces—and some would argue one could even include western Ontario—if there was a better co-operation amongst our universities, or more barriers taken down, if you will, you could have better courses being offered or made available, a higher level of expertise at our different universities.

Is it necessary, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if under a system of co-operation amongst the prairie provinces a university would be responsible for the graduation of our doctors, another university might be responsible for our registered nurses? In order to maintain a certain standard, you need to have a certain number graduating.

If you got that sort of co-operation, you would see in fact that we would have better facilities—universities, that is—and provide more opportunities amongst the prairie provinces. So if you graduated—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the honourable members wish to carry on a conversation, would they please move to the loge or outside the Chamber?

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have left, because I do not want to miss out on everything I was going to say.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member has nine minutes and 21 seconds remaining.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, I am going to have to comment on health care and health care reform. You know, we as a caucus have been very supportive in terms of what the government has been doing. Our health care, in part, in the province of Manitoba has become a sense of identity to many or is related to being a part of Canadian. It is something that we want to preserve, and there is no doubt about that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The idea of deinstitutionalizing is a good one if, in fact, it is done in a proper fashion. Everyone benefits if you have seniors who are in a hospital who could be in a personal care home and seniors

who are in a personal care home who could be in an independent, detached, single dwelling if we enhance our senior home care services.

If we do that, in fact, we will have a cost saving, and we will deliver a better service. But, when it comes to the issue of health care, I think what we need to do, as Legislature, is to debate the issue of medicare. What is health care?

Time after time we hear, well, that is a user fee, that is a deductible; you are putting into jeopardy the health care system. It is easy to fearmonger when it comes to health care, something that we all value as a sacred trust. I know I personally do, and will do what I can to ensure that we do have universal—the five fundamental principles of our medicare system for the generations to come. But I do believe we have to address other issues of health care reform.

What is health care? Eye examinations? Is that classified as health care? We charge in Saskatchewan in order to get eyes examined. For the second time around, you get charged in Manitoba. Charging for a pair of slippers, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that health care? We have to better define what health care is. I would suggest to you that charging to get your eyes examined is more of a user fee than charging for a pair of slippers in the hospital. That issue needs to be addressed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue is the health care professions themselves. The LPNs have been belittled and have been played down. At what expense? I think we have to start working with our health care professionals, maybe looking at the possibility that doctors do not necessarily have to be the only access point to our hospitals, to our personal care homes, to our walk-in clinics and so forth. Is there a need for that? Can we not have other professionals such as the B.N.s, a nurse practitioner have access to delivering some of these health care services, something that does need to be looked at?

Labour training and retraining—I want to talk very briefly about Partners for Skills Development. This is a report that was given to the government in 1990 from a committee that the Minister of Education established back in 1989 known as the Skills Training Advisory Committee.

It had six major recommendations: First, to develop a provincial labour strategy; improve a public school system; strengthen the community

colleges; four, facilitate human resources planning and training; five, to revitalize apprenticeship systems; six, to address the education and training needs of our aboriginal people.

* (1540)

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government, with the possible exception of No. 3, has virtually done nothing to address the labour training and retraining needs of the province of Manitoba. You have to put it in the proper context of our current economy, the structural changes that are occurring that are out there.

Our manufacturing industry had 62,000 people in 1989 compared to 51,000 people in '92. These are major structural changes, and this government is doing minimal in terms of addressing those issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the environment, we have suggested to this government time after time that they need to implement programs that could make a difference. I will give them credit, as I say, on the gasohol, an excellent idea.

What about putting a refundable value on a beverage container, something that we have been pushing for for a good period of time; the whole issue of water diversion and what is happening there. There are a lot of things that could be done if the government was prepared to take action.

With only a couple of minutes left, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do have to comment on, very briefly, a direction that this government is going in terms of political grants, if you like.

MIC has been slowly tortured by this government in favour of politicizing multicultural grants. The Heritage Federation—the same sort of action we have seen there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to make a challenge to the government. This is to the REDI program, the Rural Economic Development Initiative program. If the government wants to be sincere, why does it not establish a board which could be based on volunteers, because I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is all gung ho on volunteers. Why does he not base this board on volunteers from the associations such as UMM or MAUM, get representatives from possibly Keystone, individuals who are into the rural communities and allow them the opportunity to make the decisions, at least in part, on where that money or how that money could

be better spent so that rural economic development in the province of Manitoba will in fact happen?

The problem with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is it will depoliticize it to some degree. Past actions from this government show that they would not necessarily favour something like that, but they could take that bold initiative and act on that particular issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak on a number of different budgets and throne speeches. Every opportunity that I do get up to stand and speak in this Chamber I try to provide ideas for this government to act upon. When the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) says that we have a responsibility to provide the alternative to this government, I can tell the Deputy Premier that the Liberal caucus has provided numerous ideas and initiatives that would make the quality of life in the province of Manitoba better. There is an onus on government to act at least on some of them.

Whoever wins the leadership of the Liberal Party, we will continue to provide the alternatives to Manitobans as this government continues to govern, because this government has not been addressing the issues that we feel would enhance the quality of life. I strongly urge the government to take very seriously what opposition members are saying and listen and possibly read what the Deputy Premier had to say. We will get a better sense of co-operation in this Chamber if, in fact, there were some areas in which government acted upon and gave credit to where it was warranted. Things could be done to strengthen the legislative committees that are there, better ways in which including all members in this Chamber—

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

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Madam Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in my place here today to join in this debate on the budget as a member, of course, of cabinet and of the Treasury bench.

Oui, et aussi pour moi c'est un honneur et un plaisir d'être le ministre responsable des services en langue française.

[Translation]

It is also an honour and a pleasure for me to be the Minister responsible for French Language Services.

[English]

I wish to thank my colleague and friend the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) for his good wishes on that appointment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there has been an ongoing debate across the aisle the last few days about remarks made by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), which he reiterated in the course of his address to the budget and many on this side of the House. I would like to add my observations or comments to that debate, because I think it is a good point to be made.

There may be disagreement over the specifics or intent, Madam Deputy Speaker, and certainly others may comment on that. But when I review Hansard and I look at the comments that were made, I believe in the remarks made in Question Period on April 8 by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), there was certainly an implication made, whether it was intended or not or whether or not it should have been brought forward in much greater clarification, which certainly I would admit that time in Question Period does not allow.

There was certainly an implication made that equating the dollars spent on education—but I think one could argue, and I would argue in any area of government—that the dollars spent equate with equality of—in the case of the member's question—education, but certainly if one expands it to any service government provides.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I review Hansard, the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), in the cut and thrust of the Question Period responded, I think, and I support her remarks wholeheartedly, that one should never make the error of equating quality with dollars spent because they do not necessarily—and I use the minister's words—do not necessarily equate. Just because we spend more money or we reduced expenditure in a particular area that we in fact are going to make things better or worse.

The reason I raise that, I know the Minister of Education certainly did not appreciate, nor do I think anyone on this side, the member's comments that simply because the Minister of Education chooses to educate her children in a private school that has a rather large expensive fee, that somehow she herself equates expenditure with quality.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux)

wishes to carry on a conversation, I would appreciate him moving to the loge which is appropriately designed for those types of conversations.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Deputy Speaker, as I indicated, or am about to indicate, as you look at the private school system, the independent school system in Manitoba, you will see that there are many of those schools where the cost of educating a student is significantly lower than the public system, and many would argue that the quality of education in those institutions is appreciably better.

* (1550)

I am not going to debate the merits of whether that should happen or not—that is a debate we have had in this House—but I think that proves the point wholeheartedly. I know I have constituents from the area in which I grew up in the Lockport-St. Andrew's area who use the Holy Ghost School on Selkirk Avenue, St. Alphonsus in East Kildonan where the tuition is just a couple of hundreds of dollars, not the thousands that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) implies.

They have chosen those schools not just because of the religious element of an education, but also because they feel their children get a better quality of education than they do in the public system. There are certainly some reasons for that, requirements of the school, the ability to impose a disciplinary regime, a host of very legitimate reasons that make the difference. I think the point is proven that with the right combination of circumstance and the right combination of structure and the right people, with less money you can have better quality, that dollars do not always or necessarily equate to quality.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the items in this debate that I have seen come forward time and time again as members opposite have engaged in this debate is making just that point, that somehow, because we are not spending more, that we are destroying the basic infrastructure of government and destroying the quality.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I was first elected to this House in 1988—and six of the seven members of the Liberal Party were elected in that election, there were many on the New Democratic benches, actually none who came in in that particular election, some on this side—and the first budget in which I voted as a member of this Assembly, we voted to

expend some \$1.3 billion to health care in this province.

This budget that we are now going to be voting on will expend somewhere in the order of \$1.8 billion for health care in just the space of five years. If you do some quick calculation, if you assume Manitoba has a million people, round off to a million people, and you divide by that million, that means that in five years we have increased our expenditures in health care from \$1,300 per Manitoban to \$1,800 per Manitoban. Yet if you listen to members opposite, they will tell you of all the cutbacks going on in health care. Well, a half-a-billion-dollar expenditure or \$500-per-Manitoban increase in five years represents a shift of 10 percent of the provincial budget, approximately, to health care in just five years.

The budget for the Department of Labour which is under \$17 million, the increase in health care, I mean we are a matter of in just a few days our budget would be consumed by the Department of Health. New highway construction in this province has been in the neighbourhood of just over \$100 million dollars or \$100 dollars per person. The increases to health care have consumed five times roughly the annual expenditure on our new highway infrastructure, new construction in this province. [interjection] Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) asks me to speak of the debt, and I am going to get to that later on in my speech.

The point that I make is that we as a Legislative Assembly year after year, for decades, have voted greater expenditure to department after department, to outside agency after outside agency, and yet we are faced with this continual barrage of arguments and claims that quality has declined. We are not meeting the purpose.

We have to ask ourselves as legislators of all political parties, and I do believe there are members in the opposition who do put this question. I know I have had the opportunity to join in discussion with the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) in public discussion, and I know he shares many of these views in terms of looking at what we are doing. We may disagree on some specifics and certain avenues, but certainly a member who looks at this question, as I have and members on this side of the House have looked at, and said if we keep voting more money to all of these areas of government and

the demand keeps growing, what are we getting for our expenditure?

Can we justify as legislators, in the case of health, increasing the health care budget in just five years by the equivalent of 10 percent of the total provincial budget from \$1.3 billion to \$1.8 billion without asking what are we buying with that additional money? [interjection] Of course, we have to ask that. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) says no, maybe we should not ask that question. Of course, we have to ask it. Yes, we have to ask it and we have been, and not always do the answers come back as we expect them to be.

I think if one looks at the work done by the ministry of Health, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and those involved in health care, in the management of our health care system, if you look at the work done by the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, you see very quickly that our system has built into it so many things we have come to take for granted that are not necessarily what they appear to be, are not necessarily providing services that Manitobans think they are getting and certainly cannot afford.

I am reminded from the Action Plan for Health Care Reform of the case of rural cases coming to our urban hospitals and, certainly, our two teaching hospitals. I am reminded of the data that the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation produced that showed very clearly that, although the two teaching hospitals did garner the most complex rural cases coming to urban hospitals, they also had fully a third of their rural cases, the case of the two teaching hospitals, were in the least 10 percentile of complexity. We were treating cases in our most expensive, sophisticated teaching hospitals that could have been dealt with, one would argue, in either other Winnipeg community hospitals or back in the communities from where these people have come, at considerably less cost.

So do we have a better health care system because we are expending money more than we should be or need to be expending on providing health care to our citizens? Is that good quality health? I would argue not, nor is it good value for our dollars. Madam Deputy Speaker, this kind of microscope under which Health is now finding itself is what this government is doing and intending to do to each and every part of government expenditure.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we started talking a little bit about education. That is a very difficult issue,

because I think, as the Minister of Education has said on a number of occasions, there are a host of factors that do not make the scenario a simple one. One thing is for certain. We as a society have put expectations on our educational system that were not there just a decade ago.

I had the privilege of attending four public forums on education in my constituency and the constituency of the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) as the Agassiz school board, the largest school board in my constituency, prepared its budget. What was very interesting, as parents and educators and we politicians at the provincial and school board level discussed these issues of budget building, was the sense that really came up, particularly from parents, of what expectation levels we have placed on our school divisions; case in point, funding buses in the Agassiz School Division to move school teams to games.

One parent, I remember very clearly, made the point that if their child was in hockey, they had to be responsible for transporting their child. If their child was in the basketball program, somehow the taxpayer had that responsibility. The school made the point that when they called for volunteers—one particular school in Agassiz School Division—to drive the students on the team to games, they did not have one parent come forward to take on that role.

So, without putting the blame on anyone, let us just look generally at the demands that we as a society placed on our school division. Certainly, in the area of social services to our students, we have seen a great demand on our school system to not just be our educators, but certainly be our counsellors, our surrogate parents, to provide a host of services that just 10 or 15 or 20 years ago were not expected of the public school system. So those demands have all been placed there. Of course, the reality, though, is we have fewer students in our system today than we had a decade ago, some 20 percent less, I believe, and yet in real dollars we spend considerably more on those students. Granted, as I pointed out, part of that are those expectations, those additional things we have to do, but education has to go under the microscope.

* (1600)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I must admit that as I watched television this week and saw Mr. Clifford of the teachers' society on television speaking about math exams and the national math exam, I was

somewhat disappointed. Because we who vote a billion dollars, one-fifth of our provincial budget, to education, we who are expected to rise and vote that sum of money each and every year, have a right to ask, how do we stack up to the rest of at least our country?

There are a variety of ways to do that, but there must be some objective criteria, and in what other area other than mathematics? Mathematics is the ideal candidate to objectively test how we stack up in terms of our curriculum, how we stack up in terms of our teaching, how our students are doing compared to the rest of the country. It is not a be-all answer. It is not going to solve every problem or give us all the data, but it certainly gives us some. Yet there was in the educational establishment Mr. Clifford saying, we do not want that.

How does he then ask this Legislature, we as the elected representatives of the people, to continue to vote large and ever-increasing sums of money to education if we are not seeing what we are getting for it? Are we getting value for what we are spending? That is a question that we have a right, on behalf of the people of this province, to ask.

I must admit I was somewhat taken aback by Mr. Clifford's reluctance to see us have that legitimate question answered, at least in some fashion. It does say, to me at least, we have problems there if we are afraid to have that issue dealt with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just further on the point of education, we hear the platitudes all the time about education being fundamental to our future. There is no doubt about that. I have to ask again, as a member of this Assembly who has voted now on—this will be my sixth budget, with each year this Assembly voting more and more money to education, and yet what I hear back is cutbacks again, decrease in quality, we cannot handle all of the problems. What is happening within the system when we continually vote more money as legislators to education, and yet the cry for more, more, more resources continues to be heard?

It certainly asks at least that one fundamental question, what are we truly buying with the billion dollars we vote on behalf of the people of this province for education? That is a legitimate question. I do not know all the answers. I know the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) is in the process of finding them with the university review, et cetera, but the question is a legitimate one.

The education establishment cannot just expect the 57 members of this Legislature to automatically vote them such a huge sum of money every year without knowing what we are buying for that on behalf of the people who contribute that money through their taxes. That just cannot continue to happen. We have to know what we are buying for that.

I want to make the comment clearly that just because wage increases go up, which is the largest part of that, does not necessarily mean—75 to 80 percent of the cost of education is wages and benefits. Simply because those wages and benefits are not increasing annually, does that affect the quality of education? You know, one should say, no, it should not.

Are people saying to us that because people expect to not have an increase, that they are going to teach less or they are going to provide poorer quality in their teaching? I would think not. I do not think that is consistent with most teachers in this province, who are very good people who try their best, so equating dollars spent with quality is not necessarily an equation you can make.

There are so many issues that have to be dealt with in that area, but just voting more money is not going to necessarily result in improvements to our educational system. We have seen that in the past. We will see it in the future. Maybe legislators in the past, including many of us here, had the luxury of voting on budgets that provided whatever increases were required to meet wage and benefit demands, but we do not have that luxury any longer. So we must ask again, in education, as in health, as in our social services and every part of government spending, what are we getting for our dollar? Are we getting the value that we expect? Can we do it better for less? That question has to be answered.

What I find sad about this debate, and I do not expect members opposite to always agree with the conclusions that we would reach on this side, but what I find particularly sad from members of the New Democratic Party is their total failure to ask those questions about quality. Maybe like opposition parties always try to be, they have become part of the bandwagon that says, spend more, you get more quality, not asking the question, what are we getting for what we are already spending? They are not asking that question.

They are in fact saying, shovel in more money and you will get better whatever it is, without asking, are we getting anything worthwhile now or what are we getting now? What value and quality are we getting now? They have totally ignored those questions. Perhaps they would have different conclusions or different answers to those questions than us, but they are not even asking the questions, and that is what is very much very sad about this debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, health, education, certainly in the area of social services, Manitoba has built up over a 20- to 30-year period one of the richest social safety nets in our country. We are indeed one of the only provinces, I believe we are the only province, to have virtually a full Pharmacare program for all of our citizens. Most provinces, if not all of the others, provide for young people and the elderly and those who have a chronic illness that requires an expensive drug but, for other citizens, they are on their own, so we have a very rich system.

We provide foster parent rates that are higher than Ontario. We provide a host of social services, and we have for decades, that are better than anywhere else in this country.

The question, of course, is, can we afford that? What we have as a government tried to do is maintain as much as we can with the resources that are available to us as a government.

We have struggled. Ministers like our colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), the Treasury Board ministers have struggled over the last number of months with those very difficult decisions for the purpose of maintaining as much as we can possibly maintain and afford. Members opposite, of course, would like everything to be kept, but they offer no way of funding other than tax increases or more borrowing.

Well, more borrowing is not going to be the answer because that will come quickly to an end, and significant tax increases, we have had some in this budget, but certainly not the kind that members opposite seem to be calling for.

If there is one major difference between members of this side of the House and members of the New Democratic Party, and perhaps this will be the issue on which the next general election is fought, it is whether or not one wants the provincial government to hold the line as much as it can on taxation,

recognizing that there is very little additional money to take out of the pockets of Manitobans, or are they prepared to pay a lot more in taxes which the New Democrats would appear to advocate, without even asking what we are buying for those dollars, which the New Democrats continually fail to do. So this may be the division in the politics of this province, and knowing my constituents, knowing the incomes of my constituents, I know that there is virtually no room to go into their pockets to take out more money.

I just share with members opposite, last week I spoke at a health forum sponsored by community health and the hospital in Pine Falls. We had almost 100 people there. We spoke about health reform, and the question was asked about some of the changes to home care and the fee with up to \$50 on certain items in home care. The point was made, not by me but some of the seniors who were there, that they were prepared to make that contribution. They were prepared to pay for those certain additional things like crutches and some of those walkers and other things. Their main concern, particularly the home care workers who were at this meeting, was that the bulk buying power of the province still be available to get the best deal possible for those purchases.

* (1610)

There were seniors there who said, Mr. Praznik, we do not need to necessarily have our cleaning paid for. We are doing well on our pension. We are prepared to pay some dollars towards cleaning, but find a way to do it so that our home care staff who come to see us on things that you do pay for can also tag on, and we will pay them to do that cleaning. There was a willingness to pay for some of those services because people were prepared to do their share, and it was pleasing to see. I think if members opposite asked that question and were prepared to listen to many Manitobans, they would find that there is a much greater understanding and appreciation and support for those small contributions to maintain a very rich system.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if there is, I would at this moment—I know that there is quite a debate going on across the aisle. I would like to make some reference to the member for Inkster's (Mr. Lamoureux) comments about fair taxation. One item that has been lost in this debate on the minimum property tax was that traditionally in

Manitoba the people paid all of their property tax. In the '70s when—and my colleague for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) who was a member of the House at this time. I am sure he will recall better than I a period of great revenue, of Ed Schreyer's government, by and large wanting to win an election and buy votes, coming up with the \$325 homeowner's rebate. Rich and poor alike, everybody got it, the Wellington Crescents, as members opposite referred to, the Tuxedos, to the Garsons and Selkirks, right across the province, and it was an election gimmick. [interjection]

Well, the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) talks about the 80 percent of the cost of education. Yes, but what has driven that cost above the rate of inflation over the last decade has been the settlements; 75 to 80 percent of the cost of education is salaries and benefits. That has gone up faster over a decade over the consumer price index in those areas, and does the province have an obligation to fund that holus-bolus? I do not think we do. Part of that, in fairness, is the increased expectation of society on what the schools will do, as I have said. Can we necessarily afford that? I am not sure.

I want to say, back to the tax credit for a moment, so this tax credit came into play. I want to share with members, and I do it with I am sure some fear as to what others may comment to me later. I would like the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) to note this one.

My wife and I got married in 1984. We bought a small home. It was a joyous occasion. We bought a small home in Garson, Manitoba, and our first tax bill in Garson was \$109. Now, we were reassessed the next year, and I thought my taxes are going to go up, and at that point I was not an elected member, but my wife was working full time and I was working full time, and our family income was probably \$60,000 a year. My property tax bill on my little place in Garson was \$21.43. That was after the rebate, my net taxes. I saved the bill and one day—now, with two children, one's disposable income is considerably less—when I can afford it, I want to frame it for my living room, because I said at that time, I will never see a property tax bill that is less.

You know, in the village of Garson, not a wealthy place necessarily, but I was in the top half at \$21.43 of the tax bills. I was in the top half. Now the reason I raise this is that what has happened, of course,

over time is that \$325 has led to some 6,000 people in this province who pay no property taxes at all, yet have the expectation of some services. Over the last five years I have been in politics door knocking in election campaigns, meeting with municipalities, public meetings, that has been one consistent demand, to bring in some minimum tax on property, that the first couple of hundred dollars people would have to pay so everybody makes a contribution and recognizes fully that there is some cost to delivering municipal services.

Now, given the variety of tax credits that are available to families with incomes under \$15,000 and seniors, those should pick up a significant portion of that bill. So I say that this is not an issue that we have contrived in the, you know, dark of night to somehow terrorize property owners. It has been brought out after probably a decade in this province of recognition that we should have some minimum tax, that every resident of the province who owns property—remember, owns that property, has had the wherewithal to purchase it and maintain it—should make some minimal contribution to their services, including education, of course, which is part of the property tax.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say, there will be some who will find that that minimum tax—now they have to pay up to a couple of hundred dollars—it may seem like a great increase to them. I do not want to undersell that if one has a low income, but the tax credits are available. For many it will be the first property taxes that they have ever paid in their life.

Several of my neighbours, people when I was paying \$21.43 who were paying nothing, will now have to pay some minimal tax. They admitted to me at the time that that was fair and everyone kind of smiled about it a little bit in Garson, but there is that basic sense that people who could afford to own a piece of property should have some minimal contribution to the services that support that property—fire, police, garbage pickup, disposal of garbage, all of that street cleaning, all of those costs. Certainly not hugely onerous—again, for the most poor, the tax credits will provide some relief.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to as I wrap up—I believe I have about five, six, seven minutes left. I want to touch on the issue of the other provinces in Canada, particularly the Province of Ontario, because members like the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), when we kind of made some

comment during her remarks about other provinces totally ignored them. Some of the other members across the way, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), whenever one mentions the words "Ontario" or "Saskatchewan" or "British Columbia," members of the New Democratic Party tend to act as if there have never been such places, that they do not exist at all and should be ignored.

I have noticed all members of the New Democratic Party who have spoken in this debate have very regrettably, I believe, ignored the three provinces governed by their political brethren. It is somewhat disconcerting, I think, because the people of Manitoba expect us to deal with issues in a realistic way, to appreciate the world in which we are operating and try our best within it. The three governments held by the New Democratic Party have gone through some tremendous learning experiences, particularly Premier Bob Rae in Ontario.

It is interesting to note in the throne speech that was brought down in Toronto yesterday, and I would like to quote from that just because I know members opposite in their blindness would just simply ignore this throne speech, but I quote from the Ontario NDP government throne speech: If we ignore this commitment, the deficit next year will rise from approximately \$12 billion in the fiscal year just ended to about \$17 billion in '93-94.

At the current rate of growth the total provincial debt would rise to the unacceptable level of \$120 billion by 1995-96. At that point interest payments on the debt would begin to eat into our budgets for central services such as health care and education. Ontario would then be trapped in the debt quagmire that has afflicted Canada.

* (1620)

I go on to quote: Our plan to put Ontario back to work includes immediate action to bring the provincial debt under control. This year, we will put the province's finances on a course to ensure we can deliver the jobs and services people expect from their government.

I further go on to quote: Our challenge is to turn the need for cost reductions into an opportunity, says the Ontario throne speech.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure there are some members opposite who wonder when my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness)

has time to go and write the throne speech for the government of Ontario. The reality is that the New Democrats in Ontario are facing the same problem as every other government in Canada, but there is a bit of a difference.

If one compares our per capita debt, what we will be borrowing per person in Manitoba. We are borrowing some \$360 million under this budget. Ontario has almost 10 times our population. That should produce for them about a deficit of \$3.64 billion. They are looking, if they make some \$5 billion in cuts, at a \$12 billion deficit. That is over three times what we in Manitoba have.

Just so it is simple enough for some of the members opposite to understand, that means for every \$1 we borrow on behalf of our people in this province, Ontario will borrow or be lent between \$3 and \$4. They have a huge problem, and they are struggling to come to grips with it.

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

But I think the shining star has been what we have been able to do in Manitoba over five, six years, five, six budgets, gradually getting to where we know we have to be. So the challenge, I think, for all of us is to stay the course, to try to do more with less, to recognize we as legislators have an obligation to ask every area of expenditure of government to go under the microscope to see what we are, in fact, buying with the people's money, to make sure we are getting the best we can possibly afford. That is what this budget attempts to do.

I challenge members of the New Democratic Party, for once in the years that I have been in this Assembly, to attempt to deal realistically with the problems facing this province, to at least recognize that there are provinces like Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia that are having to deal with the same problem that we are having to deal with, and to get down to the business of this province in a realistic fashion instead of attempting to be all things to all people, and living in a world that is quickly passing away, if it has not passed already.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute on this debate, and I look forward to the comments of other members.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) for that lecture on trickle-down economics, one that

is discredited now across the world, for the Margaret Thatchers, the Ronald Reagans, the George Bushes, the Brian Mulroneys and the Gary Filmons of this world.

Trickle-down economics simply does not work. It ends up, as we see here in Manitoba, leading to huge deficits, cuts in services to the more vulnerable members of our society. We are witnessing that here with the Filmon government. Every year at this time, the community of Selkirk, the town of Selkirk and St. Andrews and Lockport and West St. Paul shudder at the events that unfold every year at this time. That is the presentation and the tabling of the budget by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

The first year, just after we were elected, in the very first budget brought down, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in a very vindictive, a clinically vindictive move, closed the School of Psychiatric Nursing at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, Selkirk's only post-secondary educational institution. They closed, resulting in the loss of about 20-odd jobs. The community lost around 60 students. Millions of dollars in economic benefits to the community were lost when this government decided to close that school purely out of political needs or vindictiveness on their part.

Last year when the budget was tabled the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) —again, I suppose he looked at a political map, how they determined how to bring about some of their cuts. They looked at Selkirk, and they looked at the Selkirk Human Resources Opportunity Centre, the training plant, and they decided that they would close this particular facility. So Selkirk, first of all, it was the school of nursing, and then last year was the training plant, and this year they have cut funding to friendship centres across Manitoba.

If you look at a map, again you will notice that every friendship centre except for one is in the constituency represented by a New Democrat. There is one, I believe, in the riding of Portage. The member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) did not stand up for aboriginal or Metis people in his constituency strong enough, and does not, I guess, have a great deal of clout within his caucus, because he could not stop the cuts to friendship centres.

It is apparent to all of us within the Metis and aboriginal community in this province that this government truly does not understand aboriginal or Metis people. They do not understand the link that

friendship centres have with other social agencies in our community. This is the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, and it was in this particular year that the government decided to blatantly attack aboriginal and Metis people in this particular budget.

I bring to members' attention that the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) has a resolution, Resolution No. 32, the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. I am certain now that, after he had a chance to review the budget and see the cuts to friendship centres and other aboriginal groups, he is going to have to rescind that. He is going to have to take that back and let maybe one of us bring it forward because obviously he will be too embarrassed to speak on this particular resolution when the time comes up, considering the cuts that his government has brought about in terms of aboriginal and Metis people here in Manitoba.

I just want to respond to the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey). In 1988, it was just after the election and it was in the fall of that year, I was chosen as a delegate representing the Selkirk local of the Manitoba Metis Federation at the annual convention. That year, it was held here in Winnipeg, and as part of the proceedings of the convention, all political leaders came and they spoke to the assembled delegates.

The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) was there, and he spoke on behalf of the government. I believe the Leader of the Opposition, the then-member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) was there and she spoke, and the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs spoke. The first thing he said when he got up in front of the mike was: When the Premier (Mr. Filmon) appointed me Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, I knew nothing about northern and native affairs, the minister admitted. I was quite shocked. I sat in the crowd at the time. I was incredibly naive. I thought, well, this is kind of an odd statement to make, but I guess there are many within the aboriginal community who will say, he still does not know anything about native or northern affairs.

* (1630)

So after the proceeding, I remember I went up and I shook his hand. I was so thrilled, you know, I was shaking the hand of a cabinet minister. I doubt if he will remember that but I remember that quite well. I remember those comments. [interjection] No, he

was not concerned how I voted, but it was interesting that he mentioned that at the time. It was something that stuck with me obviously ever since.

This particular Year of the Indigenous People, this is the year the government decides to cut funding to friendship centres. I doubt if any members opposite have ever visited a friendship centre. Obviously, if they had a chance to understand some of the services that they have provided to native and non-natives in this community, they would not have taken this type of really cruel and unusual punishment dictated toward this very useful organization within our community.

I guess I had the privilege years ago of working for the Selkirk Friendship Centre. After that I sat on the board of the Selkirk Friendship Centre, so I have a good understanding of what friendship centres provide to Manitobans and to aboriginal and nonaboriginal individuals within our community.

I had a chance to meet with the board of directors of the friendship centre and they provided me with some information I would like to provide to my colleagues here today dealing with some of the programs and participation levels that aboriginal people take within the friendship centre movement.

The government is always responding to our questions; in their feeble answers, they have often stated that friendship centres represent a relatively small portion of their budget. In fact, in Selkirk, the situation represents around 30 percent of their budget and the money is earmarked by, I believe, government to be used for a specific purpose.

They receive about 70 percent of their core funding from the federal government through the Secretary of State. That money is specifically to be used for administration, for the salaries of the director, the assistant director, the referral worker, the bookkeeper and, I believe, the secretarial staff. This particular money that the province provided, again, the purpose of this money was to provide counselling services and programs.

You cannot take money from the core and use that for counselling and other programs. Only the money that was provided by the provincial government was used for that particular purpose, so by cutting out that funding there they are ceasing friendship centres from providing counselling services to aboriginal and nonaboriginal individuals, and also because this unfortunately will mean the

ending of many of the programs offered by friendship centres here in Manitoba. [interjection]

Well, yes, as a matter of fact, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) raised some interesting points about some of the other groups within the community who used the friendship centre. One of them I know was the shelter for abused women, the Nova House.

I have a letter from the executive director where she states that she is saddened and shocked to hear that the Selkirk Friendship Centre had its grant cut from the provincial government.

The Friendship Centre has an important role to play in our community in regard to service for aboriginal citizens. These grant dollars covered costs for counselling programs, peer counselling, summer recreational camps and so on.

She goes on to mention that the shelter in Selkirk had a very strong connection to the Friendship Centre, and I remember when I was working there that we had a very good relationship with Nova House. We provided them with space, we provided them with our counselling support, and the relationship was very positive. I fear now that aboriginal women and children in the community will now suffer because of this lack of link between those two organizations.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Selkirk Friendship Centre provides here in Selkirk, for example, peer counselling, and there were approximately 40 participants in that. There was a youth club, there were about 2,000 participants in that. There was a drop-in centre, around 5,000. They provided sports. These are some of the programs that are now in jeopardy because of the government's vindictive behaviour towards aboriginal people: hockey, 450; broomball, 600; baseball, 500; basketball, 480.

They have a Christmas party every year which I had the privilege to attend in my role as MLA in Selkirk, approximately 200. There was a summer camp that I remember when I worked there. I had the opportunity and the chance to participate in that particular program. We would go up to Albert Beach and we would take a number of aboriginal and Metis youth with us. It provided them with the opportunity to spend some time away from Selkirk, a chance that they would normally not have. I know there was what they call the slow-pitch tournament. They had, they still do have, a very significant library

on aboriginal issues. They have language classes. I know they were teaching Cree and Ojibway and Saulteaux, beadwork classes. They had very significant dance classes. It was very popular, I remember that.

They had native awareness activities where they would go into the school trying to explain aboriginal issues to the students. I participated in that. I remember we had Ernie Phillips there that one year when I had the opportunity to participate in that. Shingoose, I know, from Winnipeg, he was there. He would participate in that particular program.

Peguis Days was held at St. Peter's Church. I remember I went there last year. I do not think any representative from the government was there. I believe they were asking about that. They have an annual event. Every year the Festival on the Red has about 2,000 participants. They have lacrosse, Canada Day celebrations.

That totals up to participation levels of around 25,000 individuals, and they say that they do not provide direct services to the government so this is why we should cut their funding. Yet here are some of the counselling services they provided—native and cultural awareness programming in the schools and in the community. They have approximately 4,000 referrals.

When I was there, I participated in the referral program. They provide counselling on domestic violence, alcoholism and abuse issues, grief, death and mourning counselling, reconciliation and restitution, suicide prevention, crisis counselling, spiritual concerns.

I know one of the counsellors who unfortunately will be losing his job in a matter of months. It was his role to provide counselling in aboriginal spirituality and he was just taken on in that role, and I know that he was very well received by the aboriginal and Metis community in Selkirk and area.

They also will provide services in anger management, creating greater self-esteem. A thing that many aboriginal and Metis people often lack is self-esteem and self-confidence, and there they would help many individuals trying to overcome these difficulties the aboriginal people often face.

* (1640)

They got into a particular counselling format, traditional parenting, family roles, elderly. Now we spoke many times in here about the particular

problems that are facing elders in our communities, particularly the aboriginal and Metis elders. They were there providing some services for elders, marital relationships, counselling at healing lodges, again trying to provide services in the traditional ways of aboriginal and Metis people. Education counselling—I know one of the counsellors quite well, and it was her role to attend one of the schools in Selkirk where there was a high proportion of aboriginal and Metis students, and it was her job to talk to aboriginal people.

I know when I was there I would go into the junior high and it would be my job to meet with young aboriginal men, aboriginal boys, to speak to them about some of the issues that are particular to aboriginal people. I know that once we established a very good rapport, I would say that it was a very successful situation, very helpful for them and very helpful for me as well.

Home visits, they provide. One of the counsellors would go out into the homes of individuals, aboriginal people. Another thing they would do would be providing assistance in the filling out of the income tax forms. Part of my job was to do that, and I still receive inquiries from individuals whose taxes I have completed in the past asking me once again to help them with that particular task.

Parenting programs, they would do resume writings, references. Another function they had was to distribute clothes to needy families, and one of the esteemed members of our community, Metis Senator Elsie Bear, played a very large role in the distribution of clothes to families in Selkirk and northern reserves that are close to Selkirk, Berens River and Bloodvein, Scantebury and other areas where there was a need for clothes, and you would go into her house and she would have her floors and all of her furniture covered with clothes donated by individuals, which she would then distribute to families in need—a remarkable woman.

Some other areas of work or networking that they were involved with was the law courts and the aboriginal justice issues that are facing aboriginal people. The Selkirk restitution, reconciliation committee was a juvenile committee to help with young offenders. I remember that quite well. I was actually on that particular board.

I was on the social studies study group, where we would attend with other teachers to raise aboriginal issues, to make sure that these issues were not

ignored in the school division, not ignored by the RCMP, not ignored by the school divisions and so on. Some of the other tasks, of course, that they provide are job referrals, further upgrading and further post-secondary training, and they would often put on community workshops for aboriginal and Metis people within their community.

Just the other day I had the privilege of attending with some of my colleagues up to Berens River. While we were there we met with the Kinnoshay (phonetic) Fishermen's Co-op. That particular co-op is having some financial problems now. We met with them recently, and they have problems that a number of co-ops across Manitoba are facing. This particular one there has problems with the northern trades assistance program, which the government slashed in 1991, I believe, where they cut \$90,000 out of the program. That was one of their major concerns.

They were saying that this will really hurt this particular co-op and other ones within that general area. If they were from Poplar River they would be receiving, I think, a 2 cent per kilogram subsidy, but if you were in that particular area you would receive no assistance and it was hurting them. It appears that there was all sorts of money for Atlantic fishermen but nothing for fishermen here in Manitoba.

Governments do not recognize the importance of co-ops to rule in northern areas where the population is low and transportation costs are high. The co-ops are needed for industrial development in that particular area. [interjection]

Well, the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) chirps from his seat there, but he should be standing up and rescinding his resolution that he put forward here, International Year of the Indigenous People. How could he possibly do that and sit around the same caucus table as his colleagues who are slashing aboriginal programs? He must be ashamed of himself. He is ashamed of himself. He spends all of the government's money sending out ridiculous statements, his leaflets without his picture, across his constituency and across Manitoba I think. I believe some of our members received some of those things. He wastes thousands of dollars on that and puts up this resolution and, actually, I have noticed that resolution, I have toured around some places in the province and we have seen it around there.

We were out in Brandon and we saw that particular resolution out there. The government is recognizing aboriginal people, but why are they cutting funding to friendship centres? It is probably because, as I said before, the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey) clearly stated at that particular meeting that when he was made minister, he said, I know nothing about native affairs, I know nothing about northern affairs. He knew nothing about it; he still does not know anything about it.

If he knew anything about it, why would he be slashing the valuable programs related to the friendship centre movement here in Canada, and why, when we were in meetings yesterday in Berens River and Bloodvein, was there such discontent amongst the aboriginal members of that particular community? If this minister knew anything about northern and native affairs, why would he let them cut the Northern Freight Assistance Allowance? Why would he let the minister of co-operative development slash assistance in terms of co-ops?

This particular co-op, now they have to pay their own auditing, before a service that was provided to them by the department of co-op development. But the minister decided, well, we have got to save a few bucks here, let us save it on the backs of aboriginal and Metis people. So that is what they did, and they did, you know—they have got to save a few bucks, so let us save it on the backs of aboriginal and Metis people.

It is clear that they do not understand aboriginal or Metis people, and they really do not seem to care a great deal about aboriginal or Metis people. It is probably, as the Minister of Northern Affairs says, they do not vote the right way. They simply do not vote the right way, so let us cut them. That is exactly the Conservatives' philosophy.

* (1650)

So now these co-ops, and this particular one, will be forced to pay for their own auditing services, which was at one time provided by the government.

They are finding this to be a very difficult, very much of a hardship for them to deal with, other than the other issues that all fishermen across this province are facing, but northern ones even more so, because of the high costs of shipping their fish.

Price is another example. They are faced with equipment costs going up. I believe they are saying they spend \$100 a day on fuel costs.

An Honourable Member: At least a hundred.

Mr. Dewar: They spend at least \$100 a day on fuel costs, and as you can imagine right now for example, the only way you can get into Berens River is by air.

The boat which leaves Selkirk—actually, it is a boat that is docked and operates out of Selkirk—will not be in operation until ice leaves the lake, and now the winter road is closed so the only access you have to that particular community is by air. Air of course is very costly.

Another concern they raised in terms of transportation costs is that particular boat that leaves Selkirk, it is rumoured that the owner has sold the boat. So now they fear that option of transportation is lost to them as well. I believe that the owner of that particular boat, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is very familiar with, a fellow by the name of Ed Price, I believe. Apparently, he has sold his boat and he is leaving. It is a shame because that is the only boat that leaves from Selkirk to go north, and one time Selkirk had many. The marine history of Selkirk is quite deep and quite long. This will be the end of it with the closure of this particular ferry.

So we are seeing again that this government, in its attempts to utilize its policies of trickle-down economics, is once again hurting aboriginals, hurting Metis people, hurting the most vulnerable people in our particular province. We can look at such things as economic growth, and it appears that after the 1990 election Manitoba has had one of the worst growth rates in Canada. In 1991, we had a growth rate of minus 3.1 percent. We were in last place. In 1992, we had a growth rate of .08. Then we were seven out of 10. This year we have a growth rate forecast of 2.9 which would put us six out of 10.

We want to talk about fairness. You could talk about fairness in a particular situation, where we were saying instead of cutting friendship centres, for example, the government responded by putting \$7 million in corporate training. Instead of cutting student social assistance, they could be cutting \$15 million in their Vision Capital Fund. They have \$12 million in I, T and T grants to corporations and they cut to MAPO. They give \$3.9 million to the Minister

of Health's (Mr. Orchard) friend, Connie Curran, and they cut the Flin Flon Crisis Centre, for example. They have a 2 percent cut to schools and universities and a reduction, of course, in daycare centres and so on.

I believe it was in 1990 in the Leaders' debate, in August of that year, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stated: Our commitment is not to raise taxes. Then he said on the 25th of April 1991: This province cannot bear any more taxes. Then in September of 1991: We recognize that the first thing government must do to encourage economic growth is to step aside—similar to what the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) mentioned earlier on in his speech, Mr. Acting Speaker—step aside and let the private sector take over, but we see that this is unfortunately not working in this province.

In 1988-89, the government had a surplus of around \$58 million. It was mentioned right here in the budget document itself. In 1992-93, the government now has a record deficit of 672. Even the member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) took issue with the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) own accounting methods and was trying to clear up the issue regarding this particular situation in his comments where he was stating that the deficit must be recorded properly, which is significantly higher than what the Minister of Finance brought down in this particular document.

Every year all the government ministers, whenever there is a building they open or building they close, there is always someone there who cuts a ribbon or presents a plaque on their behalf. Now, I wonder who is going to be the one who will be presenting the plaque to the Minister of Finance for having the highest deficit in the history of the Province of Manitoba?

Well, we see the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) will be leaving us. The Minister of Justice, he is having a hard time. The Minister of Justice is having a hard time with the government line, so he is going to be leaving us soon for the greener pastures of Kim Campbell. [interjection] Yes, I am sure aboriginal people will be disappointed with that, with his particular departure.

I enjoyed making a few comments this afternoon on the budget. I just want to again sum up. In this particular Year of the World's Indigenous People, how could this government in good conscience, how could the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) stand up

when this resolution comes up and speak in favour of the year, recognizing the Year of Indigenous People? It is a great concept, no doubt, but why they have cut funding to friendship centres and to the Assembly of Chiefs and why they have cut assistance to aboriginal fishermen co-ops? They are going to have to explain that. I am going to be interested in listening to that debate to see how they do it.

The other thing I will be doing, of course, is that next Monday I will not be able to extend my support to this particular document. Like the rest of my colleagues, I am afraid I will not be able to vote for it.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Acting Speaker, first of all, it is a pleasure to speak on the sixth budget brought on by this government. I did not participate in the throne speech.

First of all, maybe I would like to make the odd comment in regard to the budget process that this government went through. I know it was a very, very difficult process and a very, very long process for the ministers.

I know myself, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I would have to say that through the whole process the Minister of Finance is an individual who is very fair with everyone. The only one who can appreciate that is one who goes as a minister forward—I am talking about during the budget process. Each individual minister, as he goes through the process, is put through the same type of rigmarole and same type of—but he makes his judgments without any prejudice whatsoever. I must congratulate him on his dedication and hard work in bringing forward the decisions and very difficult decisions.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the best way to explain the process that our government went through this year—and I guess the main idea, very, very shortly, you would have to try to do a comparison of this year in business. If you are in business and a company finds that its revenues are down, and if it does not raise the price of its product, he has to decide that he has to find ways of reducing his costs. I think this budget emphasizes that very, very well, and our government has done that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am very proud of the work. I will go into the type of work, because we are talking about my particular department, Government Services, that probably of all the departments has to go through that process of making things more efficient and reducing its costs. I am very proud of the work of my staff at Government Services. I will also talk a little later of what the Seniors Directorate has done throughout the past year in these very difficult times of restraint.

I am encouraged by the support that my staff has provided in actively bringing forward ideas, suggestions and plans that will effect positive and economical changes that are necessary in government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Department of Government Services is fundamentally a central service agency to government as such. We strive to provide service excellence to our clients promptly and cost-effectively, and we try to do that.

* (1700)

In our ongoing evaluation of service to clients, I think the most important question that we ask throughout government, the question that we raise is, how can we do things better? In our department that is the main question. The exercise that follows helps public servants and elected officials alike to seek newer and better answers to service delivery questions.

I think a very important component to the query of how can we do things better is effective utilization of information technologies. When one examines the day-to-day operations of government, it is rather easy to take for granted the simple tools like the telephone and the computer, but in reality the cost associated with each individual activity performed by government when added together is enormous, whether it is the cost of making one phone call instead of six through a conference call or retrieving information in five minutes instead of two days. If each take is performed productively, then the public service will be that much more effective in providing services to the public.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this statement is rather elementary. However, the point is that we as government are charged with the responsibility of being fiscally responsible with the precious limited resources that we have, especially during these times, so that we are able to fund priority services

to all Manitobans in the areas of health, education and family services.

Throughout the past year in our quest of finding ways of doing things better and given our limited financial resources, I would like to describe some of the activities by the four divisions in my department. Firstly, since I have been addressing the important application of information technology, I think it is rather appropriate, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I begin by describing the work being done by the Telecommunications branch and Supply and Services division since I regard effective communication as a fundamental building block for efficient government operations.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the ultimate objective of the branch in a communication network is using new technologies while enabling all government departments to realize cost savings through quick turnaround times, increase service levels, greater co-ordination and, of course, being competitive in the marketplace. These efficiencies will be realized when clients fully understand the use and potential of available equipment and services.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as stated in the throne speech, our Telecommunications networks play a vital role in our ability to do business and compete in international markets. It is, therefore, crucial that we as government respond to technological developments at every opportunity expended on capturing the dynamics of change to further obtain lower cost communication services for the people that we serve. We are proactively doing what we said we would do. We are strengthening our telecommunication services and meeting the difficult challenges and opportunities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Office Equipment Services branch was fully implemented and the microcomputer repair service for government departments is now on board. The initiative represents a very, very important cost savings to the department. The Land Acquisition branch has been completely organized and is looking forward to its move to Portage la Prairie later on this month. They have moved in their computer systems enabling staff to access that information of their files. We have further maximized the potential of land management practices. My staff are actively looking at ways of eliminating duplication of services and are carefully reviewing the possibility of amalgamating property services, especially

appraisals and acquisition properties, throughout the government.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

A year ago, the department introduced and reformed the first SOA. That was the Fleet Vehicles branch, and it was converted to an SOA a year ago. The management reform initiative enables the agency to provide rates and maintenance services on a complete cost-recovery basis. Greater management flexibility is offered to the organizations to facilitate the achievement of these very, very important goals and objectives of this SOA.

This year, Mr. Acting Speaker, we will be introducing our second SOA. It was created by the department effective April 1, and that is the Materials Distribution agency. It will now have the opportunity to operate on the same flexibility as the automobile SOA was a year ago. I think the goals will be the same, and that is the goals of distributing and supplying and to become the supplier of choice for the province of Manitoba for its material needs. That will be along the same lines as we did with transportation.

Also, this particular department will provide the moving and storage and disposal services, and this opportunity will provide clients the ability to choose to patronize the agency because of its superior quality and the pricing and the service it will offer.

Also, as of April 1st, the Air/Radio Services Branch of Department of Highways and Transportation was transferred to my department, and I regard this move as a very logical one, for the program fits well within our service delivery mandate as a department, and I look forward to working with them.

I know that many members around this room utilize our postal services, and I realize the cost is very important. Especially some more than others utilize the savings that we try to work, and we have saved approximately \$2 million during the interdepartmental mail services throughout the last year and a half.

So the members, I know, utilize this, and they are the ones and the taxpayers get the benefits and the advantage of these maximum discount price structures available through Canada Post.

The Manitoba government is, as we are all aware, one of the largest purchasers of goods and services

for all departments. We also provide those services to boards and commissions. I think the purchasing was approximately \$100 million last year, and we will continue to work hard towards ensuring that each purchase contract represents that fair and reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am also proud that Manitoba is taking a lead role in not only my department but also the Department of I, T and T. In the role of further negotiations in expansion of the interprovincial trade agreements that have been taking part, Manitoba Government Services is presently acting co-chair in those negotiations and the aspects associated with these agreements.

Also in the past year, the Accommodation Development Division of my department is carrying on a first that has never been done in government, at least in Government Services in Manitoba. It is carrying on a complete and consolidated inventory of all government accommodations throughout the province.

They have established a database for our corporate accommodation planners, and this database also provides the accommodation consultants and leasing of some more accurate and more currently accommodation information than ever before.

We are presently working at reducing the leasing budgets for review of all these properties to identify opportunities for reduction.

* (1710)

Mr. Acting Speaker, by conducting the review we are able to determine whether space is officially utilized and whether the program delivery still requires the amount of space allocated. Our goal in reducing the leasing budget is to fully utilize our own space, when the opportunity exists at the time of the lease expiry to terminate that lease by moving occupants to another longer-term leased premise or to an owned premise.

A recent example was a land value appraisal from the Norquay Building where substantial savings were made. Another saving was a reutilization of vacant owned space; backfilling from leased space will be a reoccupancy of the Norquay Building when the Information Services Management Corporation moves to its own building. That saving is the amount of close to \$400,000.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have heard the members from across the way in the last several days talk in regard to sustainable development initiatives. They go on and they go on and they talk—we looked through our records to see whether they did anything where it is right before their eyes when they were in government under Government Services and, of course, we looked through—like most other things they talk about, they really did nothing with what was available.

In our sustainable development initiatives in the short period of time we have been in government, and through a goal set by my colleague the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) to reduce the waste by 50 percent by the year 2000, Government Services has implemented several waste reduction programs. Paper Rescue in 1992, for instance, 42 government-owned leased buildings have participated in this collection of the paper program, and a hundred tons of paper was collected. To the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), take note—she is always talking about trees—the saving of 1,700 full-grown trees. I call her my tree doctor, Mr. Acting Speaker. We have some fun in Government Services. It is not all work.

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

I have to maybe mention something that happened this winter in regard to the tree doctor from Radisson. I got called out of a meeting by one of my staff and they were quite alarmed because the press was saying as a result of the member for Radisson, they were cutting down a tree on the side of the grounds. It was a pine tree and the deal was we were cutting down a pine tree because we were going to use it as a Christmas tree. This member for Radisson was running around all over the place, to the press, going around.

I got the story from Mr. Roger Brown, who has been with us for 17 years and who is our head gardener. He says, Gerry, the tree is 40 feet tall, we saw it in the summer, it was dead. The bottom part was dead and the top part, we saw it, we could probably use it for a tree somewhere in the winter. He said we could probably save a thousand dollars. Why cut it down in the middle of the summer? When I confronted him with this, Mr. Brown says to me, Gerry, why would anybody ever think I would cut down one of my trees on my property? If anybody ever talked to Mr. Brown, he would understand. To

end the story, the press by this time found out that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) got her story all crooked.

I looked out the window and to try to get some credibility back, she is out there gathering the good parts of the bottom part of the tree. There are a few good branches. She is gathering them up outside, and she is going on to try and get somebody to say that this was a good tree we cut down.

I often wonder that, you know, most people do not know a good tree from a bad tree, and even a skunk would not know a good tree from a bad tree. Mr. Acting Speaker, I must say that some credibility was lost to the member for Radisson, and I wish she would apologize to Mr. Brown. [interjection] I can imagine what you have been going through with your ducks and geese, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) is saying.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I just wanted to give you some information. It is often said that we are not involved in sustainable development, and I must say that I will give you an idea. It might be boring to some of our members, but I will get it on the record anyway.

We collected about—oh, I guess 3,432 cubic yards of cardboard was collected in 1992 from the 16 government buildings. All cafeterias have collection bins for aluminum soft drink containers, as they are working through. Seven government locations are using various methods to compost kitchen food preparation waste. An estimate of 20 tons of this waste will be composted and diverted from landfills in 1993. [interjection] Yes, that much.

Approximately 14,530 Winnipeg telephone directories were recycled last year from Government Services. Rural directories were also collected throughout the province. We are also encouraging the use of reusable envelopes—as you know with these envelopes that we pass through the government—and the double-sided copy machines to help reduce waste flow to landfill sites.

Mr. Acting Speaker, with these programs and those implemented by other Government Services divisions, I think an average of 27 percent waste reduction in government-owned buildings was achieved in 1992, surpassing the interim goal of 20 percent waste reduction set for 1995. That I think is a great achievement for the success of this program, and I thank the employees.

Other sustainable development initiatives worthy of mention include the program of water conservation. This program is in the early stages of development. For the '93-94 year, there will be approximately a 5 percent water consumption reduction in government buildings.

Water savings procedures are a standard practice in the grounds maintenance. As many of the members out there that park their cars realize, we pump the water from the river. Then they come to complain to me as minister because the cars are dirty from the water, but that is just another way of trying to carry on with this initiative that we have.

We are also reducing the usage of harmful cleaning products. Purchasing, testing and evaluation of new environmentally friendly products is an ongoing program with the department.

The Power Smart program, as you all know, throughout the province was established by Manitoba Hydro, and Hydro is now looking at Manitoba Government Services to fulfill a very, very important role in establishing the program as a viable means of reducing electrical usage.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Government Services has initiated a plan to access the selected government facilities, and this prioritized list of buildings has been established to identify possible energy-saving measures throughout our buildings. The department will also benefit financially, and so will the taxpayers of Manitoba.

It is clear that our government is committed, regardless of what has been said across the floor from the other side, who I must say did very little while they were in government in regard to sustainable development. It was not too difficult to get up these large important percentage numbers because when you are starting from someone who had nothing, to having that challenge, it was very, very easy on behalf of the employees.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I know that a lot of the members sit around and they wonder what Government Services did. I know the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), when I first got up when I was Minister of Government Services, I talked about Housing and Urban Affairs, and so if anybody is to blame for the information coming out now, I will blame the member for Elmwood, because at that time he said, why do you not speak about your own department? Now I have taken the time to speak about the department that I am involved in.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we also are involved in refurbishing the used furniture by the workshop and the private sector. The Materials Distribution agency redistributes furniture now throughout the government to extend its useful life instead of purchasing new furniture. This initiative contributed to a 90-percent reduction in new furniture purchases in '91-92 compared to the previous year. Also it keeps people working.

Another important factor, I know that to the members from across the way, the Fleet Vehicles agency—and we talk about refined oil. I know the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) will be interested in this, because he was in the oil business before. He will not like what we are doing, but the Fleet Vehicle Agency uses refined lubricant oil supplied in bulk containers for the provincial fleet wherever this product is available—windshield washer fluid and antifreeze, of course, but the most important thing is the used parts that are sent back and rebuilt. Currently this includes the drive shaft, starters, alternators, these types of things. Also I think the most important thing is the stats this year show that we purchased 21,000 litres of oil and we returned 20,000 of refined oil.

* (1720)

To that member across the way, for Elmwood, and to the member for Brandon over there who likes to use stats—we like to throw stats across the floor—we also have reduced the distances and reduced the consumption of petroleum products by the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, just to go on, I think a very, very important part is that some years ago, '88-89, started by another minister, we started a barrier-free access program. That was to renovate the provincially owned buildings in response to our commitment to the Decade of the Disabled and fulfilling that commitment. All the members have to do is take a look up there and see the new Speaker's Gallery that is completely accessible by the handicapped, and other buildings have been identified. Also, if they will look at the west side of the building—it will soon be completed—the redesigned ramp we will be providing, that very, very important commitment that this government—unfortunately again the previous government, who started the Decade of the Disabled, I think in 1980-81—and it took this government in 1988-89 to

dosomething in regard to the disabled. We do more than just talk about it; we do it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there have been many things. I heard a comment the other day in regard to that there was just a buzzword about Total Quality Management. I have to say that our department has been more than just buzzword in Total Quality Management. Our staff have been very, very involved, and we have done many, many things in Total Quality Management.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I could go on and on and on about the success stories, about the fine work our department has been doing in Total Quality Management. Our committee—[interjection] You like the flowers in the front? Especially the ones in the front, right?

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is teamwork and team building that has helped with Total Quality Management.

I must mention though and go on in regard to our Seniors portfolio, and before I do that, maybe I could give you an example of what the previous government had been doing the last several years. Just an example on paper towels in the Legislature. Through many, many years, linen towels were supplied in the Legislature. Linen towels in the Legislature cost us \$6,500 a year. Paper towels today cost us \$1,300 a year. In the Law Courts Building—\$4,100 savings in the Law Courts Building alone. That is a total of around \$10,000, Mr. Acting Speaker. You know, if you look hard you can find many, many things, and that was an example put forward by one of our employees. Many, many examples come forward.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I must say that I would like to at this time speak in regard to my Seniors portfolio that a lot of us enjoyed. I know the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) was one of the first people to hold that portfolio along with the honourable member Mr. Neufeld who enjoyed it also. We were the first ones, and we have shown leadership in Canada in regard to the Seniors portfolio and the Seniors Directorate.

Under the two previous ministers—since it was established in '88-89, these ministers consulted with Senior organizations throughout the province, and through these consultations indicated that financial abuse was the most identified form of abuse. I have explained in the House previously the very, very important work and the things that have been done through financial abuse. Now our government is

working diligently in finding ways to educate and alert seniors to the dangers again of further financial abuse.

We established in 1989 the Outreach Offices in Portage la Prairie, Thompson and Winnipeg to provide resource, liaison and consultation to a combination of the women and seniors throughout Manitoba. This is a first, and our outreach staff have since been very active in the area of the abuse facilitating workshops for seniors and service providers in various R.M.s in northern communities. They will also be involved in the establishment of the multiteams which I will return to in a moment.

Appropriate brochures were developed in the last couple of years and printed in several languages to reflect the multicultural makeup of the Manitoba seniors. Our government formed a partnership with the federal government and worked with, as mentioned before, the Canadian Bankers' Association. We established the video that was established, and we co-ordinated conferences over the past year on elderly abuse. As a result of discussions held, our government undertook the development of protocols on elderly abuse and struck an interdepartmental committee to accomplish the task. Now, the guide for the development of the protocols was drafted and sent out early in April for community consultations with service providers and seniors.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in fulfillment of a promise made during the last throne speech, our government is proactively co-ordinating resources to develop multidisciplinary teams to respond to elderly abuse cases throughout the province. The work is scheduled to begin this month and the teams will be functioning this fiscal year in assessing the elderly abuse.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in addition, our government established the Seniors Directorate Information Line to assist seniors throughout the province.

On March 9, I personally made a brief to a subcommittee in Ottawa on elderly abuse, and I can proudly say that I stood there to bring forward the information, and Manitoba was the only province throughout Canada invited to make such a presentation. That is a result of the work by the previous ministers established since 1988.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the work that we have been doing has been received positively and very enthusiastically by seniors, professional

organizations, educators and many levels of government. It is through ongoing effort and co-operation that the quality of life for seniors will be improved and the financial and elderly abuse alleviated.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as Minister responsible for Seniors, I also had the pleasure of attending the first federal-provincial ministers' conference on Senior issues last November in Edmonton, which dealt with health, elderly abuse, transportation and housing, and social security. Since I was previously Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing, it was appropriate for me to present a brief on housing. Through that meeting I was very surprised—not surprised—I guess it was just because our ministers in this government had worked so hard since 1988 that we found ourselves so far ahead of the other provinces in dealing with Senior issues.

* (1730)

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have been asked to host the federal-provincial conference of '94 and we will do so.

As minister responsible for EMO, I was very happy that my department will be distributing emergency brochures for seniors that will provide information on what to do in emergency situations such as storms and floods and fires, et cetera. The brochure will be available for distribution shortly.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our government is committed to meeting the needs of Manitoba's seniors, and I will work to continue to seek workable solutions to resolve the senior abuse situation in Manitoba.

I will not be sending out, I hope, any letters like I received on March 26, 1993. Can you imagine that I got a letter from the Minister of Social Services who was the Minister responsible for a Seniors' directorate in Saskatchewan? This is dated March 26. I will just read a little part of it: We cannot, however, continue to provide all of the programs and services of the past. Some of the programs and services no longer available are—here is what they eliminated in Saskatchewan: The Senior Citizens' Heritage program, which is their pension program for seniors, was cancelled as of December 1, 1992; all grants for senior citizens services were eliminated, will no longer be available; the Senior Citizens' Provincial Council, their advisory group—they even cancelled their advisory group. The Senior Citizens' Provincial Council will be eliminated.

Listen to this one. They just established the Seniors' directorate. Now it will be eliminated with the exception that they are allowing it now to be involved a little bit in the social services.

This is what they have done in the Province of Saskatchewan. People often say, elect an NDP to help me. We say, hey, we are not going to be any help with this kind of help. I mean, these people are right away the first people they have attacked. They will not even allow them to have an advisory group in Saskatchewan. So far you had difficult times, but they eliminated their advisory group in Saskatchewan. [interjection] Across the away—now he is blaming that on Devine. Devine has nothing to do with the advisory group. This is an advisory group that the government presently has now cancelled—an advisory group they cancelled.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our government is committed to meeting the needs of Manitoba seniors and will continue to seek workable solutions to resolve elderly abuse in our province today and tomorrow. We as a government are working for Manitobans every day to build a stronger province and a stronger Manitoba.

Though how boring some of these facts have been to you, it is my job as a minister to bring the information forward because I am involved in Government Services. I know, as the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) was the minister previously, it is a very enjoyable portfolio. As the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said, if you want to know what is going on in the building, call the Government Services minister. [interjection] It must have been more exciting when you had money to build new buildings.

As the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) said, another thing is the Remand Centre that was finally built, that the previous government had probably forgotten about somewhere in the tracks. I know the Justice minister was over there for the opening, and there are comments from the other side of the House in regard to the building. Well, I tell you, that building is completely usable; the one I saw from Flin Flon just recently where 38 percent of the building cannot be used because they have built a ceiling and you cannot put a second floor, a wasted space around a cubicle. So anybody who wants to go up can look at a building up in Flin Flon. I noticed that the same minister that signed that one is the one that built the bridge, so I can understand why we got

a building that is 38 percent not usable. I am glad he did not build housing, that is all.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I also am proud of the accomplishments of my department in the last several years in regard to my department. The last few days we have heard about management and financial mismanagement and these types of things. I have to mention that, for on the record, under the NDP government, they have proved beyond a doubt that they cannot manage our economy. They showed that when they were in government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, and for the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), I will give him some information. During the NDP administration, the general purpose direct debt rose by \$1.5 billion in 1981 to \$5.2 billion in 1988. On a per capita basis, this represents an increase of 240 percent from \$1,399.82 in 1981 to \$4,762.08 in 1988.

This represents a staggering burden for each Manitoba man, woman and child. Public debt-carrying costs rose from \$114 million in 1981-82 to \$490 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our government has been able to combine prudent financial management with compassion. This is illustrated by the fact that we spend a greater portion of our budget on social services, namely Health, Education and Family Services, than the NDP government did. Our government spent 61.2 percent on social services on an average basis compared to the NDP, when they were in power, in the 59 percent bracket. The evidence is clear; NDP financial mismanagement abounds.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would just like to mention one more point. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was very proud, and this is what he said, he was very proud of Premier Rae's 1991 NDP budget with its 13.4 percent increase in expenditure.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

During the 1991 Budget Debate, he asserted, and I would like to read that. Here is what he said: I like the fact that he gave 8 percent to Education. I like the fact that he gave 7.8 percent for the university. I like the fact that he is raising the spending of the province in long-term solutions to get people working again. I like the fact that private-sector investment is going to grow in Ontario as opposed to decline in Manitoba. I like the fact that our per capita investment is going to be much lower in

Manitoba than New Democratic Ontario. I like the fact that they are freezing nuclear energy development in Ontario.

If you want, here are his final words that he said in 1991: If you want to debate the Province of Ontario, my friends, I will debate it, and we will debate it with pride at any time.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) said in 1991. He said that he would debate it and debate it and debate it. That tells the story right in here.

I would like to talk about the old socialist type of saying. I would like to maybe quote, and I will finish with this, Magnus Eliason. Everybody knows Magnus. Everybody respects Magnus. Here is what Magnus said at a convention: What can we do about reducing deficits? It is a big issue and something we should be talking about.

Then he goes on to say: While health care is sliding, should we be paying for abortion on demand? We just take it for granted that we should be paying for it.

Here in 1988, March 7, Magnus Eliason talking about reducing deficit and, yet, now that they are in opposition they are going on and on about spending money. In 1988 Magnus talked about that, and we all know how such a fine man Magnus Eliason is. We all respect Magnus Eliason.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. George Hickers (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the speech on the budget but, before I do, I would just like to say that we have had some critic area changes and I have new critic responsibilities. I was former critic for Energy and Mines, and I always looked forward to going into Estimates with the Minister of Energy and Mines. He was very co-operative, and he gave good answers and I learned a lot. I am looking forward to going into Estimates with the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst), which is my new critic area.

When I talk about going into Estimates with the Minister of Housing—just for the House's information, there were vandals that got into 515 Elgin a couple of weeks ago, and I spoke to the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Ducharme). He said he would provide me the information and we had a discussion on it. I had a meeting with the tenants, and the tenants were very pleased with the co-operation and support that they had received

from both ministers. What they did was they changed the locks and now they have a signing system where if you want to give keys to your relatives and stuff like that they sign for it.

So when we look at this whole budget process, that is the kind of initiative that helps people, and people appreciate. Sure, right now they are looking forward to getting their pool table and their exercise bike, and hopefully that will be coming shortly.

* (1740)

But when we talk about the budget, it was interesting to hear the Minister of Seniors mentioning so many programs that were cut in Saskatchewan pertaining to seniors, but I did not hear the Minister for Seniors mention anything about reduction or cutting of crutches or walkers or bandages.

You know, \$50 is a lot of money for seniors. What is going to happen is individuals who do not have the money or do not have the family support to buy crutches or walkers, they are going to try and do without. What is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, is they are going to slip or fall or stumble. They are going to end up in the hospital and it is going to cost us a lot more than \$50. I think that is being very, very shortsighted. I do not know why, when he is talking about the cuts to Saskatchewan, he did not mention those. I guess maybe Saskatchewan did not cut those kinds of services. Maybe they looked at keeping those kinds of services in place to help the seniors, so that way the seniors can live in dignity and live a full life and be able to get around.

When you need crutches or a walker to even get across the street, it is very, very difficult. So now to target the disabled and seniors in that fashion, I think it is wrong, because our seniors are the ones who broke the ground, made this country what it is, and yet, why cannot we even have a little bit of services that are in place and keep those services for our seniors?

Then you look at the \$75 property tax fee that is going to hit everybody. That is going to have a real dramatic impact on senior citizens and low-income people who are just barely trying to keep their own homes. What is going to happen is some people are going to lose their homes, and they are going to try and get into housing units, and then we will have to end up subsidizing those units, so it will probably cost us more anyway. To me that is very, very shortsighted.

If you look at the whole budget, we hear about the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) saying it was fairness and it was equal to everybody, but if you look at the decreases that happened, it is equivalent to 5.7 percent of taxes. That is equivalent to personal income taxes, and if it is supposed to be so fair and if people are accepting that, then why are we getting copies of letters that the MLAs opposite are sending out to their constituents to put a spin and to explain the budget? If it is a fair and a good budget, it should be able to sell itself, so why are these letters going out to constituents?

There is a real positive spin to it. In fact, I was reading—from the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer)—a copy of his letter, and it was trying to put a positive spin, that it was equal and everybody had to share the same pain. If that is true, then why do you have to try and sell that? People should be able to understand that.

An Honourable Member: Keeping my constituents informed.

Mr. Hickes: Well, that is for sure, keeping them informed, but you forgot to mention what I just talked about, the \$50 fees for crutches and the bandages and the walkers, \$75 for senior citizens who are trying to maintain their own home, and the cuts to student social assistance programs, the cuts to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, cuts to MKO, the cuts to friendship centres.

The member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) was speaking across the hall to the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), and I saw that same nice little document when I was in Little Black River, and to indigenous people, it was a day to recognize. That is nice; it is really nice. When I was there, they said, who is this? They said, is that the minister that has to do with Native Affairs? I said, no. I said, that is not the minister. Well, why did we get this? I do not know. So they said, well, what is this all about? Because it looked all official and it was really nice. They even had it on their wall and it looked really impressive, very impressive, and they thought he was the Minister of Native Affairs. Maybe next shuffle he might be. You know, I hope he does get—[interjection] Well, maybe he will get into a different one, but if he is moved into the cabinet I think that would be good because the member is very hard working. I see him at a lot of functions and he is very well liked and respected out there.

In all fairness, when we look at fair taxes, fair cuts, if you look at the whole areas that were cut pertaining to aboriginal people, a lot of it was targeted directly at the aboriginal people. If you look at all the cuts to the friendship centres, and I mentioned the cut to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the MKO, and they are wondering what happened. Like, what did we do? Why are we being cut 100 percent of our funding?

I guess the only answer that could be given to those aboriginal organizations is, because you are doing what you are supposed to be doing and standing up for the people you represent. That is why they are in those positions and that is why they do get funding to try and service the people that they do represent. You know most of those aboriginal organizations and the leaders that come out to these gatherings and these meetings are from remote communities. It is very costly for the chief and councillors and representatives from those communities to—most of them have to fly out, and they do not have access to funding. So that funding was very important for them to get the information to take back to their people.

So when we talk about fairness to all individuals across Manitoba, I cannot buy that, because I do not think it was a fair budget. I think it was a very unfair budget. When you have 5,000 people coming to the steps of the Legislative Building, that should tell you something. It is not only 100, 200 or 500; there were 5,000 people. So if the budget was so fair, what were those 5,000 people doing at the steps of the Legislative Building? They were not there to cheer the government on and congratulate them on a very fair budget. Some of them were very, very angry, and if you look at the groups that were there—[interjection] I do not know what you are saying. If you look at the groups that were there, it was a lot of the working people and working poor and a lot of the people who are unemployed and out of a job.

One of the areas that was cut was the MAPO program, and I hear the Premier (Mr. Filmon) during Question Period saying, well, there are other services to pick up the services that were cut. Well, the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gillesharmer) should know that a lot of individuals who go for meetings with their counsellors and their social workers are very intimidated, are very scared, and with the perception that, if I say or do anything wrong, those individuals have the authority and the

power to cut me totally off. A lot of people do not know how to stand up for themselves, and a lot of people will not stand up for themselves. So that Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization was very important to a lot of individuals' lives, because they were the spokesperson, and they were the ones that did the leg work and sat in on a lot of those meetings. Because, like I said, the people do not understand the system and are very, very intimidated.

So when the Premier says there are other services to pick up the agencies that were cut, that is wrong. What will happen is that individuals who do not have the resources, do not have the ability to stand up for themselves, will not be able to and will be left on the side. The next thing you know we will hear more about them in the press and in the paper or something tragic will have happened.

* (1750)

One of my new critic areas that I really look forward to and that is really important to me is dealing with Native Affairs. I was at a meeting yesterday and I was really surprised. I was in Bloodvein and Berens River meeting with the fishermen. They were saying that their price of fish for the last 10 years has not greatly increased, and yet their costs have really increased. The prices of their boats and motors, the prices of their nets, and even if they hit—[interjection]

That is right. You get subsidy from the federal government and provincial government through various programs. If you need it, it is there. You have GRIP and you have NISA, all those other programs that are there. But the fishermen, the only program they had assisting them was through either CEDF loans or through freight subsidy programs, and the price of fish that they were receiving has increased very little if any, but their price of operation has greatly increased. The price of gasoline has increased.

An individual was saying, even if they hit a reef and they break their propeller, to get a new propeller flown in because there are no roads going in, it will cost them \$15 minimum in freight for a little prop to come in. That is what they have to pay, and yet their freight subsidy was cut from over \$300,000 to \$250,000, so they cannot afford that.

They do not have a road. You probably have a road going to your farm, and if you want to operate your vehicles, your combine, you probably have the access to use purple gas which is much cheaper

than gasoline. The fishermen do not have that option. The fishermen have to pay the full gasoline price, and that has to be brought in by barge or brought in by airplanes, and it costs more per litre for gas in remote communities than in Gimli or communities that are accessed by roads.

So when we talk about fairness, if you cut the freight subsidy, how is that being fair? The fishermen were telling us yesterday that they will barely even be able to make ends meet. They said because the perception is that because they are employed as fishermen, they will bring in an income—they have families to feed, and they have zero income coming in—they cannot even go for social assistance. The community will not give them social assistance because the community views them as being employed as fishermen. Even if they bring in zero dollars, they still cannot even collect social assistance to feed their families.

It is very, very hard on them. They were saying, well, if there is no road out of here, at least why can we not keep that freight subsidy or build a road in? Either one or the other, so at least our cost is not—our costs in the remote communities, they were saying, are a heck of a lot more than, say, fishermen in the community of Gimli, because they can put everything in their truck and they can drive it out, they can haul it out with their vehicles, but there they cannot do that. So they were very worried about that.

Another blow that is coming to the fishermen is in Lake Winnipeg—and it is going to really affect South Indian Lake because they have prize whitefish. Apparently, Natural Resources or Freshwater Fisheries is looking at lumping whitefish in with rough fish. You know, rough fish is your tullibee, your marias, and they are just thrown aside a lot of times or used by their families themselves. But the whitefish are going to be lumped in with the rough fish, so the price of whitefish is going to go down.

Do you know what else? If whitefish is lumped in with rough fish, you will not get the subsidy for your packaging. Did you know that? So that is going to be another cost on fishermen. Yet whitefish is a good fish to eat—[interjection] He is from Gimli; he should know that. Whitefish are good fish to eat, but it is a marketing that has to take place.

You go into a community like Flin Flon in northern Manitoba, you go into a community like Flin Flon and Thompson and go to the supermarkets. Can you

find whitefish for sale in those communities? No. Why not? Not everybody goes out and fishes. It is great. Whitefish, I have eaten it many times. It is good to eat, but the marketing board has to start marketing, be a little more aggressive. They have to start being a little more aggressive and start marketing whitefish as they do with the pickerel and other fish.

Like I said earlier, if you go to northern Manitoba, in Flin Flon or Thompson, in any of those bigger stores, you do not see packaged whitefish for sale. I say, why not? A lot of people will buy that. A lot of people cannot go out and catch their own. You try and fish for whitefish on a hook; I will tell you, you will catch very few. Local sports fishermen cannot set nets to catch whitefish. You cannot do that. So when you are out fishing you catch jackfish and pickerel. [interjection] Well, it is too bad you hate fish because it is really good. It is very tasty.

That is the kind of stuff I hope that the government will look at and talk to Freshwater Fisheries and get them to start aggressively marketing the fish that we have for sale in Manitoba, because the communities need that kind of help. They need that assistance.

Also, when we look at northern Manitoba, right now there is very little happening. Even the mineral exploration funds were reduced by a million dollars, from \$3 million to \$2 million. Well, there are mines that are closing in northern Manitoba. Should we not try and have more dollars to try and find some minerals in northern Manitoba so that we can start producing some mines and keep some of these communities.

An Honourable Member: Then why did you vote against the budget, George? The last three budgets have done nothing but try and promote exploration and development, and you voted against us.

Mr. Hickes: Well, do not cut it now. That is only one part of the budget. There are even certain parts of this budget that I would agree with; well, it is true. But overall, with some of the cuts that I just—[interjection] No. You have to look at the overall budget—overall, because of the cuts I have mentioned and some of the negative things that are impacting the working poor, the visible minorities, the aboriginal people, that I cannot support the budget, but bits and pieces, sure.

I bet that, if you did an honest survey with your members, there are certain parts of that budget that

they would like to see out of there. You would not get 100 percent agreement. You know that yourself. If it is such an easy budget—[interjection] Okay, but if you agree with it 100 percent and you figure it is a very fair budget, why are you putting those letters out to the constituents?

I have never seen that before where MLAs of the government have to put a certain spin on something to their constituents. Why? Why then? What is the reason? A good budget should be able to sell itself. You should not have to put a spin on it. The people should say, yes, it is a good budget. We support it 100 percent. You should not have to get it—well, you would not have to go out there and sell it. I read your letter. I have seen other—[interjection] Well, I do not know why he will not put his picture on it. He should have put his picture on it.

The other things that were cut pertaining directly to aboriginal people were the cuts to the friendship centres across Manitoba, and it said that the cuts were for advocacy groups. That is why they were cut.

I totally, totally disagree with that because friendship centres are not advocacy groups. They

are a service-helping group for aboriginal people. In fact, when that was announced, I got a call from the Tache nursing home in St. Boniface, and they said, what are we going to do? We have aboriginal people here at the Tache nursing home, and their friendship centres were coming to take the individuals who were at the nursing home out for visitations, for entertainment. They were coming in bringing ethnic foods and cultural foods and taking them out for entertainment, and that was from the Tache nursing home in St. Boniface. That is where I got that phone call from.

I said, well, you phone your MLA and phone the minister that is responsible for that, because I do not agree with those cuts. Friendship centres, if you look at the services they provided for years and years, always provided—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) will have 19 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 14, 1993

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