



**Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 10, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Flood Forecast

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** I have a statement for the House, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have had heavy rains this past week and more rain is predicted for today which will create continuing flooding problems on the Souris River watershed. Forecast for today are another 40 millimetres or 1.5 inches of rain in the watershed. The rain is producing significant runoff, with conditions in many areas looking similar to what transpired three weeks ago when the snow melt was occurring. A strong weather system is moving through the area, and we are watching to determine what action will be needed.

At this time the Department of Highways and Transportation is considering rebuilding the dike on PTH 3. This additional rainfall, along with 115 millimetres or 4.5 inches of rain last week to most of the drainage areas from Minot to Wawanesa, is producing significant runoff. As reported on the weekend, some flooding is underway in lower-lying areas. Medora Creek was spilling its banks further upstream. Slow and steady rises are expected on the Souris River for approximately the next 12 days.

The unusually heavy rain since May 4 will extend the period of flooding along the Souris River to Manitoba for at least three to four weeks. It will be well into June before lower-lying lands along the river emerge, and the colder area will likely be past mid-June before it becomes dry—not good news for that area at all. While the rainfall was certainly of help in the forest firefighting situation in western and

central areas of the province, it is however still dry in the north and eastern areas. This has affected the forest fires, and we are holding the fire in the Manigotagan area, but it should be noted that there are still 250 firefighters working in this area and good progress is currently being made. Rain may move north and that will significantly help this if it occurs in the next 24 hours. This rainfall has created concerns for our communities and agriculture producers in the Souris River watershed and in southwestern Manitoba, and we urge them to contact local Natural Resource officers if they need assistance.

\* (1335)

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for an update again in terms of firefighting and flood fighting. We on this side of the House are very pleased that the rain is helping out with the forest fire situation, putting us in the ball game there to control the fires and minimize the damage to Manitobans. We have to realize too, at the same time, that while we do not have a control over the tap, the amount of water that is hitting other parts of the province will cause damage and will cause grief for Manitobans living in the Souris River watershed.

I have been in contact with some of the local people from the area, and I want to congratulate them on the preventative flood damage measures that they have been taking in order to protect their communities and to protect their farms and to protect their businesses in the southwest corner of the province. I also urge the minister, not only in the prevention stage but after the flooding has occurred and if there is some damage that has been done, that the local people, the local R.M.s and town councils and individuals who are affected by the flood receive the continued support of the provincial government, something that we have raised in this House before.

I thank the minister for his statement and hope for all the best in the Souris River area for

local people fighting this heavy amount of rain and flooding that may occur.

\* (1340)

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 24—The Municipal Amendment Act

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Praznik), that leave be given to introduce Bill 24, The Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of the bill, recommends it to the House, and I would like to table the message of the Lieutenant Governor.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, firstly, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the table and ask them to assist me in welcoming Monique Grenier, our newly appointed Clerk Assistant/Journals Clerk, to the table.

Monique, who comes to us from the Legislative Counsel office, replaces JoAnn McKerlie-Korol, who has been appointed a Clerk Assistant-Committee Clerk. Monique will be serving at the table on a regular basis if and when we get into Estimates. Welcome, Monique.

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twenty-four Grade 11 students from Neepawa Area Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Bob Ferguson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings).

We also have thirty Grade 9 students from Sargent Park School under the direction of Ms. Ricki Syrota. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### Nursing Profession Recruitment/Retention Strategy

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, in 1992 the government released a report called Quality Health for Manitobans – The Action Plan on Health Care in Manitoba. That report promised a five-year strategy for nursing recruitment, training and retention here in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to ask this Premier (Mr. Filmon): could he now table the five-year plan that his government promised in 1992 to deal with nurse recruitment, training and retention here in the province of Manitoba?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, as we have discussed in this House on previous occasions, provinces right across Canada today need more nurses. Certainly, Manitoba is amongst those provinces, and that is why we are doing a number of things to attract and retain more nurses in the province of Manitoba.

We have established a \$7-million nurse recruitment and retention fund here in the province. We continue to work with employers where we see more and more positions in our health care system being made permanent positions. That continues to be a major part of the focus on behalf of nurses. It is certainly an issue that we hear time and time again from nurses—continuing to work with our educational programs in Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition, I am sure is aware, just on Friday of last week, with a significant expansion of the licensed practical nursing program going from an intake of 90 nurses to 190 nurses coming up this next year through the Assiniboine Community College and Misericordia Hospital, continually working with the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba; last year alone, a 23 percent increase in their enrollment.

So there are a number of initiatives that are currently underway to continue to do just that, to

bring more nurses into the profession, into health care here in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, in 1992 the government said almost the same thing. The government has been working with nursing professions and other health service systems to develop a stable long-term strategy for nursing education, to ensure that we have appropriate numbers of nurses with appropriate skills and training available.

I would like to ask this Premier (Mr. Filmon): why does he fire a thousand nurses after the election campaign, and who is going to believe him now when he says just a couple of days before a campaign he is going to rehire nurses back?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, again, the information the Leader of the Opposition provides is wrong.

But just a report recently released—because it is National Nursing Week here in Manitoba and right across Canada—and in a report just released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information—I think headed up by one Michael Decker, which I believe is a name known to individuals across the way—they talk about the number of registered nurses per hundred thousand population by province in Canada.

The Canadian average is 748 nurses per hundred thousand. Manitoba's average is 893 per hundred thousand; the highest average from Quebec west, the highest across all of the Prairies including British Columbia. In fact, to give you a couple of examples, Manitoba is 893 per hundred thousand, Saskatchewan is 823 per hundred thousand, British Columbia is 696 per hundred thousand, to give you a sense of how we compare to other provinces.

So while we do have a challenge and we are committed to bringing more nurses into our health care system, on a national basis we certainly stack up very well.

\*(1345)

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, since the last election campaign, LPN education programs

have been cancelled, bedside positions were eliminated, LPNs were fired at St. Boniface, Seven Oaks, Health Sciences Centre, Concordia, Brandon, Misericordia. I would like to ask this Premier (Mr. Filmon): was he making a mistake by not having a long-term nursing strategy here in Manitoba, and did he err greatly against the patients of Manitoba by firing so many LPNs and then just Friday trying to rehire them back?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition chooses to ignore what was happening in the early '90s when you had nurses themselves, in many cases suggesting changes to the educational format for nurses, you had employers suggesting there was a need for educational changes and a change in terms of the types of services and the types of nurses that were going to be provided.

But here in the province of Manitoba, we do continue to have an excellent licensed practical nurses program. His colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was with me on Friday when we were able to announce a significant expansion to the licensed practical nursing program for the upcoming year, going from 90 to 190 entrants in the program, going from three intakes a year to six intakes a year, doing it through the Assiniboine Community College, doing it here in Winnipeg at Misericordia Hospital with two intakes, and for the first time having two rotating intakes across rural Manitoba to provide better access for people who want to become licensed practical nurses. So, again, a significant enhancement, 190 licensed practical nurses for the upcoming year as opposed to 90 last year. That is a significant commitment from this government.

#### **Nursing Profession Recruitment/Retention Strategy**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, while we are dealing with commitments, maybe the minister could explain why, in April 1992, a report to this government recommended the expanding of the LPNs to 190 positions, a report in July 1993 recommended the expansion of LPNs to 190, a letter to all MLAs in July 1994 recommended the expansion of LPNs, and a writing to all MLAs on January 28, 1993, also called for it. How can the

minister explain in the final ebbing days of this government, after having laid off a thousand nurses, the government all of a sudden has found it in its budget and its wisdom to have a nursing plan, to hire back LPNs in the dying days of the Filmon administration or the member for Tuxedo's administration?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, not surprisingly, the only people trying to be negative and opposing the expansion of a licensed practical nursing program to 190 are members opposite. I am really disappointed in the member for Kildonan because he was there on Friday, he heard from the Licensed Practical Nurses Association themselves who were thrilled with this expansion. He heard from the employers here in Manitoba, recognizing the needs in our personal care homes, in our Home Care program, how pleased they were with this announcement. He heard from everybody who participated, the Assiniboine Community College who were providing the program, how proud they are to expand this program, Misericordia Hospital that now has two intakes and how proud they are to be a part of the expansion. The only ones who are negative about the expansion and the additional licensed practical nurses seem to be members opposite. I am bewildered by their position.

#### **Licensed Practical Nurses Refresher Courses**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about a question that was put to him by an LPN at Friday's announcement who had been out of work for three years, who could not find a job, and she asked the minister: will the government be paying the \$2,300 fees it costs for these nurses to get their refresher courses after they have been laid off, after they have been out of work, after the government is now hiring them back before the election? Will the government see to it itself to pay the \$2,300 that they have to pay, after having been fired, to go back into LPN nursing?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, again, I am glad the member acknowledges he was there. He did pay attention to

some of what took place on Friday at that announcement. The individual that I think he is referring to also pointed out to me that she did go back and I believe received her registered nursing qualifications as well. As I did point out to her, the nurse recruitment fund, the \$7-million fund, that is available in Manitoba is available for individuals who want to get recertified, retrained, any upgrading that is required. That fund is accessible and is available for just that. It is one of the many things that it will do to bring more nurses back into the health care system here in the province of Manitoba.

\* (1350)

#### **Nursing Profession Recruitment/Retention Strategy**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, I guess my final question and my final supplementary to the minister is: why and how does the government expect anyone in Manitoba to believe this death-bed conversion when in fact we know at Health Sciences Centre they are closing down ICU beds because there are not enough nurses, we know in southern Manitoba they are talking about closing hospitals because there are not enough nurses, we know in the North there is—

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

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, again the member is wrong with his preamble. Again, by obviously being able to balance our books in the Province of Manitoba, something I know that members opposite have a great deal of difficulty appreciating or understanding or recognizing the benefits of, by doing that and generating surpluses in the province of Manitoba, we do have resources to dedicate to some of the areas of greatest need, and certainly health care has consistently been our No. 1 spending priority, now taking up close to 36 percent of our provincial budget. So we have the resources to dedicate to this expansion of the licensed practical nursing program that will take it from an intake of 90 students last year to an intake of 190 students this year. That is a significant

commitment to nursing and to licensed practical nurses in the province of Manitoba.

### **Hepatitis C Treatment Waiting Lists**

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Last month the Minister of Health stated that more doctor specialists are being attracted in high-demand fields. The current provincial budget, while listing some medical areas, makes no mention of specialties of neurology or hepatitis. Now a constituent advises that Manitobans diagnosed with hepatitis C must wait exceptional lengths of time before treatment can begin.

Will the Minister of Health explain why Manitobans diagnosed with hepatitis C have to wait more than 10 months for a consult at the viral hepatitis unit and then several more months before a biopsy can be done, making the waiting time over one year before any treatment can begin for people suffering with hepatitis C in Manitoba?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the preamble from the member opposite, we certainly provide significant medical services to individuals right across Manitoba and certainly individuals who are ailing with hepatitis C. For certain individuals, from the period '86 to '90, there is an initiative underway between the federal and provincial governments in terms of the issue of compensation, and we are also working with the federal government for individuals who were affected both pre-'86 and post-'90. We are working with the federal government in terms of continuing to improve and expand some of the health care services that we are providing to these individuals.

### **Viral Hepatitis Unit Funding**

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** I want to ask the same minister then why his government, in the last budget, did not mention funding for doctors specializing in treatment of hepatitis C patients. Will your government be providing funding for the viral hepatitis unit since you have had that proposal in your hands since August of 1998?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, again I do not necessarily accept the preamble from the member opposite, but I have indicated that we are providing significant support for individuals affected with hepatitis C. We also are working with the federal government right now on a memorandum of understanding to provide some additional support for those individuals. Again, the federal government is prepared to dedicate some additional financial resources in terms of the care side of individuals affected. So we are working with them in terms of areas like some enhanced treatment, additional issues relative to the whole issue of look-back and trace-back programs and enhanced surveillance. So we do continue to look at enhancing the medical services that are provided.

\* (1355)

**Mr. Reid:** I want to ask the same minister, since there does not seem to be a commitment on his part, why, Madam Speaker, has this government neglected and ignored the high demand for services in the viral hepatitis unit, whose caseload is over 10,000 cases and growing at 60 new cases a month. Is this not a high-demand area for medical services involving patients suffering with hepatitis C?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, again I repeat for the benefit of the member opposite that we have continued to provide services to these individuals. We are negotiating with the federal government in terms of some enhancement to some of the levels of care that are being provided. In terms of the issues of the specific elements that he brings to this House today, I will certainly look into those issues and get back to the member.

### **Hepatitis C Patient Quality of Care**

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, last week a man suffering from hepatitis C went to the emergency room at Seven Oaks Hospital. Because there was no room for him, he remained in the overflow section for almost three days. This man, whose immune system is severely depleted due to his illness,

was forced to stay in this quasi-public place for three days while his open wound was being periodically drained.

In light of this situation, which unfortunately is all too common, how does the Minister of Health justify his statement last Friday in Question Period: "that Manitobans are certainly satisfied with the quality of care they get in our hospitals, they get in our health care facilities."?

How does he justify that statement?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I can certainly justify that statement by listening and hearing the Manitobans who have experienced our health care system on an overall basis. I think that is a compliment to the people in our health care system, whether it be our nurses, our doctors, our health care aides, or everybody who works and provides a quality health care system in Manitoba. I am very proud of Canada's health care system, and within Canada I am very proud of Manitoba's health care system.

That is not to suggest for a minute that there are not issues that still need to be addressed, whether it be waiting lists or whether it be issues relative to hospital overcrowding or even specific incidents sometimes where a patient does not get the immediate access or the quality of care that they might want or need at a given point in time. But having said that, Madam Speaker, we have an awful lot to be proud of in terms of Canada's health care system and Manitoba's health care system, and I am certainly proud of our health care system.

**Ms. Barrett:** Madam Speaker, this is not a specific—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member was recognized for a supplementary question.

**Ms. Barrett:** Madam Speaker, how can the Minister of Health justify this situation where, due to overcrowding, the overflow room at Seven Oaks Hospital is so hot that the ambulance doors have to remain open, thereby further exposing this very ill man and others like him to the dust and the temperature changes and

all of the things that happen from the outside? How does he justify this?

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

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, I am certainly prepared to look into the individual situation that the member for Wellington is bringing to this House. We have indicated that while we have made significant progress and we do fare very well with our system compared to Canada's system, there continue to be some challenges in our health care system. We certainly have a plan to address those systems, and we have the resources to address those systems.

I will look into the specific issue that the member brought here today.

\* (1400)

**Ms. Barrett:** Madam Speaker, how can the people of Manitoba trust this Minister of Health and this government when he and they continue to say that the health care system is improving when it is not just specific instances like the minister would have us believe but hundreds if not thousands of situations day after day of people being forced to sit in Third World overcrowded conditions in our health care system?

**Mr. Stefanson:** Now, Madam Speaker, the member for Wellington is calling Canada's health care system Third World conditions. I say shame on her because anybody who has experienced systems anywhere in the world would acknowledge that Canada has one of the best health care systems in the entire world.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, to complete his response.

**Mr. Stefanson:** I will tell you, Madam Speaker, certainly within Canada I am prepared to put Manitoba's system up against any province in Canada in terms of how we compare in meeting the needs of Manitobans. Having said that, there continue to be challenges and there continue to be issues to address. We have the resources, we



have the people, we have the plan in place to do just that to continue to improve what is a good health care system here in the province of Manitoba.

### **Climate Change Action Plan Status Report**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is for the Minister of Environment.

Madam Speaker, in 1998 the Canadian government, in consultation with environmental ministers from across Canada, signed the Kyoto treaty on greenhouse gas emissions. According to the then Minister of Environment, Manitoba was in the process of developing a climate change action plan for the province. Since the minister is so concerned about the ozone-depleting substances, can the minister indicate if her department has in fact finished this report?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment):** I thank my honourable friend for the question which I know is sincerely motivated, and I do appreciate it.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In answer to the question, there are two parts. First of all, as the member knows, we are bringing forward an amendment to an act here to address in part some of those concerns regarding substances and what we can replace harmful substances with. As well, we are not yet finished working with the federal government and other jurisdictions on this. We are making good progress in terms of our discussions, and we will be meeting again very shortly. In May, the ministers of Environment across the nation are meeting, and this again will be on our agenda for further conversation and dialogue.

### **Greenhouse Gases Emission Levels**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, there was a commitment with that particular agreement for a 5 percent reduction in greenhouse gases by the year 2012. Can the

minister indicate, in terms of the direction, since the agreement was signed, to what degree Manitoba is proceeding? Are we in fact approaching it in a positive way in achieving the 5 percent?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment):** Manitoba itself is a relatively small contributor to this particular problem although we hope to be a major contributor towards the solution. We are working in conjunction, as I indicated, with our federal partnership. It is a partnership. Manitoba has, I think, made some significant contributions in terms of our own provincial legislation and contribution to dialogue with those provinces that are greater contributors to the problem. We look for continued federal leadership in this initiative, and I would encourage the member, with his particular partisan connections, to encourage his counterparts in Ottawa to give this increasingly higher priority, in particular as we prepare for the meeting later this month in Alberta.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Can the minister indicate whether or not Manitoba is actually seeing a reduction in greenhouse gases from last year to this time, or has there in fact been an increase in greenhouse gases?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Madam Speaker, we contribute in Manitoba about 3 percent of the national total of greenhouse gases and our population is closer to 4 percent, so in that sense we have a good per capita record. We are hoping to continue to control, as I indicated, with our current amendment in The Ozone Depleting Act, that we are going to be ensuring that things we use to substitute for ozone-depleting substances are not in turn then contributors to the greenhouse gas problems. We are taking initiatives such as those to ensure that our percentage goes down rather than up. Currently it is about 3 percent of about 4 percent.

### **Hepatitis C Treatment Programs—Federal Funding**

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, in September 1998 the federal Health minister announced a \$300-million special

transfer to the provinces earmarked to provide medical care to people infected with hepatitis C through blood or blood products. I would like to ask the Minister of Health today if he will tell us whether his government has accessed this so-called care program, and if not, why not, and if so, where have or will these funds go.

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, we have been in contact with the federal government who have offered a national \$300-million program over 20 years which would amount to about \$8 million in the case of the province of Manitoba. So we have had ongoing discussions with the federal government about entering into an agreement with them and outlining how the funds would be utilized in terms of hepatitis C affected individuals in terms of enhanced treatment, additional support and so on.

We are certainly close to concluding those negotiations. The last information I had, I do not think any province—as of a few weeks ago, none of the provinces had concluded their agreements, but I know most provinces in Canada are anxious to do just that. I expect that we will be able to conclude an agreement with the federal government very shortly.

**Ms. McGifford:** I would like to ask this minister, because he may or may not know that his negotiations are a complete mystery to the hepatitis C community, if he will consult with members of the community and keep them advised as to what his plans are and the state of negotiations.

**Mr. Stefanson:** I am certainly more than prepared to do that, Madam Speaker. We have certainly done that on a number of initiatives affecting the health care of Manitobans. I am certainly prepared to have further discussions about how those funds can be best utilized in the province of Manitoba to meet the needs of hepatitis C affected individuals. As I have said, the total allocation to Manitoba is about \$8 million over what amounts to 20 years, but I believe in the first year we could be looking at approximately \$1 million to \$1.3 million available in the province of Manitoba. We certainly want to put those funds to the best use possible.

**Ms. McGifford:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister today if he would follow the example set us by the Province of Quebec and confront the federal government in order to access the funds and use them to extend compensation to those who were infected before '86 or after '91.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, I believe all provinces have reached agreement for the period 1986 to 1990, and I think a settlement is close to being concluded between the federal government and all of the provinces for that period of time. We also have the situation that we are discussing right now where the federal government is prepared to make an additional commitment of some \$300 million nationally over 20 years. That is over and above all of the health care support that is provided by the individual provinces to individuals that have to deal with hepatitis C, and we certainly have an opportunity here to continue to improve and enhance the quality of care to those individuals. We certainly will be taking advantage of accessing those funds very shortly.

\* (1410)

#### **Hunt Farms Government Position**

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last year we tabled minutes of the interdepartmental elk committee that stated Natural Resources would report on the possibility of hunt farms because the agriculture industry would want them. The minister indicated at that time that he himself was against the concept, and in a recent letter to the editor stated that penned hunts were in fact illegal in Manitoba.

Can the minister table the results of his department's report on hunt farms in Manitoba?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** The policy is as I have stated: we do not and we are not going to have hunt farms.

**Mr. Struthers:** Can the minister then indicate, Madam Speaker, why an Interlake outfitter's website, which is linked to Tourism Manitoba,

offers two large game compounds, 400 and 800 acres, for bison, wild boar and fallow deer bucks?

**Mr. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, perhaps the member would wait until we have an investigation, and I will report back.

### Investigations

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin):** Can the minister explain whether his department has investigated the number of penned hunts in Manitoba, and can he indicate whether these penned hunts are in fact considered illegal by his department?

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** I am not sure if the member is playing with definition or words. I hope he is not, because I certainly will review the situations that he has alluded to and determine whether or not this is outside of the regulations that presently exist.

### Agricultural Research Funding

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Madam Speaker, agriculture research is very important to the industry. However, the move over the past decade to have agriculture research funding dollars tied to private sources has reduced the amount of public research in this province. The result is lack of independent research and a lack of visionary research. When is the Minister of Agriculture going to recognize that, with new crops and changing agriculture, there is a need for public research rather than to have all research tied to the private sector?

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, I am actually thankful for the honourable member's question because from time to time it is important to demonstrate the difference between them and us. Research is the issue, and in the last few years this administration has increased its public research by tenfold.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** In fact, this government has reduced—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Swan River, to pose her supplementary question.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he does not realize that private-sector research has their own focus, meets their own needs, and they are not going to work on projects, for example, that will see farmers have the ability to reduce their input costs, and that there is a real need to have public research funded by public dollars that meets the needs of all the farming community, not just the chemical companies and the seed companies. There must be proper research.

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

**Mr. Enns:** Madam Speaker, let me again reassure—I am rather surprised, because most of us in the agriculture community are pretty proud of what has happened at the Faculty of Agriculture in the last few years, an entire new faculty building built, research facility, a satellite station at Carman with state-of-the-art research is being built, that is all public.

Now, one other issue, an issue, regrettably, that the opposition chose to vote against and fight me with, was to allow the individual commodity groups, the canola growers, the forage growers, the cattle producers, to fund their own organizations so they could put up some of the money for the research so that that research would be specifically directed to their commodity interests. Coupled with that, of course, is the support from provincial organizations, programs like ARDI and the federal program. So we have a combination of public, private and individual commodity groups that are today funding agricultural research, and that, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, is the way it should be.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Speaker, I will rephrase the question so maybe the minister will understand it. I would like to ask him if he realizes that there is a lack of agronomic information, for example, on tillage practices, on rotation, seed depth on some of these new crops. The ag reps have no ability to advise farmers,

and farmers are forced to go to the chemical and seed companies. What do you expect them to advise them? Do you think that they are going to advise them to use less chemicals, or are they going to advise them in the best interests of the farmers?

**Mr. Enns:** I invite the honourable member for Swan River, as I do the journalists from the Sun or the Free Press or anybody else, to—while they are driving through rural Manitoba this summer, they will come upon colourful tents, 50 or 60 half-ton trucks around it, and what is happening there? Seminars being conducted by my Extension department, by university people, by the chemical companies, by private seed trial-testing companies where we are constantly trying out plots. You will see these little plots where they are growing these things, that are advising the farmers precisely how to farm better in this highly competitive agricultural age. Please take advantage; you are welcome. There are usually some refreshments, doughnuts and coffee, served at these occasions, and you will find it a refresher.

#### **Urban Aboriginal Strategy Consultations**

**Mr. George Hickey (Point Douglas):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Northern Affairs. I would like to ask the minister if these organizations, the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the friendship centres, were part of the consultations, and did they have any input in this government's so-called Urban Aboriginal Strategy that the minister announced last week? Were these organizations consulted, and did they have input into helping develop that strategy?

**Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs):** Madam Speaker, the organizations that were listed were definitely included in the strategy through their memberships, in the development of this strategy which was under the auspices of the Round Table on Environment and Economy, in those days, now the Round Table for Sustainable Development, and the individuals participated in the hearing process, the listening process that went on. It was not through political leadership.

With respect to the strategy itself which has emerged through our interdepartmental working group responding to the round table for sustainability report, the involvement of those organizations hopefully will be very significant in the emergence of the filled-out blank piece of paper that I have referred to as being the way that the strategy is going to emerge in multifaceted ways through involving all different facets that departments are responsible for in government: Health, Education, Family Services and so on.

#### **Income Assistance Amalgamation—Access Problems**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, as a result of the one-tier project, I have been getting numerous phone calls, as have my colleagues, and I am sure the Minister of Family Services' office has been getting numerous phone calls from people who are having great difficulty accessing their worker or anyone. Some people have received cheques that are late or not having cheques at all. I would like to ask the minister: in lieu of the fact that numerous people are falling through the cracks, what is her office doing to resolve these access problems as expeditiously as possible?

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** I thank my honourable friend for that question. Creating a one-tier system of welfare within the city of Winnipeg will ultimately provide better service for the clients that are served and better efficiency for the taxpayers of the city of Winnipeg, the province of Manitoba.

I do want to indicate that, as a result of the change, certainly there are new case workers, new office locations that some clients will have to attend. I want to indicate very clearly, Madam Speaker, that there is not any single parent with children that would be impacted as a result of these changes, or any disabled client. The changes predominantly affect the single, employable caseload in the city of Winnipeg.

I understand that, from time to time, there have been a little longer waits for service, but that is because the caseworkers are trying to get to know the needs of their clients; that is because there is an employment focus, and there is a job

plan that is attached to working with single, employable people to try to ensure that they maximize on the opportunity of the jobs that are available today.

\* (1420)

**Mr. Martindale:** Madam Speaker, I would like to table three copies of a list that someone kept of the attempts to get through to an office, 144 times before they got through to a worker. I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services what she is doing in a practical way to resolve these access problems. We know how the system works, but I would like to hear what the minister is doing to resolve these serious access problems so that people can get through.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I do want to indicate very clearly that if someone is having extreme difficulty reaching any—I look at this, and it gives me no detail or no information on the exact issue. [interjection] It is very typical of the opposition bringing information that really is not information to this House and trying to create an issue.

There is a help line available that has been widely advertised if people are having difficulties—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services, to complete her response.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Madam Speaker, if in fact the member for Burrows is indicating that he did not intervene in some way, when somebody that he knew was having difficulty getting through the line, and called me directly, which he has done on many occasions and I have responded immediately to those kinds of issues, I think that he is bringing this to this House for purely political reasons, and he is doing nothing to serve the people that need this service through our social assistance system.

#### **Hunt Farms Government Position**

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, a question that I

took as notice, in part, earlier in this Question Period, so that there is no misinformation on the record. When the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) was asking me about my consultations, I have a letter that was written to him by the Manitoba Wildlife Federation that indicates clearly the consultations were at their request because they were opposed to pen hunting, not on the part of Natural Resources.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Crescentwood, with one very short question.

#### **Health Care Facilities Food Services**

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, on the weekend I had occasion to talk with Mr. Ed Wirth, whose wife is a patient in Riverview and has been there for just about a year. He reports to me that, contrary to what has been said by the minister, the food situation is deteriorating, not getting better, that the roast beef, the pork, the ham and the sausages are basically inedible. They cannot be chewed by anyone who has even the slightest difficulty.

What is the minister doing to resolve the serious problem with protein intake for patients who simply cannot chew the food that is being supplied?

**Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health):** Well, Madam Speaker, this is an interesting question from the member for Crescentwood because his Leader stands up a week or two ago, and he complains about Urban Shared Services double-blanching vegetables so that they are easier to eat and more appetizing for individuals in these facilities.

Again, I think what is important is all of these health care facilities continually do patient surveys to see what the reaction is to the quality of food. Certainly, on an overall basis, the surveys show that the patient approval rating is much higher today than it was under the old food system, and it continues to get better and better at each and every facility. The objective throughout all of this is to continue to provide quality nutritional food in the most cost-effective way to the people in our health care facilities here in Winnipeg.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

### Speaker's Rulings

**Madam Speaker:** I have two rulings for the House.

I am ruling on a point of order raised by the official opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) on April 16, 1999, respecting words used by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) with respect to the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

The Premier said, quoting from the Monnin report, "Sale, by his own admission, told Sorokowski, 'it is my understanding that if you don't want to meet with the investigators you don't have to,'" but also said "He was behind the scenes counselling people to break the law and not appear before the inquiry."

As I have previously ruled, it is not in order to use unparliamentary language or make a charge against another member by the device of putting the words into the mouth of someone else. Therefore, I am ruling that the House leader of the official opposition did have a point order, and I am calling on the honourable First Minister to withdraw the words he spoke on April 16 which imputed unworthy motives to the honourable member for Crescentwood.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I will withdraw those words from the record.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable First Minister.

On April 21, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). His point of order concerned words spoken by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) respecting the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

I would note that Speaker Rocan made a number of rulings respecting alleged impugned motives. In particular, on May 30, 1989, he stated: "this is a forum in which strong

and often opposing views are held and it is a forum in which unkind but not necessarily unparliamentary words and phrases unfortunately will be used from time to time."

I have read the Hansard record and am ruling that this was a dispute over the facts. There was not, in my opinion, an imputation of unworthy motives nor a personal charge made.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### National Nursing Week

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Madam Speaker, the week of May 10-18 has been declared National Nursing Week in the province of Manitoba by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) in recognition of the important contributions made by nurses in this province each and every day. The theme for National Nursing Week 1999 is older persons and nurses, partners for healthy aging, and within Manitoba the three nursing associations will be promoting nursing through community services—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. There is so much disruption in this House currently that I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Charleswood. I would request the co-operation of all honourable members if you are having private meetings to do so in the loge or outside the Chamber.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Within Manitoba the three nursing associations will be promoting nursing through community services, social actions and public education. Our government recognizes the importance of nurses in our health care system and has developed several initiatives to ensure that we continue to have an adequate number of nurses to meet the care needs of Manitobans.

On Friday, our government announced that it is raising enrolment in the Assiniboine Community College licensed practical nurses education program from 90 to 190 students this year, with an increase of more than \$576,000 in funding. Having worked many years as a nurse, I recognize the important role that LPNs play in our health care facilities and personal care

homes. Increasing access to the LPN program is an important step forward in meeting the need being faced here and across the country for more caregivers at the bedside.

In addition to expanding the LPN program, we have allocated more than \$32 million to hire 650 nurses, and we have established a \$7-million nursing fund to assist in recruiting and retaining nurses for the province. Manitoba's nurses are one of the strongest assets of our health care system, and we will continue our commitment to training and hiring more nurses in Manitoba. Thank you.

### **Eriksdale Credit Union**

**Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake):** Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago I had the great pleasure and honour of attending the opening of the new Eriksdale Credit Union location in Eriksdale, Manitoba, and bringing greetings to over 300 people, board members and friends. This new 7,120 square foot building will provide expanded banking facilities, as well as extra offices, lawyers visits, playrooms for the kids, spacious board room, a full security system, 24-hour automatic teller and a handicap access wicket.

Having expanded to over \$45 million in assets along with its suboffices in Ashern and Moosehorn, Eriksdale Credit Union is one of the only financial service providers in this area, and with its new facility it makes the Eriksdale Credit Union the viable banking institution for northwest Interlake.

I wish to congratulate Mr. Craig Hughson, board chairman Mr. David McLelland, and staff members continued success.

### **North West Mounted Police March**

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Madam Speaker, this past weekend, Friday and Saturday, was certainly a memorable event in southern Manitoba at Fort Dufferin and Emerson. This weekend, there were hundreds of people, indeed thousands of people gathered from around the world, across Canada and Manitoba to witness the kickoff of the re-enactment of the 1874 North West Mounted Police March West. I had

the pleasure of welcoming the people there on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the government of Manitoba.

It was 125 years ago that members of the North West Mounted Police left Fort Dufferin north of Emerson to bring law and order to the Canadian prairies and to protect our borders against American incursions. In doing so, they made western Canada a safe and attractive place for settlers. Participants of the ride are travelling by horseback and are dressed in 19th Century costume. Dozens of riders will take part in this march all the way to Alberta.

The March West is expected to reach its final destination at Fort Macleod on July 2, and it will be making many stops along the way. I hope many of the members of this House and all Manitobans will be taking time to greet the March West along the way on its historical journey.

I would like to congratulate RCMP constable Tom Lowden, co-ordinator of the march, Shannon and Wally Empson and Raymond Piche of Emerson, who co-ordinated the Emerson festivities, and the many sponsors who have contributed to the success of this event. I also want to send congratulations out to the town of Gretna, Mayor John Braun and Mary Harder, who co-ordinated much of the efforts at Gretna, for the welcome that they gave to all of the riders and to all of us as we experienced Saturday night in Gretna. Thank you again for the opportunity.

\* (1430)

### **National Nursing Week**

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, I rise to commend all nurses in Manitoba on the proclamation of this as nursing week in Manitoba. I and all of my colleagues, and I am sure all members of this Legislature, take off our hats and honour those individuals who work in the nursing profession who have particularly over the past several years worked under the most trying circumstances and who still continue to give the care, the helpful, loving, hands-on care that we all have come to know and respect from that profession over the past

hundred years, in fact since the early days of Florence Nightingale.

I think we often talk in this House about the role and function of nurses. What I hear most typically amongst my constituents and those who have participation in the health care field is those nurses are "run off their feet" and are doing all they can. I hope this week is a recognition on the part of the government of the role, responsibility and function that these people give to our health care field not just in the acute care sector or the personal care home sector, but for those sectors of southern Manitoba, rural, and in particular northern Manitoba where the bulk of the health care system falls upon their shoulders to undertake something that we have called on the government for many years to address. It is fitting and it is also ironic that finally, after years of requests from the LPNs and from others in the nursing home profession, the government this week has chosen to recognize that indeed there is a future for LPNs in the province after subsequent governments and subsequent ministers have said there was no role and no function for LPNs.

We commemorate all nursing and the work they do. I do not think any member of this Chamber could not have had the experience of being touched and warmed and helped by nurses, and I, with all members of the House, honour all of those people who have dedicated their lives to helping us to recover and heal. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **UFCW Magazine**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I wanted to just put on the record some real concerns and real problems that I have. Earlier, during Question Period, I was handed a magazine. Time and time again I have thought to try to give the benefit of the doubt to Bernard Christophe, the head of one of Manitoba's larger unions, the UFCW, and I will do what I can in terms of trying to get a copy of what I am about to say to Mr. Bernard. I would welcome, love an opportunity to speak to the membership at large if he were prepared to allow me to sit on the same stage as he, and explain to the membership

what I believe is how the membership as a whole is being exploited in regard to politics on a very important issue.

This most recent edition—and I took exception to other editions that have been produced, and I have contacted, but to no real avail. It is really discouraging. You open up a magazine, you look at it, you are talking about many—whether they are single parents, people who are trying to work for a living. Their dollars mean a lot to them, and those dollars are being used to prop up a political party. I do not believe that is in fact what all of those workers want to see. It saddens me greatly to see the types of money—and when you read through this magazine—it has it on billboards—and it is money that is being paid to train NDP workers. You read the billboard, it says: office manager, sign chair, organizer, gives the list of the price of the NDP memberships. You look at the front page. It is high profile of Gary Doer. It is page after page of nothing but propaganda which is not necessarily in the best interests of the average person working at Safeway or the average individual working in the garment industry. I challenge Mr. Bernard to give me the opportunity to sit on the same platform that he is on to explain how he is in fact exploiting, not necessarily assisting.

If my memory allows me to send a copy of what I have said to Mr. Bernard, I hope that he will take the opportunity to sit down and express not only to me but I also believe to many members, not only within his union but outside the union, the types of actions and propaganda and what he does in order to get his political party on the agenda.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **BUDGET DEBATE**

#### **(Eighth Day of Debate)**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona, who has six minutes remaining.



**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** I am just picking up where the member for Inkster just said a few moments ago, that Mr. Bernard Christophe is an idiot when he is referencing the article that was just put out by the UFCW. I think it is inappropriate for that member to attack someone like Mr. Christophe when he is working in the best interests—

**An Honourable Member:** Have you read that article?

**Mr. Reid:** I have seen the magazine. Yes, I have. To think that Mr. Christophe is doing this without consulting his membership—because I know that when the legislation was brought in by the previous Minister of Labour, it was a requirement of the law of this province that the unions of this province consult with their members.

I can tell you, having seen magazines, that their membership has been consulted in this province. If the member reads those articles, he will see that there is an article in each of those magazines asking the membership—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster has risen, I believe, to speak on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I would ask that the Sergeant-at-Arms close the doors and we have a quorum count, please.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. A quorum count has been requested. I would ask that the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) please leave the Chamber. A quorum count had been requested.

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer); the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the honourable Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh); the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner); the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger); the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine); the honourable member

for Pembina (Mr. Dyck); the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe); the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou); the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson); the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan); the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau); the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli); the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid); the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski); the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

**Madam Speaker:** There are 16 members present and indeed enough members to constitute a quorum. The honourable member for Inkster therefore did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Reid:** Madam Speaker, I am not quite clear why the member for Inkster is so sensitive, but perhaps he has an ulterior political motive in mind by taking the steps that he has just done.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** I believe the member for Transcona is senior enough that he knows it is not proper to impute motives, and he is imputing motives to my colleague from Inkster.

**Mr. Reid:** Madam Speaker, I quite often try to pick and choose my words very carefully. I am sure if you will peruse Hansard, you will find that I said "perhaps." I made no reference to the individuals in a direct way. I only said that perhaps that was the case.

**Madam Speaker:** On the point or order raised by the honourable member for The Maples, indeed I will take the matter under advisement to consult, to research the Hansard and report back to the Chamber.

\* \* \*

\* (1440)

**Mr. Reid:** Madam Speaker, I only have a few moments I believe in concluding my remarks,

my opportunity to speak on the budget, so I will not waste any more of my time referencing the comments made by the member for Inkster in reference to Mr. Christophe, who is the head of the UFCW. I will let those words speak for themselves—a democratically elected organization, which it is, and that they do consult with their members on a regular basis with respect to how their membership dues are spent. Maybe the member for Inkster is not aware of that, but I will leave that for him to research.

Looking back on the health care plan of this government where they announced that they are going to take \$131 million, I believe it is, out of the federal transfers that were supposed to be spread over three years. In addition, they are taking the extra money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund which is essentially the Manitoba Telephone System sale revenue and laundering that money through that Stabilization Fund to be spent on programs at this time, when we said since at least 1995 and perhaps beyond that, that the government should have been using some of those monies that were available to us in the Stabilization Fund to spend on the health care programs so that our constituents do not have to spend their days, in some cases over a week, in hospital hallways waiting treatments, waiting for a hospital room or bed. We think it is inappropriate that the government would have built up this slush fund over that period of time while patients were lying in the hospital hallways.

Now we look back that the government is looking to hire LPNs. Well, I can remember going to meetings in my own constituency when the government announced that they were going to do away or phase out the LPNs in our health care system in our province and the LPNs telling us quite clearly: this government was on the wrong track, you are headed for disaster.

What do we see here today, last Friday, when the government announced that they are going to bring LPNs back into the system; they are looking to train. If that is not I told you so, that was going to happen several years ago, it is finally government's thinking that they are going to have a death-bed repentance just prior to a

provincial general election bringing LPNs back into the system.

They are going to try and bring in nurses from other countries around the world, trying to supplement our shortage or to reduce the shortage of nurses in this province when we know full well that you did not have to fire those 1,000-plus nurses in this province and now you are trying to recover from the damage that you have created, and Manitobans will not soon forget the damage and the untold misery that you have caused for them, their families and the lives of those individual family members and patients who have suffered under your health care plan.

Madam Speaker, with respect to education and health care, it is interesting that the government can take \$100 million as we have heard in this House to immediately finance the expansion and improvements to the two casinos, Club Regent and McPhillips Street Station, but you did not have \$100 million to put in to reducing the waiting list for patients who are lying on stretchers in our hospital hallways. I am not sure how you balance those two.

When I look at the vehicles that are parked in the parking lot at Club Regent, which is in the community of Transcona, I see a very lot of Manitoba licence plates in there. I see very few foreign licence plates coming into that facility, so it is Manitobans' money that we are taking and recycling through the casinos back into the provincial government Treasury. When the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) said sometime ago, as minister responsible, that it was going to be an opportunity to bring in more tourists, it is going to be very interesting to see the numbers when they come out, how many new tourists have come into the province to go to the casino other than those who perhaps may come in during the Pan Am Games time, because those casinos are going to be here, have been here long before the Pan Am Games, and are going to be here long after the Pan Am Games and all I see in those parking lots is Manitoba licence plates in there. I do not see those foreign licence plates you said were going to be coming to this province. [interjection]

I go by it every day on the way to work. Now, I would hope that the minister would

reference that there are no obstructions in the way and you can see vehicles, and, yes, I have gone to those facilities to see about the expansion and to talk to the people that work there, because I am interested to see how our money is being spent in this province too. I want to make sure that those funds, Madam Speaker, when they talk about spending those monies for casinos when we think that they should have been better spent to reduce the waiting lists and to attend to patient needs in our hospitals.

Madam Speaker, I talked to constituents when I have been canvassing in my community and they tell me about the poor quality of the food in our hospital systems, those hospitals that have gone on to this frozen food fiasco that you have created and that those family members are telling me that they have to take food to their family members who are in hospitals, like Riverview, like my colleague the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) raised here today. That is what my constituents are telling me as well that this food is a fiasco and that the government is going to have—you are going to end up eating that food because of the problems you have created in the hospital system.

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

**Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to put a few words, humble words, on the record in support of our 1999 budget. A budget is a vision document by a government, and today I am happy to rise and proclaim and to extol the fact that the Filmon Tories in Manitoba have a vision. They have a vision for the future people of Manitoba and in order to understand where we are going, I think it deserves a few moments to look back and see where we have come from, and I think it is significant to do that for one very impelling reason. Members opposite are perhaps a pusillanimous and ill-mannered bunch, but nonetheless they have been unable to find or discern any issues of substance in this budget, but what they have done is, they have launched a personal and demeaning attack on the integrity of members of this side of the House, and this has to be the lowest form of sub hominem abuse

that I think I have ever had the unpleasantness to observe.

Madam Speaker, the record speaks for itself because members opposite really, on consideration of this budget, have not been able to bring any issue of substance to attack this. They may say, well, not enough, not soon enough, but have they attacked the priorities? Have they attacked the substance of the bill? Have they attacked the philosophy? Have they attacked the plan?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** I rest my case. This is the plan for the people of Manitoba. This will take us into the new millennium.

I want to reflect for a moment or two on just where we have come from.

**An Honourable Member:** I want to be there for the whole thing.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** Oh, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) is saying that he wants to be there for the whole trip, the whole millennium. Well, you will get a little long in the tooth by the end of the millennium.

Madam Speaker, the Filmon Tories and Manitoba have been able to create an environment so that private industry has created 22,000 new jobs in our province in the last number of years. We have the lowest unemployment in all of Canada. When you think of where we came from, what a miserable, misbegotten administration was in existence in 1988 when we took over administration, that is short of a miracle, nothing short of a miracle.

**An Honourable Member:** It is a miracle.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** It is a miracle, indeed. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says it is a miracle. Yes, indeed. As I say, I want to humbly extol the virtues of my colleagues and where they have come from; but, Madam Speaker, when you sit in this Chamber and you listen to some of the vapour that floats around, you would think that members opposite are

describing doom and gloom and that the world is coming to an end forthwith.

\* (1450)

**An Honourable Member:** Greenhouse gas.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** "Greenhouse gas," says the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck). Well, gas of some sort, whether it is sulphur laced or not.

Members opposite, with the greatest of respect, I would suggest, are really not in touch with reality because Manitobans are back to work. This province is working.

Capital, private capital has been inflowing into this province over the last six, seven, eight years. The members opposite say that, oh, people have left, our children have left, professionals have left. Well, I admit that faraway fields look greener, but the members opposite are missing the fact that the tide has turned. The tide has turned. Our children are coming back to Manitoba because there are jobs in Manitoba, and they are not all high-priced jobs that are launched by government on the backs of the poor taxpayers. The members opposite would have a vision that full employment means that everybody works for the government on the backs of the poor taxpayer. Madam Speaker, they overlook the fact that sooner or later small business would leave our province, and there would be nobody left to pay the taxes.

In light of what may be our near future, I have taken the opportunity recently to walk the streets of River Heights, and I am asking River Heights people what they think of our economy. I can assure you that, to a person, the people in River Heights commend our government for the forethought, for the vision, for the vigour that has been demonstrated in this budget. Do you know why, Madam Speaker? Because it is a balanced budget. Members opposite say: Well, we do not trust you; you are going to break your word; you are deceitful.

We have a record, and we have stuck to the record. We said that we were going to balance the budget, and you know what we have done?

We balanced the budget. Madam Speaker, we had—[interjection] No, I think four times—

**An Honourable Member:** Five times.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** Five times. Yes, I stand corrected by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns). Five times that we have balanced the budget. Is this an administration that does not do what it says?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** No. Madam Speaker, we committed to a balanced budget, and we performed. A balanced budget sustains programs and social directives so that we can bring assets of the state to areas which are in need. This is not just the people on this side of the House who are saying this. Do you know who else is adding strength to the testimony—

**An Honourable Member:** Cubby Barrett.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** No. You see there, again, Madam Speaker, the members opposite, they are going to a personal attack, a personal tirade. They are not raising their minds out of the abyss in which their intellects have dropped. They are not speaking to the substance of the issue.

Investment Dealers Association of Manitoba described Manitoba as—listen to this, honourable members opposite—the best managed public finances during the 1990s. Now, Madam Speaker, this is not somebody from River Heights, although I have found that motto expressed in River Heights, but this is the Investment Dealers of Canada that are saying this. Nesbitt Burns gave full marks for fiscal integrity. Under Gary Filmon, Manitoba has not increased taxes. Further than that, do you know what Manitoba is in the process of doing? They are starting to drop taxes.

Now, members opposite, some of them who are long toothed enough that have been here from the bad old days, should remember that they were on a continually rising spiral of tax and spend, even in a prosperous economy. Both agencies, Moody's and Moores and Standard and Poor's, upgraded Manitoba's credit rating to AA.

That is fiscal fitness, and that is one of the hallmarks for which this government bespeaks.

Madam Speaker, we are going to go to the people of Manitoba and we are going to say: do you want to be in the poor house? Do you want your children leaving Manitoba? Do you want bankruptcy? Do you want misery? Because that is what members opposite talk about and espouse continually, and that is what they would bring to the public administration in this province. Absolutely. Continuous unremitting misery. They have a top-down, hierarchical, managed vision of economics, and they understand one thing and one thing only.

We heard a few minutes ago from a member opposite his shock or his horror or his inquietude with regard to members opposite dancing as puppeteers in a union publication as being perhaps subject to a special interest group. The Filmon government has been able to be broad-based and to appeal to all the people of Manitoba and to make opportunity for all the people of Manitoba. We have done it, Madam Speaker, not at the expense of the public purse. We have encouraged private industry to come to Manitoba, private capital to take the risk and to create the jobs that we all need so desperately in Manitoba after their depredations at the helm of public management.

Madam Speaker, I just want to put a few more quiet remarks on the record. We went out and we consulted. Our Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) consulted with the people of Manitoba to find out where their priorities were. How did they see we should spend their money?

We have gone through a period of fiscal restraint. There is no doubt about that. I want to commend all the public servants and all the people at industry who did pull in their belts and restrain themselves and draw back from unremitting demands for ever rising increases.

But the people of Manitoba told us that they wanted us to go into the rainy day fund and they wanted us to stop the saving at this point and to target various areas of our need in the province of Manitoba. Do you know where they told us to spend? They told us to spend on health care. So what did we do? We spent on health care.

Now, is that good enough? Do the members opposite applaud that? [interjection] The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is applauding now in a deprecating fashion.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order considering that the minister has just indicated that the member for Crescentwood is applauding in a deprecating manner. I am wondering if the minister could explain two things. First of all, how can he ascertain whether or not in fact an applause is deprecating or not deprecating? But, more importantly and more to the point or order, he is attributing motive to the member for Crescentwood, which I think is unparliamentary.

**Mr. Radcliffe:** Madam Speaker, in view of the comments from the member opposite, I would be more than pleased to withdraw the comment of "deprecating" that I used in nominating the member opposite.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable member for River Heights. That deals with the point of order raised by the honourable member for Kildonan.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Radcliffe:** We have chosen priorities in this budget of health care, we have chosen education, we have chosen justice. We have chosen tax reduction so that the people of Manitoba will have the opportunity to spend their own money in their own hands rather than having it yanked out of their wallets and purses and spent in the public weal because, fundamentally, the wedge difference between us and members opposite is that we respect the man in the street and the woman in the street that they know how to look after themselves and they know their priorities and they know where they will spend their money in order to make Manitoba a better place to live, to work, to do business, and to raise a family. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I welcome the opportunity of rising to follow the comments of the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). I am tempted to respond to some of his comments, most notably

the comments about the government opposite being miracle workers in terms of what they have done to change the economy and the situation in Manitoba. I think that this is so typical of extreme views that are often bandied back and forth from other sides of the House; given that it is an adversarial system, I appreciate it.

I do not want to carry the analogy any further, but to attribute the transformation and to use the word "miracle" I think is a rather inappropriate choice of words, particularly when one must actually face the reality of what the situation is in Manitoba today.

\* (1500)

You know, Madam Speaker, the member opposite made reference to the fact of taxes. I want to just briefly list for you some of the taxes that have increased on Manitobans since this government has been in power. Of course we all know the government withdrew the \$75 property tax credit to individuals. We all know that they all stood to a person and voted for that. We all know they imposed a \$50 northern patient transportation user fee. Is that not a tax?

We all know that they abolished in 1993 the preventative portion of the Children's Dental Health Program. A Health Canada economist said that it would cost Manitobans \$12 million to replace the benefits of that program. Was that not a tax increase?

They increased the personal care home rates from a maximum of \$26 a day to \$46 a day. Those are the fees that individuals have to pay to attend nursing homes. Is that not a tax increase? They charge a deductible to ostomy equipment, up to \$300 a year. Is that not a tax on individuals who through no fault of their own require ostomy supplies that they have to pay that tax?

Madam Speaker, they cut the Pharmacare benefits so that two-thirds of Manitobans no longer qualify for Pharmacare benefits. Is that not a tax increase? They limited eye exams to every two years, at a cost of \$40 to \$55 per exam. Is that not a tax increase? In 1996, they reduced chiropractic coverage from 15 visits to

12 visits, which meant if you required additional visits you have to pay for it. In 1996, they cut the dental care fund for social assistance recipients. All of those were tax increases.

You know, Madam Speaker, the members say: what would you do? The point is members on that side of the House have attempted for the past several years to dwarf the fact and be, frankly, not telling Manitobans the facts when they conveniently forget every one of those increases that must be borne by, to quote the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), the man and woman in the street in River Heights who have to pay all of those increases on a regular basis to obtain health services, to obtain other services.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, again I would ask for a quorum count.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster has requested a quorum count. Would you ensure the doors are secure.

**Mr. Clerk:** The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer); the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings); the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae); the honourable Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh); the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the honourable government House leader (Mr. Praznik); the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns); the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck); the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura); the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe); the honourable member for Portage (Mr. Faurschou); the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed); the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson); the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen); the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak); the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Madam Speaker, 16 members present.

**Madam Speaker:** There therefore is the required quorum. The honourable member for Inkster did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Speaker, what I would like to turn to now in the few minutes that I have remaining to me is the whole issue of health care.

You know, Madam Speaker, the government has made a lot—members have written letters out in the last few months discovering that in fact they are going to do a number of things in health care, after having promised the most substantive health care changes in the history of the province in 1995. After campaigning on those pledges, the government conveniently, after the election, as predicted, turned their back on Manitobans, and have created the crisis and the situation that we are facing today in our health care system.

You know, Madam Speaker, if it was not so tragic, it would be laughable to hear the comments of the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) and various other front benchers talking about the fact that they are going to clear up the waiting lists in hospitals, by what? By building personal care home beds. My good heavens, that was the pledge in 1992 in the blue book. We are going to build more personal care homes. That was the pledge of the task force chaired by Arnold Naimark that said 1,400 personal care homes must be built in Manitoba, in Winnipeg indeed, by 1996, or else you are going to have a severe problem, that the government subsequently cancelled after the 1995 election.

Members opposite wonder why people are lying in hallways. They wonder why Manitobans say: how can we trust this administration to manage our health care system, when in fact we have, by government's own statistics, the longest waiting lists in the country for diagnostic services? The longest waiting lists in the country for diagnostic services. Reference was made to Third World conditions. I concur. In some areas of the North, they are Third World conditions.

Do you know, Madam Speaker, even when the government puts in place its new, vaunted, now-that-we-are-having-an-election discovered MRIs that they are putting in place, we will still have less MRIs per capita than most Latin American countries? What does that tell you

about the priorities of this particular government?

Does it explain something about why we have long waiting lists, why we on this side of the House had to put together a waiting list help line—a waiting list help line—to try to urge the government to recognize waiting lists two years ago, and finally after much prodding from members on this side of the House, the government has now dipped into the rainy day fund? Why is the rainy day fund being dipped into now, when they could not do it the year before or two years ago or three years ago when our crisis was acute? On Friday, the minister announced—they have discovered LPNs, Madam Speaker. The government has discovered LPNs after previous ministers said there is no future for LPNs, we are laying off LPNs, we do not need LPNs, and now days, weeks, perhaps months before an election the government discovers LPNs and trumpets it.

Well, Madam Speaker, I suspect that we are a bit cynical and we are a bit tired of these death-bed conversions, pre-election. Do you know the last time we had a program to address waiting lists? It was exactly a month before the last provincial election when the then minister, the previous, previous Minister of Health announced a program to address waiting lists. In every Estimates period, I stood up in Estimates and said you must extend the waiting list reduction program, and the minister said we are studying it, we are studying it, we are studying it. Now they are no longer studying it because there is a provincial election in the offing, and all of a sudden they have discovered that waiting lists are a problem.

You know, Madam Speaker, they can argue all they want about a balanced budget and the rainy day fund, but think about what they have been able to do in this four-year period. Let us look at what they have built in this four-year period. Let us talk about the legacy of this government in the four-year period.

First, it was the attempt at privatization of home care. The government was going to save 10 percent of the home care costs by privatizing. That was the government building and reforming our system. When they were forced to back off

that, the next great plot, the next great legacy of this government was SmartHealth. A hundred million dollars will save \$200 million. Well, Madam Speaker, we are now four and a half years into the SmartHealth contract. Have they saved any of the \$200 million? They have not saved one red cent for our expenditures. Commit \$100 million; we are going to save \$200 million. We are four and a half years into the contract, and the contract and the program is in chaos, and it is literally years behind the government projections. I remember querying the previous, previous Minister of Health and asking for definitive deadlines and definitive guidelines, and every one of those guidelines are off. So the second major legacy after the home care privatization is saving you \$200 million in costs because of SmartHealth—oh, albeit we have to pay \$100 million up front to do that; oh, we are paying that money and some day we are going to get those expenses.

What is the other legacy of this government with respect to health care, Madam Speaker? Frozen food. Is it not ironic, they could cancel hundreds of personal care home beds, they could lay off nurses, they could cancel expansions across the province, but in a matter of months they could build a frozen food stainless steel facility at \$20 million, but get this again, it is going to save us \$5 million a year.

Now, they spent \$20 million. Is this a familiar refrain? Connie Curran, they spent \$4 million. She was going to save \$65 million. On SmartHealth they spent \$100 million; they were going to save \$200 million. On frozen food they spent \$20 million. They were going to save us \$5 million a year. What do we know, Madam Speaker? We know that this year it cost them an additional \$2 million.

\* (1510)

So, Madam Speaker, all of the letters sent out by members opposite to their constituents saying all of the money that is going to go from the saved frozen food to decrease other waiting lists for health care is actually a loss. They are literally losing money on a project that was supposed to save money, that was supposed to be reinvested back to give the services we require. Is there any question or any doubt that

we are a bit skeptical? We are having a bit of a problem with believing these government pronouncements in the final, dying days of a tired administration.

Let us look at the legacy. Nurses hired? No programs to hire nurses now. Nurses to be trained? No nurses to be trained. Health care aides? We are going to do that in the future. Hospital beds? That is coming in the future. Personal care homes? That is coming in the future. First it was 18 months ago; now it is another 18 months. On Friday, we heard it is the year 2001.

But what can they do, Madam Speaker? Well, they can give us Connie Curran. They can give us SmartHealth. They can give us frozen food. [interjection]

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the consultations I have had with all members in terms of allocating times. We all can take part in this vigorous and important debate.

Let us look at the other side of the ledger. Let us look at the promises. Where are the personal care home beds that were promised? They are not there. Where is the cancer institute that was promised in '95? Had they gone through with it in '95, it would be up and functioning. Well, we are now told 2002. Where are the Health Sciences Centre renovations? Well, again we are looking several years, three, four years into the next millennium before those improvements will have taken place.

Where is Misericordia Hospital? The members opposite keep saying Misericordia Hospital, after they have closed the hospital, after the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) promised, at a public meeting that I attended, that the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) attended, that it keep the hospital open. It is gone.

**An Honourable Member:** It was a miracle.

**Mr. Chomiak:** It was a miracle, to quote the member for River Heights. He could say one thing, and then it is gone. Yet they still refer to



it as a hospital, even though they ordered the board that it would no longer be a hospital.

You know, if you look over, it is hard to believe that members opposite could trumpet their health care changes and the money they are injecting and still have the audacity to criticize members here when in fact most of the initiatives that were announced in this budget have been asked, begged, implored, by members on this side of the House year after year after year during a period, I might add, when the budget was balanced and during the period, I might add, when the rainy day fund was burgeoning.

So I ask you, Madam Speaker, to look at the reality of the situation where confidence in health care in the province of Manitoba is at its lowest ebb. How do we demonstrate it is at its lowest ebb? Well, the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) has to spend \$500,000 of taxpayers' money on advertising how good our health care system. Now is that not incongruent with the claims of members opposite?

Let us talk about it again: What are the legacies of this government? SmartHealth, Connie Curran, frozen food and health care advertising. Let us look on the other side of the ledger. Where are the home care improvements and reform? Where are the personal care home beds? Where are the nurses? Where are the nurse's aides? Oh, they are coming. They are coming. I have heard that refrain in this Chamber since 1990. As I said in Question Period today, I saw a report in July of 1993 when it was promised; I saw a report in 1992; July 1994.

How many reports did the government have to get before they actually recognized the LPNs? There were no reports they needed. What they needed was an election call pending in order to determine that there was a role and a function for LPNs. Let us be frank. I had LPNs in this building attend a public meeting that the Minister of Health—the previous one—refused to attend and said there was no future for LPNs. All of a sudden the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) discovers LPNs.

So, to be a bit skeptical, Madam Speaker, I think it would be unbelievable, it would be a

miracle, to quote the words of the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), if we actually believed the rhetoric and the announcement that we have been hearing the last few days with respect to all of these announcements to improve the system.

I go back. For members opposite to say with a straight face that taxes have not increased when they have imposed a \$50 user fee on transportation from the North, when they have cut out the children's preventative program, children's dental health, when they have increased personal care home rates 74 percent, when they are charging a user fee for ostomy equipment, when they have cut two-thirds of Manitobans from Pharmacare, when they have limited eye exams at a cost of \$40 to \$55 per exam, when they have reduced chiropractic coverage from 15 to 12 visits, when they have cut the dental care assistance program. Need I go on?

Are these not tax increases? What does the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) think that those were? Does the Minister of Health think those are increases or what? They call them coterminous or copayments and they wrap them in words.

The \$75 eliminated from property tax credits that the government cut back and took them to their coffers, it would be one thing if they had used that money to improve health care, but to build a \$20-million frozen facility, to invest \$100 million of SmartHealth to so-called savings of \$200 million, to spend on consultants, to spend \$500,000 on advertising to tell us how good our health care system is, that is where the money went. So forgive us if we are a bit skeptical in terms of the announcements and the pronouncements from this government. We heard it before. We heard it before the '95 election. We accepted the government at its word in 1995 election. We had hoped they would have delivered what they promised in 1995.

Had they delivered in 1995 what they promised, people would not be lying in the hallways. The government would not be making these deathbed conversions that we are seeing in the last few months, the last few weeks, the last

few days, the last few hours, and instead we would be dealing and building a health care system, not going back and promising funding. Frankly, most of those expenditures we agree with. Palliative care, I have called for, we have called for in this House since 1992, and they delivered a week before or several weeks before a provincial election, just like you delivered the \$600 million in capital expenditures.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, my time is limited. I would like to go on.

**An Honourable Member:** Their time is up.

**Mr. Chomiak:** In the words of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), their time is up. Their credibility is stretched. Eleven years is far too long, and the legacy of this government will be frozen food, SmartHealth and political advertising for health care. Thank you.

**Hon. Mervin Tweed (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism):** Madam Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me to rise today to put a few comments on the record in regard to the '99 budget.

I think before I go too far into the positives that I see in the budget for all Manitobans, I think that it is very important that as the members opposite have continually lamented for the last several days, although I think in the world we are always taught or brought up to come up with ideas and forward thinking and ways of creating and making things happen, it seems to me that the opposition or the members opposite are lost in that time where their only answer to anything is criticism. When the criticism does not stand up to the scrutiny, then they tend to attack the individual as we have seen several times throughout the last few days on debate.

I think it is important that when we look at the Manitoba budget, a balanced budget in every sense of the word for this '99 budget, we have to take a look at the past. I think if I remember correctly in classes when I was going to school, my history teacher constantly reminded me that if we do not look at the past and look at the history of things, then we are doomed to repeat it. I think that is very important when we look at

the state of the economy in the province of Manitoba.

\* (1520)

Eleven years ago when the government changed, the Progressive Conservatives, the Filmon government as it is often referred to in here, took over the direction and the management of the economy of the province. I just asked, and again referencing to the history side, what were we facing? What were we facing as a community, as a province, as our friends and neighbours? I would suggest we were facing a high debt load, a province that was basically spending out of control with no sign of any fiscal responsibility or any idea that eventually spending had to be brought under control. The attitude was that if we could not generate it, we would continue to spend it and tax the people, and by taxing them, put them into a position where they were basically perceived. The government of the day 11 years ago were seen to be as very unfriendly. Investment was fleeing the province. Businesses were leaving the province faster than a speeding bullet. The province itself was seeking an identity. It was an identity that myself, as a small-business person, was certainly not prepared to accept, that being a province of high taxation and unfriendly towards business.

It has been said several times, Madam Speaker, and I do like to repeat it just so I do not ever forget and that my children do not ever forget, but the opposition or the government of that day, the NDP, the opposition today, have never met a tax they did not like or did not hike. I think as long as we remember that and keep that in our mind and tell our children, because today's new voter does not remember what happened 11 years ago. The new voter today who is 18 cannot remember the peril that the members opposite put this province in and the direction that it was going at that particular time.

I think it is incumbent upon all Manitobans, particularly those with access to the young people that are going to vote for their first time, to remind them that this is the state of the economy and the shape that we were in in that particular time. In the last 11 years I think we have really identified and put forward to the

people how big a challenge that really is. I think that we only have to look, and I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) mentioned it in his comments and, again, for the historical value, I think it bears repeating, at the devastation of the two most powerful provinces in Canada with one term of bad government.

We have seen NDP governments in Ontario bring it to its knees. We see the same thing happening in British Columbia, and that is not something that we can correct overnight, Madam Speaker. That is something that takes 10-11 years to correct because of the devastation that it causes, not only to the people of the communities of the province of Manitoba or the provinces. Business leaves, investment leaves, everything leaves when they are put into a position where they are going to have to continue to pay new taxes, higher taxes, any tax that suits the government of the day.

I think the reason, Madam Speaker, that we are here today commenting on the fifth—is it the fifth balanced budget?—is the fact that what Manitobans wanted was the same thing as the government of the day wanted. We wanted to have a responsibility to our creditors but also to our families, to our friends, to our children. If we did not take that responsibility on, it was going to be a continual, spiralling deficit that we would be leaving.

Our hopes, our dreams are the same as that of the people of Manitoba. We share the same hopes: a strong province, strong communities, the knowledge that our children will have a safe, happy, and rewarding life, and the need to ensure all Manitobans are able to share in the benefit of a strong economy.

I think that is, as we get to the debate around the budget, Madam Speaker, probably one of the reasons why we are seeing such agreement on the other side over the budget. I feel confident that after reviewing it and some of the comments that they put on the record that they will all feel comfortable on the other side voting for the budget because of the responsibility that this government has shown and taken in leading this province forward and making it one of the best places, the best place, in my mind, in Canada to

live. I find it would be very hard for the opposition to vote against such a positive, positive budget.

The things that we have seen going on in the budget area and some of the things that I would like to discuss today, Madam Speaker, would relate as much to my communities as they do the province. I would like to say, since accepting the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, it has become very apparent and very clear to me that this province is definitely on a roll. Everywhere I travel inside the city, outside of the city, the province is moving forward. There is construction. There is industry moving forward. There is opportunity. There is employment. There is certainly the development and the creation of the new jobs and the new market and the new economy. One of the headlines—and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) often gives me credit, perhaps teasingly, suggesting that I have been the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism a short time, and the province has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Although I do not take credit for it, I certainly share with all Manitobans in that positive message that it sends out.

One of the articles that appeared in the Toronto Globe and Mail the day after I assumed this office, Madam Speaker, the headline in The Globe and Mail read: Need a job? Head for Manitoba. The article went on to talk about the job opportunities in the province of Manitoba, and they were not talking about the jobs that the opposition so often tend to throw out there. They were talking about high paying, high quality, high knowledge jobs, jobs that are going to lead this province into the next century and position us to be leaders in the country, not only in the country, but in the world.

The government of Manitoba certainly had its detractors. I know the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) takes his role as critic very seriously, but even he, Madam Speaker, begrudgingly admitted, and I quote him: "There has been modest economic growth and job growth."

While I think I should thank the member for this recognition, for its strong and progressive fiscal policies, I certainly take exception to the

insinuation that it is a low wage, low skill economic strategy. It is not that, it is exactly the opposite.

To confirm what I have just been saying, Madam Speaker, Nuala Beck speaking at the Manitoba and the World Millennium Conference noted that this province, the province of Manitoba has more knowledge-based jobs than almost anywhere else in the world. Just under 40 percent of our workforce is employed in high-knowledge jobs, which ranks Manitoba ahead of countries such as Japan, the United States and Germany. This is her comment, not mine: "You are doing something awfully right. This province ranks second in the world only to the Netherlands."

When you take Manitoba out of Canada and compare it to the rest of the world, it is ranked second. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, this government will not sit and accept No. 2. We will continue to strive and work harder to make it No. 1 in the world.

We certainly had some positive indications, Madam Speaker, in the last few months in regard to these high-knowledge jobs that Ms. Beck was speaking about. I would like to tell the House about a few of them, if I may. In January, Cangene Corporation announced a \$15 million health biotechnology research and development centre, approximately six health technology jobs to be created. It is a 35,000 square foot facility.

In February, a company out of Pierson, Manitoba, Inmetal North America Ltd. announced a \$2.6-million precision metal casting facility in Pierson. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, 10 years ago, 12 years ago, with the situation and the atmosphere in the province of Manitoba, with the direction that the then government of the day was going, this would never have happened. So I congratulate the community of Pierson, and again this is one of the many examples out there that are going on in Manitoba right now.

In March, Monsanto Canada announced a new \$10-million crop development centre, creating 30 new technology jobs. World class crop development, and who is going to benefit from it first and foremost, the people in the

province of Manitoba. It brings high-tech employment, investment and important research to our agricultural sector.

\* (1530)

Madam Speaker, these are just a few examples of the employment opportunities that now exist for Manitobans, and I suggest would not have existed 12 years ago and would not have existed today had there not been the change that was made approximately 11 years ago.

Some of the things that I see happening, Madam Speaker, and positive things in the communities that I represent, as many know, the boundaries have changed and the new constituency of Turtle Mountain, which I am looking forward to representing and serving the people, but in the communities of the old Turtle Mountain constituency, communities such as Boissevain, Killarney, the R.M. of Morton, the town of Souris, the R.M. of Turtle Mountain, all received natural gas in the last four and a half years. I can tell you, that has put the people of those communities in a position to take advantage of all the economic activities that are coming our way in this province. I look forward to future expansion into more of the communities that I represent and will represent under the new boundaries.

In health care, we have seen a \$2.2-million expansion and upgrading of the Souris Personal Care Home. Again, the RHAs identified through a needs assessment what the communities wanted and needed and are creating the facilities that are relevant. We are seeing some upgrading of the Killarney hospital for the doctors' facilities. Again, the thinking was the better facility and service you can provide, not only for your people who are using it, the clients, the people of Manitoba, but also for the people who work in that environment—by creating that better environment, we are hoping that it will ensure longer-term stays by the doctors and also a more satisfied workforce.

In education, Turtle Mountain School Division is buying 52 new top-of-the-line computers for our students, again bringing them up to speed and bringing them up to world competitiveness that they are going to have to be

in when they graduate from high school and go on to university.

*Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

We have additional space being added to our Wawanesa School for the music room, something that they have wanted for a long time. They have a wonderful program. Killarney is adding three new rooms to their school because of growth in the community and because of the necessity because of the new jobs.

We have seen the construction of five new grain terminals in the constituency of Turtle Mountain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last four and a half years, and in talking to those facilities, they have future plans. They have future plans to develop feed centres and chemical centres and fertilizer centres, which add jobs, add families, add to our tax base, add to the stability of our rural communities, and, therefore, creates the opportunities and needs for a better health care system, a better education system, a better social service network.

We have seen some increases in funding to the regional health authorities. I think that as much as the opposition continue to complain and berate the functions and operations of the RHAs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on the record that I think they are doing a very good job. They are communicating and trying and working within communities. I think it is very important that we continue to encourage them, and we will see things doing better and well in our rural communities.

Some of the things that I would like to discuss in regard to the budget itself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had a 3 percent reduction in Manitoba's personal income tax rate, and that saves Manitobans \$112 million. I ask anyone in Manitoba: who cannot stand to have a little bit more change in their pocket? I have heard the members opposite refer to it as a cup-of-coffee budget. Well, I guess I am a believer that any amount that you can save or offer to people and if it is doing the right thing for the right reasons, then that is the direction we should go. I certainly am not ashamed to stand and support that type of budget.

A 4 percent reduction in the small business income tax: I met with the CFIB prior to the budget, and that was the one thing that they stressed. They did not ask for it overnight. They did not say do it today, do it tomorrow. They said show us the commitment that you are headed there, and then we can build our plans and prepare our budgets based on that information. I think we have certainly satisfied some of the requests and some of the needs that they saw that will benefit their small businesses.

We have seen the extension of the manufacturing investment tax credit to the year 2003. When you look at the investment that is going on in Manitoba right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is just phenomenal, the amount of investment that we are seeing. Although I cannot find my exact numbers in front of me, I can tell you that we are one of the leaders in the investment side in the province.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I do know we are on a bit of a time line here and everyone would like to have the opportunity, part of my new portfolio is the Department of Tourism, and I would like to in all sincerity invite all members of the House to take part in the Pan Am Games, coming to Manitoba this year. It will feature 5,000 athletes from 42 countries. It is the third largest multisport event ever held in North America, and I would invite all to participate in whatever way and encourage their communities. I often think, very seldom do we get an opportunity to portray and display our communities and our province to the world. What better way than through this type of an event. I would encourage all to attend.

On that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to suggest that the Tourism department is certainly responsible for creating approximately 50,000 jobs in the province of Manitoba. It is a wonderful area of growth, and we continue to see it enlarged.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the House for the opportunity to put a few comments on. I will certainly be supporting the 1999 Manitoba budget, and I would ask all members to give consideration to doing the same. Thank you.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Budget Address, which, of course, is an opportunity to reflect on economic policies in this province. I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate following the comments of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed) because I think his comments, in a way, are indicative of how much out of touch this government is. Because of this kind of boosterish puffery that we hear about how the minister travels around Manitoba and things are going so well, I would invite him to come to northern Manitoba, for example, where I can tell you right now that my community is hurting because of the current situations in the nickel market. I will take him to communities with 70, 80 and 90 percent unemployment.

I will take him in areas of the city, the inner city of this province, where we see destruction of neighbourhoods unprecedented in the history of this province. That, indeed, is one of the problems. We see after 11 years that, while some people in this province may be doing better, significantly better as a result of Conservative government, many people are not sharing in any of the supposed good-time, good-feeling benefits that we hear in rhetoric from members opposite. I think any realistic assessment would point both to the strengths and the weaknesses of the Manitoba economy.

You know, I say to members opposite, one of the surest signs of a government that has run its course is when it is unable or unwilling, as be the case, to recognize some of the real challenges facing Manitoba. What I want to do is put in context today some of the main challenges that we see ahead as we go into not only a new decade but a new century. I would say we have to start from the recognition, I believe, of some of the significant changes that we have seen as indicated by this budget in the government's own attitudes, its own responses to the public of Manitoba.

Now I want to put this in perspective, because there are a number of myths that the Conservatives like to buy into and a number of underlying assumptions that have followed this government in its budgetary policies for the last number of years. I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are assumptions and deliberate

policies that often are not stated but are very clear.

\* (1540)

I want to begin, by the way, by sort of putting a quick summary on what this government has done for the last 11 years. Essentially, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you were a householder, if you wanted to follow fiscal policies of the Conservative government, what you would do is you would sell your house and you would go buy 6/49 tickets. This is a government that has, by and large, been able to sustain a so-called surplus the last number of years by doing what? By selling MTS. In fact, it is astounding in a way the degree to which they have flushed through the revenue from the sale of MTS. I note that, if one looks at the documentation of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, last year they withdrew \$222.4 million from the fund. This year they are projecting withdrawing another \$184.7 million.

Now, what does that mean? What it means is this minister has violated what we have been told was sacrosanct by the previous Minister of Finance. Ever since the government introduced the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, back in 1989, something by the way that we supported, introduced by Clayton Manness at the time, we were told that the 5 percent figure was sacrosanct. Well, it seems that the government managed to find some fudge room this year going into an election.

What they have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is if you look at the last number of years in terms of the—and I invite members to look at their own budget document pages 24 and 25. They will see that if it was not for the sale of MTS, they would be in a deficit position, the sale of MTS, the flushing of the money into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and then the flushing of the money into government expenditures.

By the way, I point out that when we had debate on the balanced budget bill, we brought in an amendment that would have prevented that from happening. The government opposed it. Now I think we know why. I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should be the first thing that people should realize. This is where they

have gotten a significant amount of their resources to balance the budget.

Now, what is the other main part of the great policies of this government and fiscal policies? It is lotteries. This is a government that came into office and took in—in 1989, how much do you think this government took in the way in terms of lotteries? I will give you the current figure just so you can get an educated guess. It is \$220 million. Do you think it was 200, 150, 100? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Conservative government in 1989 took in \$30 million, so a significant part of what we are seeing now as supposed fiscal management has got nothing to do with fiscal management at all. It has got to do with the dramatic expansion of VLTs in this province, dramatic expansion of VLT revenue and casino revenue, nothing to do with fiscal management whatsoever.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you want to compare again 1989 through 1999, you will see the other source that we have seen in place. This is a government that talks about taxes, but the growth of revenue in this province, I believe, has been over a billion dollars in terms of own-source revenue—a billion dollars. Taxes have not gone down, they have gone up because of bracket creep, in particular, because of the increase in the basic sales tax; in 1993, other changes such as a reduction of the property tax credit, which reduced it by \$75. Some households were faced with a \$250-a-year minimum property tax charge. So the bottom line, the other thing this government has done is benefited from increased revenues. I believe the Fraser Institute, not an institute that I often quote in this House, has pointed to that. That has been the real source of these so-called balanced budgets, it has been growth and revenue.

I find it interesting that when you look at the underlying dynamics of this government, you essentially see a situation where in 1989—I want to put this clear on the record because it amazes me how people on the other side buy into their own mythology. You know, when they came to government, the changeover in government in 1988-89, the NDP government left this government in the position of having a surplus of \$56 million. In fact, well, the member for

Gimli (Mr. Helwer) laughs, but what he does not do is he does not check—

**An Honourable Member:** The 1988 budget.

**Mr. Ashton:** You see once again how they buy into their own mythology. Now, as the minister would know across the way, what is important whether you are in government or you are in business or your own personal finances, it is not what you say you think is going to happen at the beginning, not the budget, it is the actuals. The actual in '88-89 was a \$56-million surplus.

The reason was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I put this on the record many a time, because of some of the policy changes of the government and also additional revenue. Nickel taxes, by the way, and royalties brought in over \$100 million, nothing to do with—[interjection] Well, you see, the minister across the way says: who believes me? The Provincial Auditor believes me. You know, I often talk in this House about sort of the big lie tactic. We all know about the big lie tactic. The mentality here is, well, if nobody believes you, it does not matter. Do not bother me with the facts. I say to the minister, read the Provincial Auditor's reports. A \$56-million surplus was left.

But, you know, let us read through the budget documents. If he does not believe the Provincial Auditor, let us look at this document, and I say—[interjection] Well, you know, once again he does not get it, he does not get it, that the bottom line was, the actual, end of the year, the actual was \$56 million, and he knows that. [interjection] To the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) here, the actual budget situation, the actual, not the projected budget, was a \$56-million surplus.

What I like about reading the budget document is that this sort of big lie tactic that members opposite get into is even projected further. Now, what did this government do after they had this surplus in '88-89? Well, they transferred the money into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and you can see as you run through this, by the way—because members opposite obviously have a really difficult time reading the books some time. I noticed one member across the way was decrying the fact

that the government was borrowing \$2 billion in 1988.

Well, it is doing the same thing today, refinancing the existing debt. You know, my mortgage comes up every year or two. You go and you refinance. This government does it; previous governments did it; future governments will do it. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a government that at times has great difficulty in understanding basic fiscal concepts.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would also recall that in refinancing their debt, transferring it back into North American currency, the interest rate worked out to about 28 percent for a \$6-billion budget. That is how stupid they were.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order, and let me bring to the attention of all members that a point of order is when we are sort of leaning away from the rules, not just to get up and make a point.

The honourable member for Thompson, to continue.

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**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again this government will do anything possible not to get into discussion of the actual situation with Manitoba's finances, and, as I was pointing out to this minister—there is a line here, by the way, on pages 24 and 25, Financial Review and Statistics. Now, what happened after they had this surplus? Let us run through it because there is a line here, it is actually not identified. In the 10-year summary, there is one line that is not identified. We have revenue; we have expenditures. This is the only line that is not identified, and you know why? It is because it is the deficit or surplus figure.

So what happened in '90-91 is there was an actual deficit of \$358.9 million. These, by the way—this is the Conservatives. You listen to their mythology, that somehow they came into

office and had balanced budgets. What did they do in '91-92, \$304.3 million. What did they do in '92-93, \$766 million. That is the highest deficit in Manitoba history—not the New Democrats, not the Liberals in the '50s, not anybody other than the Tories.

It does not get identified in here because what they do then, if you read the books again, if you read through it, you get these deficit reduction transfers. What did they do? When they had a surplus, they put the money—[interjection]

I see the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mrs. McIntosh) is singing into her desk here. I do not know if she is cleaning out her desk in anticipation of an election tomorrow, but, obviously, if she is singing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the swan song for this Conservative government in its dying days. [interjection]

\* (1550)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if she wants to stand up and sing the swan song of the Conservative Party, I am quite prepared to cede the floor, and I know we have members who use their time to sing in this Chamber on their feet, and I respect that, but opening your desk, I do not know. I think the minister is suffering from some stress disorder or something. That is okay. A good election campaign will fix that. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask if you would call the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mrs. McIntosh) to order. I do not mind be heckled, but having somebody singing when you are talking about deficits here, I think, is more than going beyond a normal commonness. But that is okay if the minister feels that is appropriate as a minister of the Crown to do that-

**An Honourable Member:** They are singing the blues.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, they are singing the blues right now, I can tell you. I get the feeling tomorrow the campaign clothes are not going to come out. I think the chicken suit is going to come out.



I say to members opposite, part of the problem here with this government is its lack of credibility, \$766 million. Do you know what their deficit in '93-94 was? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$460.5 million, actual, \$196. It was not until '95-96 that they posted a nominal surplus. Do you know how they did that? They transferred \$145 million in from the deficit reduction transfer. In other words, '95-96 was not a surplus. It was not a balanced budget. Oh, wait a sec. You know, in '95 they came up with the balanced budget legislation.

**An Honourable Member:** Indeed, we did.

**Mr. Ashton:** Indeed, they did, says the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns). I say to members opposite that it was not until—even in that year you were you able to post a nominal surplus, but if you look at what has happened since then, what the government has done to maintain its supposed surplus position, it had to do a number of things. The first thing it did is that it froze the personal care home construction, the capital construction that it promised in '95. It was no accident. It was a direct result of their decision to bring in this legislation, legislation they could not even live up to in the first year without dipping into their surplus funds. The second thing they had to do is to sell off MTS. They could not maintain their fiscal position based on their existing revenue without the sale of a capital asset. What was that? That was the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System, something we predicted in this House.

You know, it is interesting, if you look at it, there is a direct correlation here between what they decide is their fiscal course and their inability within existing revenues to achieve that. That is why we ended up with health care in the situation it is in Manitoba today, a conscious decision by this government not to live up to its pre-election promises, a conscious decision based on the reality of the fiscal situation, and I would suggest not a small element of right-wing ideology. Now I want to comment here. There is a degree of irony as we sit here today debating a budget that has significant increases in health care spending. Now, I pointed to some of the difficulty the Conservative government got itself into in the '95-96 fiscal year.

But what is interesting is it was not that long ago—and I look to the Bermuda Triangle of health care ministers all seated in a triangle over there. It is very similar to the Bermuda Triangle because people who go in the Health portfolio on that side seem to disappear very shortly afterwards and resurface in some other capacity. Health has a way of doing that. We have been through, I think this is our fourth Health care minister now since 1993. You know, I look to members opposite because there was no small degree of ideology in their approach, and I remember the days when certain lobby groups were lobbying for reduced government expenditures, and one of the areas they pointed to was health care.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our view on this side with health care is a lot clearer because, as the party that fought for and established medicare in Saskatchewan and fought for and established it nationally, I say to members opposite that we understood from the beginning that one of the key elements of health care, universal health care, is the fact that it is an insurance. It is universal insurance. To a certain extent, when it comes to health care, you get what you pay for. Insurance, you want a certain level of coverage, you pay for it. If you want reduced coverage, you may be able to pay less, but you know if you go the other way and decide you are just going to reduce the premiums, immediately you get reduced coverage. But members opposite did not understand that. They believed that there was a significant amount of waste in the system. They brought in Connie Curran. A complete fiasco. Recommended suggesting—

**An Honourable Member:** Nobody is making any noise.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, to the Minister responsible for MPIC, I am hoping the people will listen, because you know they had this ideological approach that they could save money that way.

Who could forget the fiasco of home care? They wanted to privatize it because they believed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they could save money.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment):** I do not know if there are rules

about this. Perhaps you could let us know, but I do not believe it is necessary to scream when everybody is being quiet in the House and listening. It is very hard on the ear drums when someone is bellowing at the top of their lungs. I do not know if there are any rules about excessive noise from members who are on the floor having been recognized. If there is, could you ask the member to be more quiet, please, in his demeanour?

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

The honourable member for Thompson, to continue.

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**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take no lessons on anything in this House from the minister, who was singing into her desk only a couple of minutes ago.

I say to the minister opposite, she may not like to hear this but this is the reality, that their whole policy on health care has failed. It has failed miserably because it was driven by the myth that somehow they could save money on health care without affecting patient care. They are proven by their own budget, going into this election, that they are dead wrong. You know, it is interesting they ran a poll, paid for at public expense. What did that poll show? What is the No.1 issue in Manitoba? Health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Everybody in this province knows the direct result of their cuts in the health care system is, what? It is people lined up in hallways. It is people in my own constituency who wait a week to get into a hospital. It is people who cannot find a family doctor. It is chaos in the health care system. You know, even they have understood that. They are so desperate to deal with the reality of health care, they have not only brought in this budget, they have paid \$500,000 of the taxpayers money to say, well, you know, health care, there are problems, there are challenges, but we are working on it. You know, after 11 years, they are working on it. They are working on what? They are working on the problems that they created by their own ideologically driven desire

to save money in health care with the false assumption they could do so in a way that would not affect the quality of patient care.

I mean everybody in this province knows that to be the case. Even members opposite now, they are born-again defenders of the health care system. Well, at least that is what they would have you believe. What I want to map out here is as we mark the complete and absolute failure of their health care policy as shown by the fact that now, going into an election after cutting desperately, they are in a position where they are pumping money in. I want to say though that there is a pattern here. You know, this is an historic pattern in this province. Conservatives, before elections, promise to provide the funds to provide the level of services that people want. After elections, they do the complete opposite.

By the way, it is not just the Filmon government. We often talk about the Lyon government. That is the one with the L-Y-O-N, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for Hansard. Some people misunderstand when we say Lyon Filmon—something to do with the Monnin report, but, you know, I am talking about the Lyon government. The reality is, in 1977 when they were elected, after they got elected, they hacked and they slashed this province in a way that had never been seen before. We saw 20 percent tuition fee hikes in one year. We saw major cuts to our hospitals. We saw major cuts to post-secondary education and the public education system. You know what happened in 1981—this often gets missed, but you know what Sterling Lyon did? He became a born-again spender. There were increases promised of 15 and 16 percent, but the die was cast. People understood not to trust the Conservative government.

\* (1600)

I say that one of the reasons that Lyon government was one of the only one-term governments, I think, in the history of Manitoba—I stand to be corrected on this, certainly one of the only—it was because people did not believe the reincarnation of the Sterling Lyon Tories as somehow being concerned about health care and education.

Well, I say to the people of Manitoba, the same thing happened in 1995. They went in, they promised more money for health care. I remember the Premier (Mr. Filmon) even apologized, a first in his series of apologies. He has become a serial apologizer in this province. It was in the debate where he apologized for Connie Curran. A lot of us did not quite believe the sincerity of the apology, but of course he was apologizing because it was a fiasco.

You know, they promised even in the election, you remember the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) walking around. I like the two campaign ads they ran because I like to remind people of this. One of the campaign ads was walking around and saying, well, remember your positive experiences on health care. Trust us on health care. That was a good one. The other one was the Premier in the jail slamming the jail cell doors. Now, I do not think they are going to run that again this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because given the number of Conservatives that may be up on charges in light of the Monnin report, I suspect that people might see the Premier in jail and assume that he has been put in jail as a result of that. I know they do not want any association with jail bars after their ads in '95.

You know, they promised. They said health care was a big issue. I say to members opposite you are trying to do it again. You are trying to fool the people of this province again. I look at this budget. I mean, cautious fiscal management? You are throwing money to the wind, certainly the promises, very much like '95. Some fiscal management, some fiscal conservatism here. Well, they do not defend it on that basis.

I am going to miss the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey). I already miss him actually. It is almost like he is fading away because he has always been up front in terms of his politics. Somehow I think even he knows, as the co-chair of the campaign, that there is a big credibility gap for this government when it comes to being protectors of medicare.

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) is starting the same thing. I think Paul Edwards did that last time, pointing around

saying to I think it was the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), you are gone, he said. Once again another sign of arrogance 11 years into this. You are into a pretty tough election fight, and you know that. I would not be pointing fingers at anybody on this side suggesting we will be gone. I would just be a little bit careful about your own seat. Believe me, a little bit of humility politically is good, especially after 11 years.

I say to members opposite no one believes you on health care. Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mrs. McIntosh) I do not believe expects to fool anyone in her constituency. Does anybody in her constituency believe that the Conservative party defends health care? I mean, after you cut, after you promised the capital and you did not deliver it, how many more times do you think you can go to people and expect them to believe you? You can fool some of the people some of the time, you can fool even all of the people some of the time, but in the case of this government, you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

I say to the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mrs. McIntosh) I regret the fact she has not had more time to speak in this debate. She did speak, and I missed her speech and I apologize, but obviously she has been denied that opportunity. I wish she would stand up and defend the government's record on health care because it is abysmal, it is absolutely abysmal.

I say again, when you look at the fiscal balance in terms of what is happening, this government now is embarking on what it did in 1994,1995 with one major change. By the way, I will say this on the record, I do not believe the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) would have brought in this budget. I do not believe he could have stood up with a straight face and announced bringing the Fiscal Stabilization Fund below what we were told was a sacrosanct figure, its target figure. He would not have done that. The Minister of Health is an accountant by profession. I know he believes in some level of credibility of the books.

Do you know what is interesting is the fact that they brought in the new Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), and there have been a couple of major changes already? The Fiscal Stabilization Fund now is no longer sacrosanct, but also, if you look at the numbers in this document, you will see very questionable projections. Well, I have read them carefully, and it is interesting, because I want you to compare some of their projections. They are projecting growth rates and own-source revenues of 6.2 percent–6.2 percent. But what is interesting is, I want to check their growth projections. In fact I asked a question to the minister in the House based on them. They are projecting in this document some rather interesting growth numbers. They are projecting I believe 2.4 percent growth this year. A range of forecasts that I reviewed show between about 1.9 and 2.7. So they picked the upper end of that conveniently. But if you go ahead to the next year, what they have done is they have bumped those numbers up. Read this document, you will see, they are actually projecting a higher degree of both nominal and real growth than is indicated in any other forecast, most forecasters showing declining growth in Manitoba, not increased growth.

So I want to go a bit further because they have evidence in their own document on this. I would point members of this House to the budget document. It is quite interesting, because there are certainly signs of some of the difficulties that were faced, the mineral production being down, for example. But check the figures on investment, check the figures on private investment. The intentions for '99 are below the actuals for '98, the preliminary actuals. There is a projected decline in investment, and it is particularly significant on the manufacturing investment.

Now, when you have a decline in investment, any economist will tell you that you will eventually in short order have a decline in growth. It is one of the lead indicators of the economy. So what they are doing is, they are projecting great growth and revenue when the numbers for investment and the numbers for economic growth, whether it be any of the forecasters, the banks, the conference board, project a slowdown next year.

Well, let us go one step further, because what is interesting is they have fudged their numbers on the upward sign, particularly in the fiscal year 2000-2001. Now, why would that be the case? Well, the problem is the one-time CHST supplement from the federal government as indicated by the budget document. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) knows this. It is a one-time draw they are taking this fiscal year. A \$21-million surplus and they are withdrawing more than a hundred million dollars, \$115 million in this year alone. Does that not tell you there is a problem?

But, you know, next year, there is nothing to draw on. They drained the Fiscal Stabilization Fund down to \$235 million. There is no CHST next year. So what they are doing is, to make up for the year 2000 and 2001 where their revenues, the projections are clearly on the decline and where there is difficulty in having those one-time draws, I say to members opposite, what your Finance minister has done is pumped up the growth numbers in a way that is not defensible by the underlying numbers in this document.

Just imagine this, this government going into an election. Why would they do that? Does it not strike you as being a pre-election ploy? If they were really to look at the underlying growth, I mean, for the last 10 years they have underestimated revenues, now going into this election, this pre-election budget, they have overestimated. Is that not coincidental?

I say to members opposite that I really question the sincerity of this government's figures. I will say on the record that I do not believe some of the numbers in this document, specifically the projections for the years 2000 and 2001. I suspect that we are going to be in a situation where the next government, whoever it might be, you know, I am obviously hoping for an election fairly soon and looking for a change in government, but whether it is this government or another government, I hope this government has not deliberately left the cupboards bare. I hope this government has not deliberately fudged the numbers. I say on the record: we are in a position where we have not had the opportunity to fully scrutinize the books of this province. This government hides away from

public scrutiny in Public Accounts and does not want to hear about the Provincial Auditor.

\* (1610)

The bottom line is, this Minister of Finance, I believe, was brought in to do a job. He was brought in to inflate the numbers and bring in a budget that we question whether it is sustainable or not.

I say, Madam Speaker, this is important because we are in a situation in this province where, within a matter of days or weeks or months, we see an election. We see the very real prospect of a campaign in which, certainly there are two parties—and I am never arrogant to the point of assuming the people will not look at all the alternatives. I do not think the Liberals will certainly be seen as credibly running for government, but obviously while they are a party, they are not official in the House, but they do field candidates. I do not mean to say this disrespectfully, but I think a lot of people will be looking at the situation they are in. That is why when it comes to this budget, in particular, it puts all of us in a very interesting situation.

As I said, I have expressed clear reservations about the underlying fiscal framework in this budget. You know, ask anybody who is an economist, and I know from my own experience the first thing I learned in economics was question the assumptions. I question those assumptions. But you know what is interesting is this budget does include a significant amount of what we have talked about and called for in health care. It should have been done, I believe, earlier. I believe it would have saved them money, saved them the embarrassment, the terrible human injustice of the hallway medicine we have seen, but they miscalculated. They caught themselves in their political bind. They got caught up in their political ideology. I recognize in this budget a belated attempt on behalf of the government to say we blew it.

I mean, how else can you read this dramatic increase and expenditure on health care? How else can you listen to their comments when they recognize the problems with the hallway medicine and the other structural problems in our health care system? I am still not sure, by

the way, that they have the right answers. I see some of the announcements, they seem to be more aimed at the kind of publicity they can get rather than the health care policy improvements. I say to members opposite that is why it places us in a very interesting debate in this House.

In looking at the Liberal motion which we are debating currently, I was stunned to see that the Liberals—the Liberal, pardon me, I do not speak for the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski)—did not even mention health care in their amendment. They did not—[interjection] Well, I say to the members opposite, I would like to know where the Liberals stand on what is happening in health care. Because I will be the first one to say, as much as I am disappointed with some of the things that are not there, I mean, we almost wonder if they have not taken some of our policy documents and xeroxed them, because finally the things we have been talking about for years, the things that they opposed are now being implemented. So we have these born-again protectors of the health care system on the Conservative side. I say to members opposite, good luck to you if you think you can fool people again this time. I say good luck to you. You are going to need it, especially on health care.

As I look ahead to the next election, there are going to be some choices I believe that the people of Manitoba are going to be faced with. I believe we can do better in this province. I believe that some have benefited, certainly some of the wealthier people have benefited, but I do not believe the government has understood that after 11 years it needs to be concerned about all Manitobans. I look on the tax side, for example, their emphasis on income tax alone—and certainly income tax earners in this province are faced with additional burdens, especially because of bracket creep—but I notice they have not even included, they have not touched property tax. It is doubled. The property taxes in this province have doubled in the time this government has been in power. In their prebudget consultations, they did not even ask people about property tax.

I say to the government opposite they should go back on what they did in '92-'93 in which they did a very regressive thing by removing some of

the property tax credits and particularly imposing the \$250 a year minimum tax on very many low-income earners. That is the kind of thing they should have been looking at this time around. It is a balanced approach to tax relief, as well as the kind of resources that we have been calling for in terms of health care.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that the challenges for governments ahead are going to be significant. I have put on the record our concerns about the underlying projections. I think anybody in this province who talks to young people in particular will recognize the challenge we face in keeping people in this province. I talked to a woman a few days ago, 31 years old. There were only two people in her graduating class who are left in this province. Everybody else has left the province. This was in commerce. Thirty-one years old.

You know, it is going to be interesting because, as we go into this election, that is, I think, going to be one of the key battlegrounds. The last election, the Conservative appeal to young people in this province was primarily the Jets. Who can forget the Save the Jets propaganda? Remember the Premier was out of the loop. He did not know until a few days after the election there was really no hope of saving the Jets. They cannot run on that this time. They cannot run on the cynicism of raising the minimum wage a few months before the election. They cannot run on their record on education in this province, because they have been raising tuition fees and limiting opportunities, and all the promises in the world will not work with young people.

Believe you me, the Gen-Xers out there, one thing they understand is that they have this barrier they can put up. It is called a healthy level of cynicism. They do not believe this government anymore. I do not know what they are going to try and pull the wool over young people today, but I say in the next election, which could be as soon as tomorrow—if they are a little bit worried, it may be next week. I am predicting today that the chicken suit will be out tomorrow. We will even go out to Mallabar and rent one for the Premier. But, if they are so confident, so smug and so arrogant as they are in the House, why not have an election and base it

on the fundamental fact that we need challenges for young people in this province and that we need opportunities?

This government, after 11 years, has run out of steam. It is time for a change. It is time for a change in government. It is time for an election where we can elect a New Democratic Party government with a vision for the next decade that will seek to develop economic prosperity for all Manitobans and not the privileged few like this government.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** It is a privilege for me to be able to address the budget and to be able to add my own perspective and words to the debate that has taken place. I thank all honourable members who have contributed thus far to the discussion. Regardless of whether or not I agree with some of the presentations, I think that this is our democratic right and opportunity to be able to put forth our differing perspectives on the key issues that face us in this Legislature as members representing over a million people in the province.

I remember one of the former senior staffers that I dealt with early on in our term of government saying that every dollar spent by a government was a policy decision made. I believe that there is nothing truer than that when it comes to evaluating what is the most important policy document that government brings forward each and every year. It is not the throne speech. It is not the various different bills. It is the budget document. This year is no exception, Madam Speaker.

I want to begin by saying congratulations to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), to the Treasury Board, and to all members on this side of the House who contributed towards the development of what I believe is a wonderful planning document to lead Manitobans into the next millennium, a document that sets out clearly our priorities, that is not only balanced in terms of the bottom line, but balanced in terms of where it places the major emphasis and the major priorities of this government for the future of our province. It does so many things that will be of long-term, lasting benefit to the people of this province that I think it bears repeating so many of the wonderful elements of the budget

and how they will positively impact the lives of individuals throughout the next year but, I believe, for years and maybe even decades to come.

Madam Speaker, it also very, very clearly delineates the difference between us and the members opposite in terms of approach to government. I always have to harken back sometimes just to refresh my disgust of the members opposite and their actions in government but certainly to refresh my memory of just how bad they were when they were in government. I think it is useful to everyone to be able to from time to time just remember how bad things were under the New Democratic government of the Pawley-Doer era back in the '80s.

In those days, of course, you have to remember that they were desperately trying to show some semblance of economic activity, some sense that they could create jobs for some people in society. So they were in the process of spending a couple of hundred to \$300 million on the Jobs Fund, which did nothing, nothing but create short-term, make-work jobs. Then they advanced two years ahead of when they had a market to sell the energy the construction of Limestone so that Manitoba Hydro had to pay two years of interest on a \$1.8-billion investment without having any income to offset that interest. They did that only, only to be able to create a few jobs in northern Manitoba so that they could save the seat for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and a couple of his colleagues.

\* (1620)

Those are the kinds of things that under any normal scrutiny would be rejected out of hand as being just bad economic decision making. That is the kind of thing that they were so desperate to do that they had to do in order to try and create some economic activity in this province. It had to be all government driven, because certainly we know that investors were not coming here, people were not creating jobs in the economy from the private sector. It was whatever the government could do, and they did it all on a mountain of debt that they left for future generations to have to deal with.

There is a mythology that, of course, continues on the New Democratic side. Of course, they wonder why people opposite do not believe them when they keep trying to say that they really were good managers, that they in fact left us in good circumstances when they left government. They even have people—I think I saw Howard Pawley's son write to the local newspaper in Selkirk and to the Free Press trying to say that they had left us with a \$59-million surplus.

Well, the member for Thompson apparently tries to sell that baloney even in this House. Here is the actual budget that they were defeated on. I just ask you really, just think about it sensibly. Would Jim Walding have voted against a surplus budget? Of course not. Of course not. What he was sick and tired of was year after year of half-billion-dollar deficits. Then when he got up to vote on a budget, it was this budget. Here is the 1988 Manitoba Budget Address with the smiling face of Eugene Kostyra on it.

Okay. So this is the real thing. This is not the mythology that is in the mind of the member for Thompson. Here it is. Here is the deficit: net budgetary requirement. That means deficit. That is the New Democrats. By that time, they were so concerned with all the criticism, they could not even bring themselves to refer to it as a deficit. They called it net budgetary requirement, which meant the money you had to borrow to meet their needs in spending.

Madam Speaker, \$334-million deficit, that is what Eugene Kostyra brought in. That is what Jim Walding voted against. That is what kicked these people out of office. To hear the kind of mythology that is brought forward by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and before he leaves, I will just tell him that they were not in office then to govern the province for the next year.

When we came into office, we brought in a new budget, and that budget called for a deficit, at that time, of about \$150 million. As we adjusted some things and changed some expenditures and changed some revenues, Madam Speaker, a \$150-million deficit was budgeted for. Then we got a one-time adjustment from Ottawa of \$200 million of additional

funding that had not been planned for, that had not been budgeted, and it was going to provide for a \$59-million surplus. We said in this House that that is one time. It will not be repeated, and it cannot be built into your base requirements for future budgeting. So we are going to set it aside in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. That was the beginning, that was the birth of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which, I might say, was supported and voted for by some of the members opposite, who may still be around in this legislation, because it was the only sensible thing to do.

Were they responsible for a \$59-million surplus? Absolutely not. They were never in the chair of government during the period of that fiscal year, Madam Speaker. We were, firstly, in the election campaign for the first three and a half weeks of that fiscal year, and then they were out. So, as everybody knows, cabinet does not operate during that period of time; they were all out campaigning. It is all done by the bureaucracy. They can take zero credit for anything that happened in that three and a half weeks of the fiscal year.

After that, it was the responsibility of this administration, and, if any credit is to be given for a surplus budget, we will take the credit. But the fact of the matter is that nothing can be credited to the New Democratic Party. Nothing can be credited to the New Democratic Party because that is the reality of the situation, but they still, 11 years later, try and sell that baloney to the public that somehow, some way they left us with a surplus.

Absolutely false, Madam Speaker, and this is it right here. This is it in writing. In black and writing, as Slaw Rebchuk used to say. This is it right here. They did not leave that for us, and the public knows it. The public knows that their legacy was half-billion-dollar annual deficits on a routine basis, and it was a huge achievement, in their mind, to get down to a \$334-million deficit, which is what they were projecting for the 1988-89 fiscal year.

That is all we got from the New Democrats, despite that massive, massive load of deficit financing that we went through during the '80s, under the Pawley-Doer administration, despite

the fact that they raised taxes at every possible turn. The sales tax went up from 5 percent to 6 percent to 7 percent. The payroll tax, which had never existed, was introduced at 1.5 percent and then increased to 2.5 percent and resulted in a couple of hundred million of additional revenue that had never heretofore been received by any previous government in the province of Manitoba, and they continued to slap on the taxes. The highest corporate capital taxes in Canada. The highest corporation income taxes in Canada. The second highest personal income taxes in Canada, on and on and on.

**An Honourable Member:** They were going to tax the air. Remember the airlines.

**Mr. Filmon:** Oh, they were going to tax—the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) reminds me that they were going to tax the airlines as they flew over our air space, Madam Speaker. Unbelievable.

Then, of course, they sold the buildings of government. They sold the buildings of government into a tax shelter, which a number of their members took advantage of, and then they did not even own this Legislature and other public buildings, the University of Manitoba and so on, so that they could create another tax dodge and avoid paying some taxes to the federal government and give them another advantage to try and hide the way in which they were really spending our money. It is unbelievable, Madam Speaker.

You know what is really interesting is that it is very, very parallel and similar to what they are doing in British Columbia today. All of their refugees, all of their philosophical refugees like Gunton, the Tom Gunton who is now the key deputy minister who arranged to have a balanced budget when there was none according to the figures, he came from here. He was Wilson Parasiuk's deputy minister. He went to British Columbia, along with Wilson Parasiuk, along with Marc Eliesen along with—oh, I keep running into them because a number of them are still there. When I go to federal-provincial conferences, I keep seeing these new familiar faces who are the old Manitoba mafia who were with the New Democratic Party. They are doing



the same things there, destroying the economy, that they were doing here.

Madam Speaker, the fascinating thing is just as the New Democrats brought our economy to its knees here in Manitoba in the '80s, they are doing the same thing in British Columbia, and they did the same thing in Ontario earlier this decade, the two most powerful economies in Canada on their knees as a result of rotten New Democratic Party policies.

They have the audacity, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), to talk about kids not getting jobs, young people not getting jobs. Now, just let me tell you what it was like under the New Democrats here in our province. When we took office, our youth unemployment rate in this province was 3 percent above Canada's, one of the highest in the country. So those people that he is talking about not getting jobs, well, there were 10 times as many not getting jobs in this province in terms of the youth coming out.

\* (1630)

If you were somebody under 25 years old, you could not stay in this province to get a job under the New Democrats—our youth unemployment rate, 3 percent above Canada's. Today, it is almost 6 percent below Canada's, the lowest in Canada, the absolute lowest in Canada.

That is the difference in our approach, Madam Speaker, is that young people now have hope in the future. Young people have a sense of optimism. All you had to do was read the story in the weekend Free Press: Manitoba headed for a brain gain. They talked about kids in university and college. You know, in our colleges, it is about 90 percent, high 80 percent of people who graduate from our community colleges who go right into a job within three to six months of graduation. It was not that way under the Pawley New Democrats, let me tell you, and in universities, in areas like business—he talks about commerce. He obviously does not know what he is talking about, the member for Thompson. In commerce, it is upwards of 85 percent of their graduates of business and commerce who are going right into employment here in Manitoba. In engineering, when I talked to the dean last year at a graduation exercise, it

was over 75 percent, approaching 80 percent. In my day of graduating, which were good times in the '60s, less than 60 percent of my class got jobs coming out of engineering in Manitoba.

This is all-time record levels of achievement for the young people of this province, Madam Speaker. Here is what they are saying. Here is Jen Carriere, second-year advertising art student, Red River Community College: "Everything is here for me so I might as well stay."

"The downtown atmosphere is nice now. I like how they're fixing it up," says Leigh Klassen, second-year computer engineering student at Red River Community College. They want to stay. They want to work here, and, thank heavens, Madam Speaker, for the first time in a long, long time they have that option, that opportunity, and they can do it if they want.

The papers in Brandon are filled with the news of recruitment of hundreds of people for the opening sometime later this summer at Maple Leaf. That does not even include the jobs that are being opened up at the production level or in trucking or in marketing or in feed supply or in all those supply industry jobs or the building industry. It goes on and on and on.

That is the kind of thing that people here know is different today than it ever was under the Pawley administration. In fact, it was so bad under the Pawley administration that when the now Leader, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), was the president of MGEU, he used to talk about how they were wasting money on the Jobs Fund creating the short-term, make-work jobs. He said: they are hiring people to plant flowers on the roadsides. They are putting up green signs, he said. They are sprouting like flowers in the ditches, he said. It is unbelievable. That is exactly what it was like under in those days, and they want us to go back to those days. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, the public says: No way do we want to go back to those days. No way do we want to go back. The public says: We do not want to have our young people have to leave this province in order to get jobs. No way is what they say, and that is because they are not old enough to be able to forget the decimation that was brought to this province by the New Democrats.

Madam Speaker, this budget is very, very different from that. It is the product of a constant, consistent progress towards a goal for 11 consecutive years. Our goal, very simply, was to make this an attractive place for people to come here and invest, an attractive place for people to raise their families, and a place where jobs would be created on a regular, regular basis. I have already talked about the difference that we are having. We wanted most importantly, and we still do say, that young people have to have work and have to have a place that they can say: I want to stake my future here. That is exactly what we have spent 11 years creating.

It is different. The members opposite are constantly trying to find—and it is a moving target, because the sand is shifting under their feet—somebody that they can latch on to, because they cannot run on their old record and what they did when they were in government before. So they look around and they say, well, British Columbia. I mean, oh, well, better not go there because we know what they say about British Columbia and the economic forecasts, and maybe that is not the best comparison.

I have a story here. Here it is. Dateline: Kamloops. There is a mixture of good and bad news in the latest economic forecast from the B.C. Credit Union Central. I might say that the Credit Union Central is one group that tends to support the socialist way of doing things in British Columbia, and they will give them a break if they can. They say: While things are improving, B.C. still has the worst economic outlook in the country. Worst. Senior economist Helmut Pastrick says in a revised forecast that real domestic growth in B.C. this year will be .4 of 1 percent. It was negative last year in 1998 and now .4 of 1 percent, so it is improving, but it is still going to be the worst in the country. So that is what they like to point—well, they will not point to that.

So then they say: Well, things would be better if we did what Roy Romanow was doing, and they would say, of course, Roy, who is a friend of mine—and I appreciate the fact that Roy has done a very good job of some things in government. Some things. He has operated on a very conservative fiscal framework, which is the only way that he could make economic sense of

a lot of the things that he has to deal with. But, on the other hand, he has not had the opportunity that we have to diversify. Well, I should not say that. They have not taken the opportunity to diversify that we have.

If there is one thing that is different in our economy today versus a decade ago, it is the fact that we are now considerably more diversified than ever, ever before in our history. When you consider that both financial services and manufacturing exceed agriculture and food production as a proportion of our GDP, that is a dramatic shift from where we were a decade or two ago.

When you also consider that within agriculture we have tremendous diversification taking place. We are the largest producer of edible beans in Canada, the second largest producer of potatoes in Canada, and those potatoes are almost all for processing. Madam Speaker, 700 million pounds of French fries a year are exported from this province. Tremendous, tremendous diversification taking place that has resulted in value adding and a tremendous number of jobs and opportunities and continuous, continuous growth, even in the field of agriculture. So, when the downturns take place in certain commodity prices, we are not hurt nearly as badly as they are in Saskatchewan because our people are diversifying into better cash crops and better income situations for them, stabilizing their incomes, adding value, creating jobs for their children close to the farms, within the towns and villages and cities that are close to the farm. All of these things are extremely important and they are different. They are different than they are in Saskatchewan. So, while at the same time we continue to add jobs, and I will say this that even in 1999, thus far this year we are up another 10,000 net new jobs. After consecutive increases of 10,000 or more for the last few years, we are still going up in jobs.

This is the headline in the Leader Post of April 10, less than a month ago, Saskatchewan loses jobs. What it says is: For the second month in a row, Saskatchewan stood out from the other provinces in March by being the only one with fewer jobs than a year earlier. That is not great news, and I hope that my colleague and

friend Roy is able to deal with it, but I am saying to you that there is a difference in policy, in fiscal and economic policy, that leads to this.

\* (1640)

Our diversification in our economy has meant that we continue to add jobs year by year, that we continue to add investment year by year, that we continue to add investment year by year. Last year, at the height of the employment season in the latter part of the summer, we hit an all-time record high of 560,000 people employed in our province. Those Manitobans working last year earned almost \$14 billion of wages and salaries last year. That is unbelievable, all-time record levels. We reached all-time record levels of private capital investment, and it was the seventh consecutive year of increase in private capital investment. That is where the jobs are coming. That is where the opportunities are coming. That is where the growth is coming, and that is where our young people are finding the future for them is in all of these things coming together.

Madam Speaker, yes, we have done it differently, and we have done it differently against the wishes of the members opposite time after time after time. Even in this session, we hear the same old, same old, negative, negative stuff. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), he says things like that we are too dependent on the United States. Good heavens. The United States is the largest consumer market in the world. Any country would give their eyeteeth to have a solid trading relationship and an opportunity to access that market. As a result of that—[interjection] Oh, the financial genius from Burrows says they are coming down.

Madam Speaker, here is another one who has never worked in the private sector in his life, never had to meet a payroll and he thinks everything is simple. Right? Hey, listen, you know. Yes, if it is on the collection plate, you spend it. Right? That is it, unbelievable. The simplistic view of the world that says somebody else is going to look after you. The taxpayer is going to give you all the money you need, and somebody else will look after you. It is unbelievable that they have this attitude to life, and they have not learned a thing.

They have been in opposition for 11 years. They have not learned from their mistakes, and they continue to come up with the same old baloney that says all we have to do is go back to the Howard Pawley days of using the public Treasury to spend and spend and spend and we will make good times happen. For whom? Not for all these young people who were unemployed when you were in office. Not for all these people who were searching, looking desperately for jobs. The only people that you will satisfy is yourselves and that is not good enough.

I want to just tell the members opposite that they never, never learn. There is a recent article in The Hill Times, which some members may get. I get it sent in to me periodically. It is about a veteran NDP member in the federal Parliament, Chris Axworthy, who is leaving his party to run in Saskatchewan, and I have told you about some of the difficulties they are having in Saskatchewan because they have not taken the opportunity to diversify, but at least they have done part of the equation right by balancing their budget and by creating a fiscal framework that is sustainable. At least they have not been tempted to do what the Pawley-Doer administration did—try and spend their way into prosperity.

Axworthy says he is leaving because he is frustrated by his own federal NDP party which he says is out of touch, and he is frustrated by a broken parliamentary system. He has been 11 years in Parliament and he says that the federal NDP needs to update itself because there is no other model no matter how hard you look, no matter how fond your hopes to find an old style leftist socialist party in the world that you could look up to and say, look, see, that is how we could be.

That is exactly what this group has a problem with. They are looking for an example that they can point to that is successful, and there is not one anywhere in the world. There is no left-leaning socialist party that has been successful in creating a solid, economic framework and jobs and opportunities for the future. Nowhere. The interesting thing is that when I talked about the former Manitoba New Democrats going to British Columbia to work,

none of them went to Saskatchewan. To my knowledge, none of them went to Saskatchewan, the only government that at least has part of the equation right.

A lot of them went to the federal party. David Woodbury, known to some members around this place, I think, to the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and others, but, anyway, David Woodbury, a famous name from the Pawley-Doer administration, is one of the chief advisors in Ottawa to the New Democrats. This is what Chris Axworthy, a New Democrat, says about them. He says there are none left—talking about good examples of socialist, left-wing administrations in the world—none, none, none. Not one, so there is not even the slimmest thread on which to hang this old style left wing kind of social democratic party that the NDP could be. That is exactly what they are doing, hanging not only their future but Manitoba's future on that slim thread that with their socialist, left-wing policies they could really do something good for the future of this province. Not a chance, Madam Speaker, not a chance.

Here is another thing that Mr. Axworthy said. He said the fact that 65 percent of the population is socially democratic and the federal NDP can only get 13 percent of the vote is a sign that it is not the people who are wrong; it is the message and our product. And that is the product that the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) and his band of men and women, jolly men and women, are trying to sell. Oh, no, they are not terribly jolly. Actually I take that back, they are not terribly jolly.

He says, referring to the federal NDP party, who are, I might say, a mirror image of what the member for Concordia and his colleagues want to portray, it is just out of date, out of touch. I thought it was so appropriate that they would choose as their slogan, Today's NDP, because this is the group that lives for today. They spend for today, they incur deficits for today, they build up all of these things, and it is just for today. What about tomorrow? What about the kids? What about the people who have to pay those debts in the future? What about the next generation who needs a job and an opportunity? What about tomorrow? Today's NDP. That is

all we have from this sorry group of jolly followers of the member for Concordia.

Well, Madam Speaker, the other side of that coin is if you do not have it right, if you do not get the mix right, and as I said my colleague from Saskatchewan has at least got the fiscal framework in balance, but the problem is they are not because they do not have the diversity, because they do not have the growth in the economy and because they do not obviously have the consistently increasing revenues, they are falling behind.

Here is another headline from the Saskatchewan newspaper: Saskatchewan falling behind in the tax game. Now, this more recent. This is just from last week. It says: The bar got raised another notch this week and it looks like Saskatchewan is going to have a tough time just keeping up in this game of fiscal high jump. First, Alberta reasserted its leadership with its March budget which contained no tax cuts but proposed a radical restructuring of the province's entire provincial income tax system. Next, Manitoba unveiled its budget Thursday, which cut its personal income tax rate to 48.5 percent, putting Manitoba's PIT rate slightly ahead of Saskatchewan's. But Manitoba's PIT rate will decline to 47 percent starting January of 2000, saving the average family of four earning \$50,000 about \$230 a year. In fact, next year Manitoba will have the third lowest income tax regime in Canada behind Ontario and Alberta.

\* (1650)

He goes on to tell what this will mean to Saskatchewan families in not being able to be competitive. He talks about the Manitoba advantage. He says: Call it the Manitoba advantage and that advantage will only get bigger, given Manitoba's greater fiscal flexibility—because we have a lower debt load. We have been paying down our debt, and we have a lower debt load than Saskatchewan.

He says: While both provinces have roughly the same-sized population and economy, Manitoba is carrying significantly less debt than Saskatchewan. Our \$26.5-billion-a-year economy is saddled with an \$11-billion debt for a debt-to-GDP ratio of about 40 percent.

Manitoba has a debt-to-GDP ratio of 22 percent. In practical terms, this means Manitoba will pay \$481 million in debt service this year. By contrast, Saskatchewan will shell out \$724 million, 50 percent larger than Manitoba's debt service charges.

He says: Of course, some people will criticize Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon for taking \$185 million out of the province's Fiscal Stabilization Fund—I think he heard those comments from members opposite, Madam Speaker—to pay for these tax cuts and spending initiatives. He concludes: not me. I figure, if you got it, flaunt it. That is what this writer in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix says about the comparison.

So, Madam Speaker, here we have a situation where members opposite have been desperately trying to find a way to criticize our budget, and what have they been criticizing? Well, they have been criticizing the fact that we took the money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, \$185 million. What have they been saying for the last two years? It is raining, take the money out; it is raining, take the money out; take the money out. That is what they have been saying.

Well, it is the same thing as what they have been saying for the last five months about coming back into session. They have been saying, get us back into session; we want to get at them. We have got all these new ideas; we have got all these things we want to talk about.

We are here. We have been here now for two weeks, and where are they? Day after day after day, same old, same old, same old. C'mon, now, surely, surely the public deserves better than what they have been getting by way of opposition. I mean, even opposition has to have some sense of obligation to do things right in this Legislature, but to repeat the same questions that you asked last June, last April, a year ago before that, is this opposition? I mean, is this really somebody who has been doing their homework? What have you been doing for the last nine months while you have presumably been telling us that you want to get at us? Good heavens.

Let us just take a look at some of the issues that are behind this budget, why we are able to do what we did. As I said, it was a continuous process of consistent movement towards the goals that we set for ourselves.

In last year, 1998, not only did Manitoba have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, which was, I might say, 5.7 percent for the entire year, that was the average rate, down from 6.6 percent in 1997, way below the Canadian average of 8.3 percent. It has not been this low since 1980. Now, there is that great black hole in the 1980s where the New Democrats were in government spending bags and bags of money, running up the deficit, raising taxes, and nothing good happened, none of these statistics, these statistics about growth, about investment, about jobs. There is no comparison with those black-hole days that the Pawley-Doer government gave us.

Not only did we have the lowest unemployment rate, but our real gross domestic product grew 3.4 percent in 1998, well above the national growth of 3 percent. We continue to have forecasts of very, very reasonable growth, anywhere from the mid-2.5 percent range up to higher and better rates. As long as we are in office, I am absolutely confident that those rates will exceed the forecast.

I talked earlier about jobs, last year full-time employment increasing by 10,000 net new jobs. This year, thus far, the private sector has created 10,600 net new jobs in the first four months of this year versus last year. The growth continues, the confidence continues, and these are the ways in which we differ so dramatically from members opposite.

Manufacturing shipments were up 7 percent in 1998 versus 3.2 percent for Canada, the largest growth rate among all of the provinces, the third consecutive year that Manitoba shipments outpaced the national growth. Retail sales up 2.1 percent in 1998. The retail sales growth was led by furniture and appliances, general merchandise, clothing. In the first two months of this year, we are up again 2.2 percent in retail sales. This is following upon a five-year period, all the way back to 1994, of consistent growth, and we keep growing in terms of retail

sales. To put it in perspective, in the first three months of this year, the three other western provinces experienced declines in their retail sales, and ours continues to grow.

Foreign exports to all countries up 6.2 percent, ninth consecutive annual increase. The increase exceeded Canada's gain for the fifth straight year. Exports to the U.S., the thing that concerns the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), up 13.1 percent. He would rather have us in the situation that British Columbia is in which their exports are declining because they thought they were smarter than everybody else in Canada and almost 40 percent of their exports were targeted at Asia. That is what the member for Crescentwood would like to see of course, and that is what he would see if he were in charge.

Investment spending rose 10.4 percent in 1998, more than four times the national increase. That has got to be a phenomenal assertion about how people have confidence, people from all over, not only our own companies who continue to invest in their expansion and growth but people coming from outside the province seeing us as an absolutely wonderful place to invest and grow.

I want to say that this is a reprint of a section that was put in the World Link magazine this year, a publication of the world economic forum. It is about 20 pages talking about the attractiveness of Manitoba for investments. It goes to 28,000 CEOs worldwide and tells them about why this is a great place to come and invest and to create jobs and opportunities for the future, and that will continue, Madam Speaker, because of the policies contained within this budget.

The other thing that, of course, from time to time the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) chirp about is the average weekly earnings. They say that somehow some way Manitoba earnings were not keeping up. There was a period of time—there is no question—that we held down increases in public-sector wages and salaries, as did virtually every province in Canada. We were not alone in that, and I can tell you that the seven provinces and the federal government, who all worked towards a balanced

budget throughout the '90s, had to ensure that they were not paying public-sector salaries beyond the capability and the sustainability of the economy to support.

\* (1700)

Average weekly earnings last year, 1998, rose 3.3 percent, compared to a 1.3 percent increase in Canada. Our growth led the nation. In the first two months of 1999 our earnings increased 1.3 percent, compared to .2 percent in Canada, so the growth continues as the economy continues to burgeon and grow, and it is being felt by every Manitoban in their pay cheque. That is why last year there were \$14 billion of wages and salaries paid in Manitoba because of that continuous growth in the economy that is being felt throughout the economy. That is the news that is in the budget.

That is the result of continuous years of fiscal prudence, and that is exactly what was said in the commentary that was sent out by I believe it was Nesbitt Burns in their commentary on the budget. They said prairie prudence. Here it is. Members opposite have been, again, chirping away about the sustainability of this budget. I can tell you that the people who have to go out there and sell our bonds or make our bond ratings, they know where it is at. They examine with a fine tooth comb our budget, and they say: Manitoba prairie prudence. They talk about its coming in line with the projections, with the expectations, and ensuring that it can be sustainable for the future, Madam Speaker.

The same thing is true in the Scotia Bank. The same thing is true of Wood Gundy and all of the other commentators who are coming out and commenting on our budget. These are objective people. These are people who do their homework, who do their analysis. They are not political operatives like the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) or the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) or the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) who are only interested in some cheap political trick that they can play on the six o'clock news and get an eight-second clip. These are people who are examining thoroughly the fundamentals, the foundation of the economy, and the outlook for the future. I

take their word before I take the word of a member opposite any day of the week.

The other aspect, of course, which was very encouraging which took place just about two weeks ago, was the Toronto Dominion Bank who were forecasting the fiscal outlook for the various provinces of Canada, and out of the 10 provinces they rated two with having excellent fiscal prospects—Alberta and Manitoba, the only two provinces in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I just want to talk about personal ethics and some of the cheap shots that were taken in this budget debate and in the Throne Speech Debate by members opposite at members on our side. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), both holier-than-thou people, of course, always, of course, try and put down in words their disgust, their perception of what they believe has taken place as a result of actions of members in our party, Madam Speaker.

Despite the fact that members opposite got the complete public review that they asked for by retired Chief Justice Alfred Monnin who concluded that no elected member on this side, no member of our party's executive or management committee was involved in what he says was a scheme of five individuals, they go throughout the province and even put it in their brochures, trying to sell to Manitobans that somehow, some way, elected members were involved. We know that the only person with whom Chief Justice Monnin found fault in terms of a member of this Legislature was the member for Crescentwood. He is the only one who was rebuked for his actions.

But, Madam Speaker, I want to just take you back a little bit. I mean, this game is not a pleasant game to be played when members opposite do things that are hurtful, that are personally attacking and deceitful, but, you know, if we wanted to be dirty, we could talk about why the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) did not repay his Canada student loan until it was on the front page of the newspaper and he was publicly embarrassed into it. Now, is this an ethical person? Is this somebody whose

character you would like to be able to say is yours and you would want as your leader? I think not.

I think my colleague for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) maybe did a bit of a review because there were cheap shots being taken about a certain relative of the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) and what they said were benefits that he had achieved through the privatization of the Manitoba telephone system. They talked about his gains as having gained a million dollars. Obviously, with the price of stock today, that is now less than half of that, and that is one of the things that members opposite know nothing about, and that is investing and how the stock market goes. It goes up; it goes down. People gain; people lose; people take risks. That is how investments are made and jobs are created, and people sometimes lose as much as they gain and sometimes more.

But, Madam Speaker, what they did not talk about was \$2-million John Bucklaschuk. How about \$2-million John Bucklaschuk? Now, this was a cabinet minister in the Pawley-Doer government, and this was a cabinet minister who, when push came to shove, somehow had all of the records that were to prove the case of who-knew-what-about-whatever shredded. However, because of a wrongful dismissal suit, he ended up having to face his accuser, one Carl Laufer, in court. He had to acknowledge that indeed when he said publicly that Mr. Laufer was to blame for the losses and that he had never been informed of those losses, they called witnesses, including the former chairman of the board, to demonstrate that indeed he had been fully informed, and he tried to hang it all on Mr. Laufer. The result of that was a \$2-million award from the people of Manitoba to pay for a former NDP minister who was distorting the truth, who publicly lied about his knowledge and who kept it all secret, so that the New Democrats could win the 1986 election campaign. Now, that is ethics. That is New Democratic style ethics.

I just say to members opposite that if you want to play the ethics game, then you are going to have every single aspect of your actions examined publicly, and you have got lots to be concerned about, every one of you there, for

your actions and the actions of your party in government.

Madam Speaker, the interesting thing about members opposite is that they are now creating what they believe is their big issue in preparation for the next election campaign. They believe that health care is their big issue. Of course, in looking up some information, I found it interesting to see, this was a poster that one of my staff brought in that used to hang in doctors' offices back in 1988, early '88. It says: "About Manitoba's Ailing Health Care System." Ailing.

Now does it say about Manitoba's wonderful health care system? No. Does it say about Manitoba's excellent health care system? No. It says: "About Manitoba's Ailing Health Care System." And it is put out by the Manitoba Medical Association.

\* (1710)

It says: "The Pawley government claims: 'In Manitoba, the torch of universal health care has been held high, in sharp contrast to many other provinces where a crisis mentality in health care has been fuelled by harsh budgetary measures, program cutbacks.'" That is taken out of the 1988 throne speech.

Then it says: "In reality, the Pawley government has dropped the torch: waits of more than six months for urgent surgery; serious shortages of psychiatrists and other medical specialists; 100-plus hospital beds to be closed." Those were, I recall a lot of them, in Brandon General Hospital where the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) was, and "confrontation with doctors instead of impartial fee arbitration."

Then it says: "If this isn't crisis mentality, Mr. Pawley, what is it?"

Well, that is just one little example of the difference between how they see things today versus the reality of how they were when they were in government. They were in a crisis mentality. They were creating waiting lists, people in hallways. People were in hallways in 1982, I can tell you that for a fact, when they were in government.

This government instead is investing in better and better health care. When we first came into government, there was a report prepared in 1989 that said we were 900 personal care beds short in this province. We proceeded to build those 900 personal care beds between 1989 and 1998, and now we have another 600 under development right today, because we are making the investment to convert to the needs of tomorrow, of today and tomorrow, for long-term care. We have tripled investment in home care each and every year, three times as much spending today. This is what is being done by a government that has been able to plan for the future.

This is what is being done by a government that is ensuring that we deal fairly with everybody. Here, we are in the midst of arbitration with the Manitoba Medical Association. The Pawley government, according to this document, wanted confrontation, refused arbitration, would not agree to it, Madam Speaker. The same thing with nurses. This administration said that we would do everything in our power to find a settlement that was an honourable settlement, that was a fair settlement, that allowed us to deal at the table with the nurses of this province, unlike what has been done in other provinces that attempted to legislate their nurses back. We were able to accomplish it. Absolutely.

Madam Speaker, the other thing is of course members opposite talk about nurses and the employment of nurses. I refer them to The Globe and Mail, Saturday, April 17, that did a Canada-wide analysis of nursing. It is entitled: Ill feelings mount as nurses persevere. It talks about issues right across Canada, and guess what, it does not criticize Manitoba nearly as severely as it does most of the other places in Canada, including administrations under the New Democrats. Why? Because in this province we have one of the better nursing-to-population ratios in Canada. We have a nursing-to-population ratio, according to this, of 1 to 109 people, and that, Madam Speaker is—sorry. It is 1 to 108 in 1997; it was 1 to 109 in 1992. It has hardly changed.

Look around us. Saskatchewan is 1 to 121; Alberta, 1 to 131; B.C., 1 to 134; Quebec, 1 to



125; Ontario, 1 to 145. Madam Speaker, that is the difference between us and the members opposite. The members opposite talk a good game; but, when they were in government, they did not do it. In fact, they left nothing but problems. Nothing but problems. They did not have the capability to do it. As their leaders have said before, or some of their members have said before—[interjection] Well, what was Professor Allen Mills? What did he say? They said that he is a good Liberal candidate, and that is an interesting thing. The member opposite raises a good point. As I look at the new candidates that we have attracted to our party, they are absolutely outstanding. I look at people like Jim Penner and Maxine Plesiuk and Reverend Harry Lehotsky and Mary Richard and Chief Ron Evans. Then I look at the Liberal candidates, and they have done some pretty good work too. Wayne Helgason, good candidate. I look at Allen Mills, quality candidate. I look at John Shanski, good candidate.

What did the NDP attract? The NDP have been a tired bunch of old people, a tired bunch of old people. All they want to do is go back to the past. Back to the past. We are going to revisit all of this. We are going to take you back. They have time warp machine that is going to take us back to the glory days of Pawley-Doer, when we were running half-billion-dollar deficits and raising taxes every year, and everybody was looking for a job. That is what they want to take us back to. They have learned nothing. Absolutely nothing. All they care about is whether or not they keep their jobs. That is all they care about. They do not care about people. They do not care about the future. They do not care about new generations. They care about whether or not they keep their jobs.

Remember, because I want to talk about a variety of issues here. I do not want to get bogged down on a few. I want to just say that just a couple of weeks ago we got the report of the World Wildlife federation that rated Manitoba as second best in Canada.

The reason that I remember is, of course, that when they were in government these so-called friends of environment got an F rating. That is what they got. They were the lowest rated in Canada when Gerard Lecuyer was the

Minister of Environment. So, again, an area of improvement.

Here is something I wanted to just close on, talking about Manitoba families. Here is an article that says: Manitoba families are closing the income gap. It talks about the fact—it is in the Free Press, Catherine Mitchell. I cannot get a date on it, but it is very recent. I pulled it out a few weeks ago. It says: The average Manitoba family earned less than their Canadian counterparts in 1997, an annual survey of wages by Stats Canada indicates. The same study shows the province's poor were only slightly better off than the average Canadian low-income earner. The average Manitoba family's income was \$54,316, the fourth highest in Canada—the fourth highest in Canada—behind only Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

That is the reason why we are below the average, because those three are the biggest population concentration, so standing fourth still puts us below the Canadian average. But fourth in Canada, when we have the sixth largest economy, is not a bad place to be, not a bad place to be. Manitoba families' income are doing well, and it is because they have improved dramatically in this last half decade. That is why the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) no longer trots out all of his negative statistics because they are not there anymore. Families have been increasing their income and improving their circumstances.

\* (1720)

But, you know, what is even better over the last while has been the way in which we have progressed with respect to so many of the social policy issues, because I know the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has been involved in so many different ways, in programs like Taking Charge! and so many of the things that have been going on. I remember a while ago when we, a few years ago, were getting criticism from a variety of different sources, saying we should be doing more for those who live in poverty, we should be doing more to help families in difficult circumstances and so on. She put out the word, the minister, that we would look for partners, better ways of doing things. The result of that has been a whole

variety of different groups coming together to work with government through programs like Taking Charge!, which was a federal-provincial initiative, and Opportunities for Employment and so on and so forth. Over 10,000 people—over 10,000 people—have been taken off social assistance and into the workforce in the last few years.

I was at the most heart-warming get-together just a few weeks ago, and it was a little ceremony that was put together by Opportunities for Employment. They were featured on the front page of the business section last Saturday in *The Globe and Mail*. Opportunities for Employment is a relationship, a partnership between the Department of Family Services and the Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Economic Development Association. They came to the minister and said we will help you. We will take on the most difficult cases, the most disadvantaged people who are chronically on welfare, and we will help get them into permanent good circumstances in the workforce. We will rebuild their self-esteem. We will work with them to give them their confidence again. We will socialize them and we will give them the skills they need. Whether that is computers, whether that is word processing or any of those other things that are the modern skills of today, we will work with them. They had a goal of 100 to 110 people a year that they would take off social assistance and into the workforce.

I was at the ceremony less than three years into the program of the thousandth graduate, and it was so heart-warming. This person was a single mother with six children, two of her own and four foster children, and she still wanted to get into the workforce. She still had the courage of her convictions and the confidence to go back into this training program. She was in her mid-'30s, I would guess, and she made the most heart-warming speech about what this meant to her. She is one of the thousand people who have been taken off welfare, and the best part of it all is that MCC and MEDA said to us: the deal is we will not get a nickel until the people we have trained are in the workforce for a minimum of six months and then you pay us \$4,000 per client. They have put 1,000 people in less than

three years into the workforce, and we have paid them after they have been in for six months—marvellous, marvellous, marvellous.

Madam Speaker, that is the difference between us and the members opposite. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) wants to tell people how to stay on welfare, how to get there. She puts on seminars. She advertises in the newspapers to keep them on welfare, and we are taking them off welfare, and that is the difference between us.

Madam Speaker, just one final anecdote. I was on my way out a week ago, Wednesday, to the grand opening of Angus Reid's expanded facilities, adding a couple of hundred jobs and research and polling and all of those areas. Angus obviously has moved himself to Vancouver, but his presence in Manitoba continues to grow and grow and grow. He has over 500 people employed here. He continues to expand, and it was a good event. I was on the way out, and I was just a little bit late. I was running down the stairs with my notes under my arm. It was about two o'clock, and there were three people at the bottom of the stairs of the Legislature here, two women and a man. I could see them kind of look at me as I got to the bottom of the stairs. The man said, are you the Prime Minister? I said, no, no, I am the Premier. He said, yes, yes, that is what I meant. He said: my friend here told me. I said: what would you like? He said, well, could we have a picture with you? I said sure. So I had my assistant take the camera and take a picture of the four of us.

Then I said to him: where are you from, because he had a bit of an accent. He said: I am from Poland. I said: oh, well, my dad is Polish; he was born in Romania. Oh, he said. Good. Let us have another picture. So we had another picture. I said: what are you doing? He said, well, my wife and I are travelling across Canada. We live in Vancouver but we are looking for a job and we are going to Ontario. I said, well, you should be asking your friend here to just show you some want ads. I said: what do you do? He said: I am a plumber. I said: we are short of building tradesmen. Get your friend to show you the want ads and you can get a job here in Manitoba today.

Anyway, he sort of looked at me and whispered almost quietly: would you mind telling me what your politics are? I said, well, I am a Conservative. Why do you ask? He said, well, NDP in British Columbia, NDP, no jobs.

Madam Speaker, that more than anything else tells the story of the New Democrats. They represent no jobs, no opportunity, no future for the young people of this province, no vision. They got the same old, same old, same old. Negative, negative, negative. A repetition of all the bad old failed policies. That is all that we get from the New Democrats, and that is why I say to you they provide us with no credible alternatives, no credible alternatives. They sit there day after day just criticizing, carping, complaining, doing all the things that resulted in them being in government and being in opposition, and they will stay in opposition.

So, Madam Speaker, we here on this side are very encouraged as we watch the members opposite desperately look for some way to criticize this budget. They cannot find it, so they do not even move an amendment to the budget. That has not happened in 11 years. Maybe they have seen the light. Maybe they recognize that we are the only people who have any credible policy for future economic growth and opportunity in this province. I accept their judgment. It may have taken too long for them to get there, but I accept the fact that they recognized that this government has the economic and fiscal policies, has the vision and has created the opportunities that will lead us very strongly and powerfully into the next millennium. Therefore, this budget deserves to be supported not just by members on this side of the House but by members right throughout the House.

I hope that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will join in the throng. I hope that he will join in the throng of support for this budget, because we know from talking to people throughout this province, throughout the length and breadth of this province, that they want this budget to be implemented. They want the tax cuts, Madam Speaker. They recognize the wisdom of what we have done in the 11 years that we have been in government, and they want this government re-elected to be able to

implement all of the policies to create a brighter, stronger future for our province and for all the people in this province.

The members opposite can carp and complain all they like, Madam Speaker, because people in this province have come to expect that from them. They know that the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) goes and finds every silver lining and looks for the black cloud. They know that the duke of doom from Crescentwood and the prince of darkness from Concordia, they have established their reputation clearly and unequivocally to the people of this province. They have established the fact that they have no new ideas, that they have no fresh thoughts, that they have no talent that is coming forward to take on the challenges. All they have is the same old, same old. All they have is the things that did not work in the past. They have no place that they can even turn to to show people of a social democratic administration that really works.

\* (1730)

That is why, Madam Speaker, I will be proud to stand up in support of this budget. Thank you very much.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., in accordance with subrule 27(5), I am interrupting the proceedings to put the questions necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and the amendment to that motion.

The question before the House now is the proposed amendment moved by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do you wish to have the motion read?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Voice Vote**

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

**An Honourable Member:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

#### Formal Vote

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, realizing I was the only one who verbally supported the motion, I would ask to see if there would be support to have a recorded vote from any member who might be inclined to support the motion.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member have support for a recorded vote?

**An Honourable Member:** Madam Speaker, there is support.

**Madam Speaker:** There is support? Okay.

The honourable member for Inkster has requested a recorded vote. Call in the members.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Lamoureux.*

#### Nays

*Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Cummings, Derkach, Doer, Dewar, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Driedger (Steinbach), Dyck, Enns, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Faurshou, Filmon, Findlay, Friesen, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Hickes, Jennissen, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McIntosh, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reid, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Sale, Santos, Stefanson, Struthers, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey, Wowchuk.*

**Mr. Clerk:** Yeas 1, Nays 50.

**Madam Speaker:** The amendment is accordingly defeated.

The question now before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

#### Voice Vote

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

#### Formal Vote

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, once again, I would appeal for members to allow for a recorded vote on this important issue.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Inkster have support?

**An Honourable Member:** There is support, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** There is support. A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

*Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Cummings, Derkach, Dewar, Doer, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Driedger (Steinbach), Dyck, Enns, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake),*

*Faurschou, Filmon, Findlay, Friesen, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Hickes, Jennissen, Laurendeau, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McAlpine, McGifford, McIntosh, Mihychuk, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reid, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Sale, Santos, Stefanson, Struthers, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey, Wowchuk.*

### Nays

*Lamoureux.*

**Mr. Clerk:** Yeas 51, Nays 1.

**Madam Speaker:** The motion is accordingly carried.

### House Business

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on House business

for tomorrow, I believe it is our intention at some point during the course of proceedings to go into Estimates debate. The opposition House leader and I are working out the details around that and hope to have an announcement tomorrow for the House.

\* (1740)

At this time, I would ask if there is a willingness to call it six o'clock?

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

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 10, 1999

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