



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, December 5, 1997

The House met at 10 a.m.

Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice inquiry and the Pedlar report.

PRAYERS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Domestic Violence

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Domestic Violence

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Cathy Thomassen, Paula Mallea, Linda Comty and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Deborah Schnitzer, Coralie Bryant, Mendel Schnitzer and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

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

THAT domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in Manitoba that results in the injury and death of women across this province; and

THAT certain initiatives such as the Family Violence Court, the Women's Advocacy Program and mandatory charging have been taken by the government; and

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ron Schmalcel, June Welsted, Dianne Hindle and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

THAT survivors of abuse, their families, service providers and the community at large recognize serious shortcomings in the response to domestic violence which continues to threaten the lives of Manitoba women and children; and

THAT a blueprint for an effective response to domestic violence is being offered by several reports including the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Pedlar report and the Lavoie inquiry recommendations.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Shaun Loney, Sandra Danco, Susan Sinclair and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

* (1005)

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in Manitoba that results in the injury and death of women across this province; and

THAT certain initiatives such as the Family Violence Court, the Women's Advocacy Program and mandatory charging have been taken by the government; and

THAT survivors of abuse, their families, service providers and the community at large recognize serious shortcomings in the response to domestic violence which continues to threaten the lives of Manitoba women and children; and

THAT a blueprint for an effective response to domestic violence is being offered by several reports including the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Pedlar report and the Lavoie inquiry recommendations.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Domestic Violence

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Is there leave to revert to Presenting Petitions so the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) may present a petition? [agreed]

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Priscilla Bilsborrow, Carol Payne, Iris Griffin and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of a meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I have some reports that were tabled intersessionally, but I wish to table the Pineland Forest Nursery Annual Report for the year ended March 31, '97; the Natural Resources Annual Report for '96-97; the Five Year Report on the Status of Forestry; and the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation Annual Report for '96-97.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling two annual reports, one being the Manitoba Decentralization for 1996-97, and the Annual Report for the Manitoba Water Services Board for 1996-97.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Remembrance Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Madam Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to attend a sunrise breakfast in remembrance of the young women killed at Ecole polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989. Each year on this date we pause to remember the 14 young women killed in an act of mindless violence. The shock and the horror do not subside over time. Once again, our hearts go out to the families and friends of those young women who died in 1989. We also remember and honour the Manitoba women who died as a result of violence and express our deepest sympathy to their families and friends.

Domestic violence is a serious issue, and we are constantly looking for ways to improve the system for the protection of women. Following the tragic deaths of Rhonda and Roy Lavoie, a commission of inquiry was convened which provided important recommendations for the protection of Manitoba women.

Our government moved swiftly to implement that commission's recommendations. An implementation committee was established, chaired by Dr. Jane Ursel, co-director of the Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women. The implementation committee will work with community groups to co-ordinate the implementation of both a short-term and a long-term plan.

To further help implement the commission's recommendations, we have committed an additional \$1.7 million in funding to help Manitoba families caught up in the tragedy of domestic violence. We realize that more remains to be done, and we cannot do it alone. All of us have a role to play in stopping the cycle of violence: government, community groups, business groups and individuals. By working together, we can ensure domestic violence is not tolerated by anyone in our communities.

* (1010)

We are committed to working with Manitobans to end the destructive cycle of violence. Carved in the stone of the memorial garden in the legislative grounds in remembrance of women who have died as a result of family violence is a pledge to end violence against women.

I urge all Manitobans to join in that pledge. I ask each one of you now to join me in remembering those Montreal women who were victims of violence, as well as Manitoba women who have been victims of violence.

I would also like to invite you to join the vigil to be held tomorrow at 7 p.m. in the memorial garden on the east side of the legislative grounds. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I thank the minister for her statement. I want to assure the minister that we on this side of the House join hands in the struggle to end violence against women. I trust our commitment is most recently evident in our community work with women and with women's groups and will be apparent in a report that I will table later today.

Tomorrow evening, on December 6, the 14 women murdered in Montreal on December 6, 1989, will be remembered and named at a ceremony in the legislative grounds as the minister has already indicated. The ceremony, as she has indicated, begins at seven, and all members of the public are invited. I do ask you to join me, along with the minister, at that ceremony. I will be particularly honoured if you join us, because I have had the honour to be asked to be a speaker.

I know we here today remember the 14 women murdered in Montreal, murdered simply because they were women. I know too that we think of the survivors, friends, families, lovers, and that we send these people our sympathies. The violence of December 6 forever marks and diminishes our lives, but most especially those of victims, their families and intimate friends.

Today, standing in this Legislature of 56 members, I am aware that since 1989, 81 Manitoba women have been murdered by their partners, former partners, boyfriends or men who considered themselves to be boyfriends. I repeat this figure, Madam Speaker: 81 women. That is the whole of this Legislature and 25 additional persons. Just gone, murdered, often after years of brutality and abuse.

Madam Speaker, one of my favourite poets, Margaret Atwood, writes in her poem *Spelling* that a word after a word after a word is power. I think too that a name after a name after a name is power, and therefore for the purpose of evoking the power of names and words, as we work for justice and with the purpose of affording these dead women some respect, I will name the Manitoba women murdered since 1989.

1989, Christine Jacks, Charlotte Brooks, Connie Stevens, Linda Robinson, Mary-Ann Reid.

1990, Shirley Ruth Androniwich, Bridgette Grenier, Gloria Heart, Stella Jaskiewicz, Isabelle King, Teresa

Lori Murdock, Iris Muzylouski, Joyce Rae, Merle Ruby Owen, Martha Trout, Carol Watson, Desiree Watson.

1991, Carla Caldwell, Karen Rosemary Cameron, Victoria Irene Cook, Diane Marie Hamm, Clara Jane Harper, Dorothy Bernice Mildred James, Marilyn Jensen, Glenda Morriseau, Sarah Phillips, Elizabeth Anne Dianne Siemens, Marilyn Swampy, Sylvia Anne McKay.

1992, Donna Madelaine Ramsay, Noella Wilma Balanger, Kimberly Anne Jones, Shafquat Ahmad, Angie Francine Levesque, Elizabeth Saltis, Carol Sue Pascal, Marisa Duck.

1993, Emerine Bella Spence, Olive Barbara Keeper, Terri-Lynn Babb, Sherry Lee Paul, Marjorie McConnell, Tina Franks, Marjorie Henderson, Victoria Jean Hornbrook.

1994, Sureta Khan, Barbara Ann Munro, Stephanie Edwards, Jamie Nora McGuire, Marilyn Hyrchuk, Kelly Lynn Stewner, Debra Catherine Redhead, Darlene Marie Weselowski, Laura Faye Coleman, Viola Anne Flett, Michell Darlene Harkness, Sarah Kelly, Marjorie Sokalski, Marilyn Diane Heath.

1995, Rhonda Lavoie, Dawn Maris Brunsel.

* (1015)

1996, Nelita Deborja, Jolene Einarson, Dorothy Martin, Barbara Pelletier, Eva Emanuel, Sonia Ross, Andrea Christine Attwood, Amanda Cook, Ester Johnswride, Donna Durnam, Edna Chartrand, Mary Nancy Leveque.

1997, Jeanette Marjorie Mercer, Angela Clare Harper, Carol Marlene Hastings, Vanessa Lynn Prince, Beverley Vitiello, Roberta Lee.

Madam Speaker, in remembrance of these 81 murdered Manitoba women, I request that the House rise and observe a minute of silence.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 4—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that leave be given to introduce Bill 4, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Agricultural Credit Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that leave be given to introduce Bill 5, The Agricultural Credit Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société du crédit agricole), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1020)

Bill 6—The Animal Liability and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Animal Liability and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires d'animaux et modifications corrélatives), 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. (The message has been tabled.)

Motion agreed to.

Bill 14—The Executions Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Toews), I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 14, The Executions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'exécution des jugements), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I am tabling the recommendation.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 19—The Public Trustee Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Toews), I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 19, the Public Trustee Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la curateur public et modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I am tabling the recommendation.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this morning fifty Grade 5 students from Linden Christian School under the direction of Mrs. Michelle

Grove. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

We also have twenty-one Grade 11 students from Teulon Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Alvin Reinsch. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

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

* (1025)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Voices From the Front Lines Report Government Response

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, during the release of the Lavoie inquiry report the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) taunted questioners by saying: when you are the leader in the field, where do you go for advice? The truth is that this government's violence against women's program is inadequate. Today my colleagues and I are proud to table the grassroots community advice that the minister's government so sorely lacks, entitled Voices From The Front Lines: Community Response to the Lavoie Inquiry.

Madam Speaker, we thank survivors, front-line workers and activists for the benefit of their knowledge and experience.

My question is for the Premier. I would like to ask the Premier if leadership is what kept the AJI on the shelf, is leadership what closed down the Pedlar implementation committee and keeps Pedlar on the shelf, and will this Premier agree today to respond in writing to the report that I just tabled so that this report and the Lavoie inquiry itself do not become the next victims of this Premier's leadership?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for her question, and I know that her question is asked with the intent of ensuring that all of us should take the responsibility to address the issues that surround violence against

women, to ensure that the incidence of death and injury and all of those things that occur as a result of domestic violence, that we do everything possible to address.

Madam Speaker, I can say that we as a government have taken that responsibility seriously in all the time that we have been in government. I recall that one of the first things that we did in 1988 was to double the funding that was given to women's shelters at that time, because we believed it was a high priority and something that ought to be dealt with. I have looked, for instance, at the latest figures as to the total money that we invest in family dispute agencies, including shelters and other agencies. In the time that we have been in office, something under 10 years, that funding has increased 308 percent. That is because we believe that it is a serious issue; we believe it is an important issue.

I know that the member opposite has other questions, and I will respond to her about our commitments to and the actions in response to the Lavoie inquiry report in response to her later questions.

Violence Against Women Program Funding

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Osborne, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Another question about leadership, Madam Speaker. I want to ask the Premier if leadership explains why abused women must wait six to 18 months in order to see a counsellor. Does it explain why existing programs funded by Family Disputes have been cut, contrary to what the Premier says, by 4 percent since 1993-94, though 81 women have been murdered and countless women lead lives of unspeakable brutality? Does leadership explain why service providers struggle to write funding proposals while the Premier flies to London to see the Winnipeg Ballet?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I regret the tone that the member places in her questions, because she clearly knows that it is important for us to ensure that we have a strong economy, that we have an economy that allows us to have the revenues that we

need to support the services. I talked about the 308 percent increase in services.

Some of the services that she references were not available, for instance, when we took office. They have become a part of the delivery of government services in the area of family dispute, in the actions against family violence. So I can tell her that I do not want to politicize this, but the things that her government did, the government of the political stripe that she represents, when they were in office were woefully inadequate in most of the things that she talks about. They have been improved dramatically.

They are certainly not ever good enough when we still have continuing violence against women that we have to deal with, and so we must continue to try and improve what we do. That is why the government acted very quickly in setting up the implementation committee and committed resources—I believe it is \$1.7 million—to a lot of these issues because we believe they are important. We believe that they are not things that should be politicized, but if the member chooses to do that, that is her choice.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the Premier if he will assume the role of elder statesman, show some wisdom, repair the damage done by his government's miserly leadership and agree to Justice Schulman's recommendations, and that is additional funding to shelters, second-stage housing, women's resource centres and other domestic violence programs. I am asking the Premier to save some lives.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, when you consider some of the facts that I have put on the record about doubling, even in the first year that we took office, the funding to shelters, you realize how woefully inadequate the New Democratic's response was to those needs.

Madam Speaker, we have continued to increase that funding and have announced in a variety of areas of response to the Lavoie inquiry, as I said, \$1.7 million of further action to be taken. I would suggest to the member opposite that if she would like people to respond in a statesperson-like fashion that she ought to perhaps look in the mirror.

* (1030)

Lavoie Report Implementation Program

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Premier: in distinction to the Premier's Justice minister, who on the release of the Lavoie report arrogantly asked: when you are a leader in this area, where do you go to for advice, we say we will do all we can in our power, whether it is opposition with positive ideas or as new government in this province, to ensure that what happened to the Pedlar report will never happen to the Lavoie report.

Would the Premier now commit, out of respect for the life of Rhonda Lavoie, indeed the 81 women killed since 1989 in relationships in this province, that he or his ministers of Justice and Family Services will report in one year on the Lavoie report's implementation progress at a new directly democratic innovation, and that is community sessions accounting directly to the community?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Vodrey) have both committed very strongly to implementing recommendations of the Lavoie report. They acted quickly in setting up the implementation committee. The committee has chosen immediately to consult with the community so that they have the input that they require before action is taken. Meetings are already taking place, and I believe that departments are acting and are prepared to act as soon as recommendations from the working groups are received. The working groups, of course, contain 27 community members, six of 10 shelters are represented, 10 members are from outside Winnipeg, six have aboriginal backgrounds. I know that the implementation committee is anxious to ensure, as much as possible, that their recommendations reflect the needs and are action oriented.

Madam Speaker, second-stage programs in women's resource centres are involved in the process as well, and I believe that the committee intends to have addressed all the recommendations by October of 1998. I know that this government will be held accountable and will stand up and be accountable for the actions that emanate from the implementation committee's work.

Domestic Violence Legislation Introduction

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Would the Premier, who never answered my question and who should be admitting that six months after the government received the Pedlar report we have no new programs, no action yet—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mackintosh: I ask the Premier, who regrettably and amazingly in his throne speech neglected to make any commitment to straightforward changes to the law, as recommended in the Lavoie report, to introduce legislation this session modelled on Saskatchewan law to better protect Manitobans from domestic violence, because if they will not, we will introduce the law.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): The throne speech referred to the intended introduction of legislation, Madam Speaker, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) has also indicated that, and I am sure that the member opposite will be interested to see the import and the impact of that legislation when it is introduced.

Stalking Legislation Introduction

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I think there are some revisions in there—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mackintosh: My question to the minister is—and I hope he did just commit to legislation on domestic violence. It was not in the throne speech. Will the Premier commit to legislation this session to deal with the terror that is experienced by Manitoba women from stalking, as recommended by the Law Reform Commission report that was issued in June of 1997? Because, if not, we will ask Legislative Counsel this afternoon to begin preparing the law.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. I do want to indicate to him

that of the four working groups that are presently working that will be addressing half of the recommendations from the Lavoie inquiry, the Advisory Group on Civil Responses to Stalking has almost completed its work, and those recommendations will be coming forward to us and legislation will be introduced.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, yesterday the impression was left by the Minister of Health that the government's disastrous plan to privatize home care was dead in the water. Since the initiative grew out of the Premier's Office, and since the Premier has been the strongest advocate of the privatization of home care, will the Premier today be prepared to stand up and categorically indicate that it is his government's policy that the home care privatization plan is over, that those programs that have been privatized are going back to the public sector and that the government will return to the public sector all of those programs? If that is in fact the case, will the Premier confirm that this is in fact government policy now?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, since this administration came to power in 1988, we have continually attempted to improve the delivery of public service to ensure that the citizens of Manitoba are receiving the best service possible with an efficient delivery mechanism and in a very cost-effective manner, and this is important because every dollar we waste in the delivery of public service is one dollar less for high priorities in health care and education and family services.

Madam Speaker, when we embarked on an attempt to test our home care system—and it is a good thing because no area of public service should not have to undergo a test to see its delivery mechanism—we went through that process with a tendering process last year. We discussed that in this Legislature and in Estimates. We had one contract awarded out of that. We had only one bidder that met both the tests of quality and of price. We have gone through with that. We expect to have that evaluation done. My comments yesterday and ones we made in April commented on the results of that test.

But I say to members opposite, we have learned many things out of this process. We have learned and made and are making many improvements to our system. We also have some guidelines in our cost-effectiveness that we have learned by which to test our system and will continue to do so.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, is the Premier (Mr. Filmon) prepared to indicate what he has learned from this disastrous experiment of the government, and is the Premier prepared to say that his government will no longer privatize home care services, health care services, will renounce the Olsten contract, the Central contract and the other plans for privatization of various aspects of health care because the Premier has learned that the public of Manitoba does not want a privatized health care system but in fact supports the publicly funded and supported universal health care system that we have, or is he not prepared to make that commitment today?

* (1040)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, one of the things, for example, we learned, and I know in discussions I have had with the Premier over the last number of months—and an area that we have improved and are improving in our home care delivery system is separating our assessment function from the delivery function to ensure in fact that we are not only assessing the proper needs of home care clients in a uniform way, but we are also ensuring there is proper follow-up, that we are not providing service long after the need is there. One thing we learned in the home care strike last year which was interesting was that on a number of occasions we had clients whose need for home care had ended but the service was continued because there was not the proper follow-up.

We continue to learn ways of improving the system. The member asks of the Premier and myself to make an ideological statement, to say beyond any doubt that we will do this or that. If there has been one lesson of our government, it is we are pragmatic. We want to do what is best for the people of Manitoba and delivers them the best service possible, and we will do that.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, since the Premier is not prepared to commit, even to categorically deny the

privatization scheme, is the Premier prepared to jointly, together with us in the opposition, write to all of the private nursing firms that have mushroomed up in this province like Aaron's Angels, Classic Foot Care, Creative Care, Gentle Touch, Health Care Plus, Omni Care out of the United States, Quality, Realcare, all the private companies, many of whom have mushroomed recently—is he prepared to write to them categorically and outline what his minister has sort of said today but he is not prepared to say, that the government is not going to be providing contracts for private nursing homes out of our public system to these private firms? Is he at least prepared to do that?

Mr. Praznik: Again, when a party decides to make all of its decisions on the basis of ideology, the people who suffer are ultimately the citizens of the province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, we in this government have proven time and time again that by testing the way we do things, by looking for new ways to do things better—sometimes we do not always find what we thought was there; many times we do. I am reminded of the fact that in this Legislature we saw the New Democratic Party oppose terribly the move to dual marketing, and yet this week we see in hogs—and this week we see the result: 1,100 good jobs for the province of Manitoba.

They were wrong, Madam Speaker. We saw time and time again in our hospital system, in imposing many of the—the change at the Grace Hospital, a change that has resulted in 184 more hip and knee surgeries this year. They were wrong. Why? Because they are fundamentally afraid to look at things from a new approach and try to do things better. This government is always committed in looking for ways of doing things better.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe my question to the minister is: would the minister be prepared to jointly write together with us to

the private home care companies that have opened up to indicate where the government's policy is supposedly nonprivatization?

Madam Speaker, the minister is talking about dual marketing of agricultural commodities and is attempting to draw a parallel between that and health care. I ask you to call the member to order. If he cannot answer the question and has to compare it to agricultural commodities, then I suggest he not answer the question at all.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, my reference has obviously hit a sore spot in the opposition. My reference is to the fact that the New Democrats fundamentally are opposed to explore new ways of delivering service or governing the affairs of our province. The result is that you do not improve service to the people of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we are always prepared to look at new ways. The member talks about absolutely no private funders or users in home care. We use the Victorian Order of Nurses regularly. They are not a public body, and we will continue to use them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Kildonan, I would ask the honourable minister to respond to the question asked.

Workers Compensation Board Occupational Diseases—Dominant Cause

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): For over 10 years the Workers Compensation Board has been denying benefits to the families of deceased workers of Federal Pioneer Electric, workers who died of cancer caused by exposure to mineral oils which had been well documented to have carcinogenic properties.

The WCB has denied workers' claims based on the premise that dominant cause was not determined. I will table the WCB briefing note showing that the advice

given to the CEO not to pay the claims based on dominant cause was in fact done in error and should not have been used as the criterion for rejecting these claims.

I wanted to ask the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) now to recognize that dominant-cause test was the wrong test used to deny these claims in adjudicating the Federal Pioneer cases since this only became law on January 1, 1992, not 1980s, when these cases were raised, when the test should have been probable cause. Will the minister recommend that the WCB immediately reconsider the 10 outstanding cases of pancreatic cancer deaths so that these families do not have to wait another 10 years for justice?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): My honourable friend obviously was not listening very carefully. I indicated clearly yesterday that cases that were brought before the Workers Compensation Board in the 1980s will be adjudicated on the basis of the act that was in place at that time.

Any of these cases that were registered at that time will be adjudicated on that appropriate legislation. His reference to changes since then certainly do not apply in those cases.

Mr. Reid: The minister's own department did not even use the criterion that was appropriate for the time, which I have tabled—

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the minister to indicate what the WCB will be doing with the list of some 300 names of other Federal Pioneer employees who were blacklisted as involved with mineral oil and PCB oils. Will you be contacting these families and also contract to Dr. Anna-Lee Yassi to conduct further independent epidemiological studies to determine the impact on these people?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, the blacklist that the honourable member talks about is a list that was prepared by the union, and I know it is available for distribution. The corporation will be dealing with the claims that come forward, and if any of those

individuals wish to renew those claims, they can simply do that by contacting the corporation. They have indicated very clearly that they are prepared to review them. There is no statute of limitations involved on cases that were brought in the '70s or the '80s that were not dealt with appropriately. That can be done at this time.

* (1050)

Mr. Reid: Well, the minister will not commit to doing the study of these further 300 people then.

I want to ask the minister a further question, Madam Speaker. Considering that Mr. Gerhard Streuber died of stomach cancer, worked with mineral oils and PCB oils for much of his working life at Federal Pioneer, and considering that both oils are known to be carcinogens, will the Minister of Labour indicate that he is prepared to have the WCB review the case based on probable-cause test considering that the available medical evidence is there, and will the minister now commit to changing the legislation back from his dominant cause that his Minister of Health brought in a number of years ago and restore the probable cause as the test for these people?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, the use of mineral oil was used in plants such as this prior to 1975. These cases came forward in the 1980s to the Workers Compensation Board. Certainly these cases do go back a number of decades with different boards and different staff, different government in place. They were reviewed at that time, and the board at that time and the administration at that time rejected those claims. New evidence came forward in 1996 that mineral oil was the probable cause. Now those are being reviewed and in fact have been accepted.

Violence Against Women Firearms Control

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, we are not necessarily afforded the opportunity to be able to respond to the ministerial statement earlier today, but I wanted to, on behalf of my other two colleagues, express and echo many of the words that the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Vodrey)

said at the beginning of Question Period, and I look at the button and read from the button that we are all wearing today inside the Chamber: In commemoration of the 14 women killed in Montreal December 6, 1989, and all women who have suffered from violence.

This is indeed a very important day for us not to forget, and I guess the question I have is to ask the Premier—there were thousands of women across this country, women's organizations across this country, police associations across this country that believed that gun registration was something that was positive in order to help protect women.

I would ask the government if today it has any sort of documentation that shows that gun registration was in fact not the way to go, and that is the reason why we see a court challenge.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the government can give some sort of indication in terms of what cost there is going to be to the Manitoba taxpayer because the Province of Manitoba is taking intervener status, I believe, with the Alberta case on this particular issue, and if in fact that money could have been better spent on programs to prevent abuse towards women.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I will take that question as well on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I would suggest is that all members might want to reflect on that particular issue. It is something that was recommended in the Pedlar report, and I would ask the government to reflect on that.

Mr. Filmon: I will take that question as well as notice on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

Crisis Shelters Funding—Rural Manitoba

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, domestic violence is a very serious issue, not

only for urban women but for women in rural and northern Manitoba, but this government does not seem to understand that.

I would like to share with the minister a few comments made by rural women from the Lakeside women's resource centre and the Evergreen resource centre. These women say that with all the recommendations in the past, why is it that rural women are being ignored. Rural women are unable to utilize urban services. They say they need rural services that are visible and accessible. They also say: we feel very isolated and ignored by the present government.

Given these comments, when is this government going to start to show some compassion for rural and northern women and restore funding that has been cut, restore funding to crisis centres and ensure that further centres are not closed?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question, because it does provide me with the opportunity to indicate that this government does care about family violence no matter where it happens throughout the width and the breadth of this province. That is exactly why, as we look at implementing the recommendations from the Lavoie inquiry, there will be significant representation, already is significant representation from rural and northern Manitoba on the working groups.

As a matter of fact, there are many, many communities that are involved. We have representation from the community in Flin Flon, The Pas, Dauphin, Moose Lake, Winkler, Selkirk and Brandon, Portage la Prairie and the city of Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we believe that those that need the services and support those that need services right throughout the province need to be included. We will continue to work with all of those communities, all of those people in the communities to ensure that the services are implemented and improved in the best manner possible for all Manitobans.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the government is committed to services throughout Manitoba, can the minister explain then why the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre was

closed without review and women are forced to drive an hour to The Pas for shelter, and other shelters in rural Manitoba are operating at a bare-bones budget? When is the minister going to recognize that we have to have services in rural Manitoba because there is violence there also, and women are often left in very desperate situations?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, I thank my honourable friend for that question. I know that the communities of The Pas and Flin Flon are working very well together to try to ensure that all of the women in their communities that need support and services have those services, and we will continue.

We did increase funding to the shelter system and second-stage housing by \$125,000 in this year's budget. We have more money committed in the Department of Family Services for implementation of recommendations from the Lavoie inquiry. As the working groups that have been set up and will be set up do their work, they will be providing to us information on what needs to be done right throughout Manitoba for services to women in instances of family violence.

Lavoie Report Implementation Committee

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, given that women outside of Winnipeg feel that the Lavoie inquiry is Winnipeg-based and the implementation committee appears to be a Perimeter committee and does not reflect the views of women living outside of Winnipeg, will the minister, will this government immediately agree to add two representatives to the implementation committee, one for a rural representative and a northern representative to ensure that the issues facing these people are addressed?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question. What I want to indicate to my honourable friend is that we have done better than that. When all of the eight working groups are up and running, which will be by January, there will be 23 representatives from outside of the city of Winnipeg and there will be another 10 representatives from northern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, there will be 57 community representatives, including 90 percent of those agencies that we fund. There will be victims included in those working groups, and there will be those consumers of the service involved in the working groups. We have made sure that we are consulting with community organizations, those that need services from the system, to ensure that a comprehensive package of support is available to all Manitobans.

University of Manitoba Facility Upgrade

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the Premier may believe that the road to success is always under construction, but nowhere is this less true than at the universities of Manitoba where nine years of Tory neglect are evident in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Facilities are inadequate to meet new technologies. Animal care facilities in particular need immediate upgrading to meet the Canadian Council on Animal Care Standards for ventilation and exercise space. At one building, dogs must be exercised in the corridor with the obvious unsanitary consequences.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education to explain why it is she is prepared to put at risk the \$19 million of research money that comes to Manitoba and which, if these standards of animal care remain in their present condition, may well be forfeited.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, not accepting the assumption the member made in asking her question, we are aware of infrastructure problems at the University of Manitoba. We have been working very hard with university administration to identify those areas where we believe buildings need upgrading. We have just provided some \$5 million for upgrading fire codes, things that do not show but that are necessary for safety and good maintenance, good stewardship of the buildings. We will continue in those efforts to ensure that the infrastructure at the university, which was not sustained the way it could have been in years gone by, becomes a focus of attention. I have been out to the university to look at these buildings, and as I say, we have set money aside and will continue to work with the university to overcome the many decades of neglect that have been there at the university.

* (1100)

**University of Manitoba
School of Nursing—Disabled Access**

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I would like to table as a public document a document that the minister received, Urgent Renovation and Equipment Requirements at the University of Manitoba, which shows very clearly the nine years of Tory neglect of the infrastructure of the universities.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, to pose her question now.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister to explain why it is that she is prepared to tolerate the fact that the new college of nursing at the University of Manitoba has no disability access at all or that disabled students in a main arts building face a washroom journey to another building along a route that must be closed during after-office hours.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, again, not accepting the assumption inherent in the member's question that there is no caring on this side, a very incorrect assumption, I indicate to the member that I have been out to see the buildings that she has referred to in her question here. I have looked at the school of nursing at the University of Manitoba. I have asked for the material that I am receiving from the university as photographs, et cetera, that we could use, and I appreciate receiving same. I do not know if that is what she is referring to here, but certainly I have been out to tour the facilities. I have asked for photographs which I have received. That may or may not be what she has tabled, but we are aware of the problems and working with the universities to ensure that the far more than nine years—she seems to think for certain statistical purposes that the world started in 1988 but for other statistical purposes that it did not, and I realize that it is part of the need to be selective that they feel—but we are aware and consciously working on correcting any problems with infrastructure at the universities, plural.

**Children and Youth Secretariat
Funding**

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I was interested to read today in the paper that the

Minister of Family Services' deputy has said that the Child and Youth Secretariat is now going to address the issues of poverty and the lack of affordable child care in our province. This is after the government has made sweeping cuts and changes to areas of large government programs in social allowances, foster care, subsidized child care, public schools, children's health programs, cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars. Now they have a Child and Youth Secretariat with a budget of \$500,000 that is going to solve these problems.

I want to ask the minister why her original plans for the Child and Youth Secretariat which were to have government departments identify 2 percent of their spending on children and youth programs, which was over \$12.25 million, were changed. Can she tell us how much money is going to be allocated to the Children and Youth Secretariat to deal with these problems—as outlined in the paper today—of poverty and child care?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for the several questions that were in her comments just put on the record. I do want to indicate that government departments will be very actively participating in all of the early intervention and new initiatives that will be undertaken as a result of the co-ordination of activities through the Child and Youth Secretariat, and that all government departments that are involved in the secretariat will be contributing dollars towards several of the initiatives that will be undertaken.

So, Madam Speaker, I think some of the questioning is a bit premature, and as we move through the next few months and we have a budget announced by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), a lot of the detail around where new initiatives and where new spending will take place will occur. I welcome the opportunity through the Estimates to have full and frank discussion with my honourable friend, around all of the good things that will be happening, to try to ensure that children get off to a healthy start to life.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, my supplementary for the minister is: why does the Annual Report for the Child and Youth Secretariat for '96 and '97 not identify any of the spending that they took from other

departments and reallocated or spent differently? Can she tell us how much money last year was reallocated from government departments and spent, quote, differently by the Child and Youth Secretariat?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for her questions and comments. I do want to indicate that the Child and Youth Secretariat is there to facilitate co-operation and working together of government departments to ensure that children in Manitoba are best served through that co-ordinated effort. They are the facilitators of bringing community and government together to ensure that any initiatives, any programming that we are undertaking is doing the very best possible things for families and children that need our support.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Economic Growth

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, this past year has been a banner one for Manitoba and for Manitobans. The exciting news regarding the \$112-million Maple Leaf meats invested in Brandon and the eventual 2,200 jobs that will be created highlighted what has already been a tremendous year for our provincial economy. However, it is important that as these important investment announcements come, we do not lose sight of the fact that there is a longer-term goal as well.

We recognize that our success as a province is based not on sporadic growth and investment but upon stable and steady growth. That is why, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that while recent labour force statistics indicate that our province's seasonally adjusted jobless rate fell to 6.4 percent in November and that our monthly job-growth rate was the second best in all of Canada, it is a part of a longer-term pattern of growth and development.

In fact, Madam Speaker, for the eleven months leading to November 1997, our province has achieved a seasonally adjusted employment growth rate of 2.6 percent, third highest among the provinces and well

above Canada's 1.8 percent growth rate over the same period.

Madam Speaker, in the wake of major job creating investments, it should be noted that our government continues to focus on the long-term growth and prosperity of Manitoba. It is an approach which has seen us become a province of fiscal responsibility and unlimited opportunity, and it is an approach which will continue to make Manitoba stronger. Thank you.

Winnipeg High School Football League Trophy

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I rise on a member's statement. I want to pay tribute to an outstanding student at River East Collegiate, a Mr. Gordon Buck, who was recently awarded the Winnipeg High School Football League Trophy, the Harry Wood Memorial Trophy, for the player who best combines football, academics and community and school involvement.

The headline for the article says: Buck does it all at River East. It demonstrates some of the outstanding work that this young resident of North Kildonan has undertaken as a student at River East Collegiate. Besides starting on the offensive line for the City Championship Kodiaks, Gord Buck is involved with the peer counselling and tutoring programs, the school newspaper, the student council and the Manitoba NDP and various other charitable organizations.

* (1110)

I know Gord and worked with him last year in April in the federal election, and I did not know all the other outstanding things that he has done. He holds a 98.6 percent average, winning academic awards in debating, English, science, Canadian history—that subject we want to keep in the curriculum in Manitoba—computer science and writing. He also represents Manitoba as one of 12 Canadian students on an international exchange program in Hong Kong.

His teachers and coaches at River East Collegiate talk about his outstanding leadership, his strong intellect, the co-operative and supportive way he works with other students in the school. They make note that Mr. Gordon Buck may at one point accomplish one of his things on his "to do list," which is to become the Prime Minister of Canada.

I am sure we would all like to wish him well in continuing with all of his activities.

Stonewall Youth Justice Committee

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I would like to speak about the valuable work done by the Stonewall and District Youth Justice Committee. The committee, made up of 10 members from various south Interlake communities, is a community-based justice program, and it has been active in the area since 1984. The committee takes youth out of the courts and channels them through a community panel which determines their punishment for a crime which they have committed.

The youth, supported by family members, appear before a panel of community members and peers to talk about the crime—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members standing at the back of the Chamber to move their meetings to the loge or outside the Chamber. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Gimli.

Mr. Helwer: The youth, supported by family members, appear before a panel of community members and peers to talk about their crime and how their behaviour can be changed. The committee takes referrals from the courts, from Justice officials and from the fine option program and finds a suitable way to make the offender accountable to the community and to their victims.

The Stonewall and District Youth Justice Committee boasts a 90 percent success rate. It is successful in the fact that it helps reshape the attitude of the offender in that it finds solutions at the community level.

The Stonewall and District Committee is just one of the 67 youth justice committees offering the same fine service around the province. So I would like to congratulate the Stonewall and District Youth Justice Committee for their fine work in the community and for providing such a valuable service throughout the years. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Home Care Program

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement on home care. The home care system in Manitoba was rated the best system in North America until this Tory government came in and tried to tear it apart in order to make profits for their friends. In February 1996, when leaked Treasury Board documents proved that this government planned to privatize the entire system and lay off 3,000 home care workers, the government admitted that this was indeed their secret plan. It was only the vigilance and determination of the striking home care workers, with the support of the clients and their families, that made this government partially back down by privatizing only 25 percent of the home care services. The minister fully admitted that the privatization would not save any money. Even this Tory government could not pretend that service would improve.

This week the government finally admitted that privatization, even partial privatization of home care has been a disaster. The government now admits that low wages, high turnover rate of staff, lack of continuity of care and loss of government control over the service all contributed to the failure of this partial privatization of home care. The government has yet to apologize to the home care clients, to their families, the home care workers and to the public for their foolish and cruel attempt to destroy a model system of home care in this province, just as they tried to do it for the purpose of profit making offering on the altar of money-making mammon. Many of these home-care workers are new immigrants, new Canadians. The action of this government irretrievably hurt them and their families as well.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying that profit is no better than the care for people. People are higher than profits.

Video Lottery Terminals

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to express some disappointment in terms of a policy statement that appears to have been taken from the New Democrats which does disappoint me. The New Democrats have now indicated that they support VLTs in our restaurants

and bars, that in fact the NDP, if elected in government, would not take away the VLT machines.

In fact, and I quote from the article, their policy seems, and this is the critic for the NDP commenting on gambling: Their—the government's—policy seems to be based on the amount of money they can make from Manitobans, said MaryAnn Mihychuk, NDP Lotteries critic. However, Mihychuk admitted her party would not remove VLTs from Manitoba bars and restaurants if it were in power. I do not think we can afford to take \$125 million out of general revenues at this point.

Madam Speaker, I am standing today because I am hoping that the NDP will reflect on that particular policy and maybe reconsider and make a statement come Monday that would at least demonstrate that they are prepared to be a little bit more open and consult with constituents. I look at my colleague the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), which has a wonderful high school, as we all have high schools; but you can walk across the street and there are VLT machines in a restaurant. Do the NDP now support that? What would the principal over at the Maples high school have to say, someone of the name of Brian O'Leary have to say about that particular policy? I am disappointed that they would have taken that particular position. I still wait today for the government to take any sort of a position as opposed to try to shuffle the blame or to shuffle its responsibility off onto another appointed, a politically appointed group, and when they brought it in, they brought it in on a false pretence of other justifications.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and on the proposed amendment thereto of the official Leader of the Opposition, standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East who has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I want to carry on from where I left off yesterday talking about the economy and the factors

affecting the Manitoba economy and reflecting on the fact that we are not an economic island to ourselves, that we live in the Canadian economy, that we live in a North American economy. Indeed, we live in a global economy which does affect what happens in Manitoba most directly, more than we sometimes appreciate. When you look at the amount of exportation that goes on for Manitoba, whether it be agriculture or mining or whatever, you appreciate that world markets do have a direct impact on the level of production, the level of demand for our output. So I said a lot of nice things yesterday about the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey) and his department and his efforts with Maple Leaf Foods and the fantastically large new plant that is going to be going into Brandon and the good news from that. Today I would like to put that aside.

Let us talk about some of the realities of the Manitoba economy and some realities of our debt situation and some of the realities about the real wage levels that are affecting our workers in this province. I would like to begin by observing an article, statements made by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) yesterday and quoted in today's Winnipeg Free Press, about elements of the Manitoba economy, because there are some misimpressions, I believe, that the Premier is giving to the people of Manitoba. One in particular I would like to refer to is the statement that the Premier made that we are starting to pay back our share to Ottawa, and he was referring to the fact that we pay back millions of dollars in employment insurance contributions to Ottawa. In fact, in the article I think he makes a reference to \$300 million being transferred to Ottawa under the EI, the employment insurance fund. In other words, that is on a net basis after we take into consideration all the payments made to unemployed Manitoba workers from the fund and then compare it with all the payments made to the fund by Manitoba workers.

* (1120)

The fact is, Madam Speaker, and this is very important, this has been the case ever since that fund was set up. So let us not pretend or tell the people or mislead the people by saying we are starting to pay back our share. I recall when I was minister of employment services noting that we were paying hundreds of millions of dollars to Ottawa for

unemployment insurance or employment insurance that we were getting back. So this is not a new phenomenon. It has been with us for years.

As a matter of fact, ever since the labour force survey was established, Manitoba, along with the other two Prairie Provinces, has enjoyed among either the first, second or third place in low levels of unemployment. We have either had the lowest level, the second lowest or third lowest level of unemployment, and that is true perhaps without exception. There was perhaps one year where Ontario got to be third. But the fact that we have low unemployment rates translates into Manitoba workers paying more into the fund than we are getting out, and the Premier observes this as though this were something that has just started and as a result of his regime. Well, that is not the case. I repeat, it has been going on ever since that fund was established.

Also, I note, Madam Speaker, in his statement yesterday that we have some of the lowest personal income tax rates. He says we have not raised any major tax rates for 10 straight budgets. In fact, he refers then to the lowering of the personal income tax rate. Well, I recall as a member of the House back in '88 and 1990 when we had a minority government that this government did indeed reduce personal income tax rates, and we in the opposition voted for it. We supported that. We were not opposed to that. We supported that.

I believe one of the reasons that prompted a cut in taxes at that time was that the Premier and the government knew, because it was in a minority position, it had to go to the people within a year or two, which it did indeed in 1990, and what a way to go by saying, look, we have cut some income taxes, even though we were going to be facing some very, very serious deficits, which brings me to my next point, and that is that there is reference to us being fiscally responsible and living within our means, spending smarter and increasing efficiencies.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the budget document over the last decade or so, which covers a period of time of this government, you will find that the bottom line has not always been that great. To suggest, as it is suggested in the Premier's statement, that somehow or other the government has taken us out of a serious debt

situation, magically and positively and consistently over the years, is simply not true, because the fact is—now I am going to say right at the beginning, our debt situation has improved in spite of the impression being given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that it is such a terrific problem that that has to be the No. 1 priority for any surplus, but over the years we have had some very, very serious deficits.

As a matter of fact, the biggest deficit in our history was realized in the fiscal year 1992-93. I am simply quoting out of the last budget document, the 1997 budget document. In that year the bottom line, budgetary deficit, was \$566 million, but that was after the Minister of Finance took \$200 million out of his Fiscal Stabilization Fund, but that Fiscal Stabilization Fund, that \$200 million, he really got back in 1987-88 thereabouts, courtesy of a surplus that was left by the previous NDP government, plus some additional federal transfers.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I recall, back in that time, when the then minister, Mr. Clayton Manness, took \$200 million out of revenue to therefore show a small deficit rather than showing a surplus, which he could have shown as soon as he—in their very first budget they took the \$200 million out, set up this Stabilization Fund.

The Auditor at the time criticized the government and said this was not good bookkeeping; this was misleading the people of Manitoba and misleading everyone when you have done that, but they have this Fiscal Stabilization Fund and they put money in and out, and it becomes a shell game. You take it out when it suits your purpose; you put some money into it when it suits your purpose. In 1992-93, it suited the government's purpose to take \$200 million out of the fund and put it into the statement, and therefore instead of showing \$576 million deficit, which would have been the true deficit, they brought it down to \$566.

That figure, and the press appreciated this and reported on it, this was the biggest deficit that the people of Manitoba have ever experienced. The biggest, the largest deficit in our history. Far larger than anything that was experienced under the previous NDP government. We have had many other years of

serious deficits, '93-94. I will not quote all these figures here. There is a large amount. There are hundreds of millions of dollars worth of deficits.

So much so that indeed the per capita debt in Manitoba has grown, has gone up from 1988-89—and again I am just quoting out of the last budget document—of \$4,752 per person. That was the debt per person. Today, under this government, it has grown by about a thousand dollars. It is now \$5,735. That is the net general purpose debt. That is the one that is often referred to, because this is excluding in effect the utilities, which are self-sustaining or not as important in considering our debt situation.

At any rate, so there has been an increase in the debt. There has been an increase in the debt burden. On the other hand, if you want to look at it in terms of what our economy is doing and what our total spending situation is, indeed the burden has been reduced, and I refer to some figures here. If we relate it to the GDP, it has now fallen somewhat from 24.8 percent of the GDP, which was in 1988-89, down to 23.6 percent in 1997-98. That is based on the budget document and some updated estimates based on the preliminary financial report for the year ended March 31, 1997. So when you relate it to the total economy, the debt burden is somewhat lower.

The total net debt fell from about 50.0 percent to 45.4 percent. At any rate, when you compare it, however, with the total spending on public debt to total spending, public debt costs, that is the interest on the debt, declined slightly since 1988-89. They were 10.4 percent according to the budget document. The most recent estimates show it down slightly, but this document shows it exactly the same, 10.4 percent. In other words, there has been no change from the beginning of this government's period in office until today. At least according to this document, there has been no change. The burden has remained the same, roughly 10 percent. Slightly more than 10 percent of the total spending goes to interest on the debt.

An Honourable Member: But they want us to believe it is a lot higher.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Yes. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), however, is going around the province

holding his consultations with the public of Manitoba and getting across the message that we have got such a serious debt problem that indeed this has to be the No. 1 priority. With any additional surplus he may have, we must and should pay down the debt. Well, before I go further, I want to point out of course that the reason he has been able to show some black ink in his statements recently is because of the massive cuts that have occurred in real dollars, the cuts that have occurred to major areas of responsibility.

* (1130)

In the case of health care, again, just—I was able to have a document comparing '92 to '97. In real dollars, that is when you squeeze the inflation out, there has been a decline in health care spending in this province of 9 percent; 1992 compared to 1997, the most current estimate we have, there has been a real decline in spending on health care, 9 percent. If you look at social services, there has been a decline to even a greater extent. It has been a decline of 12 percent, spending 12 percent less on social services today than we did in 1992. If you look at education, there too there has been a serious decline of 9.4 percent in total spending on our education budget. In other words, what we have seen is a Minister of Finance who is going around the province bragging how great his books look, how he has moved to these surpluses, but he does not discuss the fact that this has been done on the backs of school teachers, students, on the backs of the ill, the sick, the people who depend on our health care system and on the backs of the poorest of the poor, people who depend on welfare and whose welfare rates have been cut, taking money from those who least can afford to have any of their income reduced from the very meagre level that it already is.

So that is the reality. We have got this on the backs of the people of Manitoba. You can look at other examples. What about Pharmacare? We have got black figures because we have transferred this burden of paying drugs in a very massive way, in a serious way, to the people of Manitoba to the extent that there are, I am convinced, thousands of people in Manitoba today who are more reluctant to take the medication that they should be taking, as prescribed by their doctors, because of the cost involved. There is a group in there, low middle income people in particular who

have to pay more for Pharmacare, for their drugs now, who have to make some serious decisions, and this is a backward step. If anything, drugs should be as free as possible because the utilization—and I am talking about prescription drugs, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the use of medication is a preventative measure.

I recall being at a major announcement in Brandon with Ayerst, and we were talking—this gentleman from a pharmaceutical company from Montreal—about the whole question of using medication and so on—of course, he is with the industry, but I agreed with him. Medication used properly as prescribed by the doctor does reduce health care costs. It keeps people out of hospitals. It keeps people out of nursing homes. It extends lives. It enables people to live a better quality of life assuming it is the proper drugs, of course, and assuming the doctors diagnose properly and that they are using these prescriptions properly. So it is sad. So there again we have transferred that cost.

What about nursing homes? The nursing home rates have gone to the moon, and there has been a very serious transfer of cost to people who can ill afford to pay this additional amount for nursing homes. Couples where the one partner may be in the home, the other is still living in their own house, and they are having an extremely difficult time making ends meet because they have to pay out all this additional money for nursing home rates.

An Honourable Member: Twenty thousand dollars and something.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Twenty thousand dollars. Thousands of dollars. As a matter of fact, I have said this in this House before, people on basic Old Age Pensions have been forced to pay so much that they can qualify for welfare. I have written in the past to people in my riding, have told them to look into it, have their family members look into it, and would you not know that there were actually some people who qualified for welfare because the government took so much money from them for nursing homes. Some of them are Conservatives too, I might add. One of them anyway was. At any rate, I am saying that is where we get our black figures from because we have reduced in real dollars health care spending, social services spending, education spending. We have transferred costs.

Unfortunately, and this is really sad, and I know the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey), I am sure, would agree with me, it was really a sad day when Don Orchard, the Minister of Health at that time, got up and said we are eliminating the child's dental program. It was rural; it was a great program. It was delivered cost efficiently through schools, dentists and dental nurses working together, and it was great. It was low cost, and it has a payoff in the future, because what it does, I mean, it reduces dental costs, dental repairs that would have to occur when the young people became adults. So those are some reasons.

I also want to make the observation that when the minister goes around, as he has, consulting with people I would suggest that he gets a biased crowd there, generally speaking. Yes, it is open to the public, but I know there are some people that tend to come that are a little more willing to agree with the minister and his message that any surplus available should go as a top priority to paying down the debt. I could not help but observe that the same day that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) was in Brandon with a group of approximately 75 people, I guess it was at the Victoria Inn, at any rate this paper, the Brandon Sun, had the story that we have heard before that debt is a major problem according to Stefanson, and most of the people there sort of agree that this should be the No. 1 priority: we should use our money to pay down the debt as opposed to cutting taxes or as opposed to beefing up spending on health care or education or whatever.

The very same night, and this was purely coincidental, the Brandon School Division had arranged for a public seminar, a public forum, to discuss what should happen to the Brandon School Board budget. What should they do in the year ahead? Because as these officials, the school board people, will tell you in Brandon they have had a very difficult time. They have been squeezed. They have had to cut. They have had to lay off teachers. They have had to increase sizes of classes. They have not had the equipment that they have needed, et cetera. What are they to do? They do not want to raise municipal taxes if they can help it, and yet in reality they have had less monies from the province.

If you look at it in terms of actual purchasing power, again in 1988 from all the documents that we have, you

can see that per student or per pupil there has been a loss of roughly \$350 per student in real terms available to the students, to the pupils in Manitoba in the public education system. When you go to the school divisions, you go to the schools, you talk to the people, the trustees, the officials, the teachers, you really see what is happening, and it is serious. It is undermining our public education system.

But the forum, the point I was making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that that forum and headlines in the paper, the people there wanted the government to spend more money on education, not to take any surplus money and pay down the debt, which was the message that came out of the ministers' forum. So here you have—and, incidentally, they had 75 people to approximately the same number of people, and I said it was just purely coincidental that these meetings were held on the same evening. You get these two stories, I mean, so who are we to believe? Are we really to believe the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) who says, well, really the people of Manitoba want him to use this money to pay down the debt, or do we believe the public forum held by the school board where people came, including people from the Chamber of Commerce, incidentally, the mayor and so on. They were there. They were quoted in the paper, but the general thrust was that we need more money for the education system. We have to support our education system.

Having said all these things, I want to make another observation, and that is, the concern about the debt is not a monopoly of the other side. Somehow we are sort of painted as though we are the people that like to get into debt and want the debt to get bigger and bigger. That is not the case. That is not the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a matter of fact, you know, for people who think that you equate social democracy with higher debts, this is just nonsense. The essence of social democratic philosophy or democratic socialism, whatever you want to call it, is to work towards a more equitable distribution of the wealth among the people in the community, among the people in our society, a more equitable distribution of income and not to be living in a lot of debt. As a matter of fact, the CCF-NDP governments in Saskatchewan had a record of being very, very frugal, and it was the Devine Conservative government that got the Saskatchewan debt, Saskatchewan budget into the shape it became.

The difference here—and when you say the reverse happened here I want to tell you in the Schreyer government, and I have to go back and look at the figures, I believe we had a lower debt burden at the end of our Schreyer years in government than we had at the beginning, a few percent. But in the Pawley years, where the debt arose, not in Manitoba alone but across the country in '82-83—[interjection] No, '82-83 we had a recession, and when you have a recession—if you had a serious recession next year, you will quickly find yourself in a deficit whether you like it or not. What happened also, the interest rates were up to the moon, 18 to 19 percent interest rates, I mean, all that combined. Also, what the Pawley government tried to do in '82 and '83 was try to stimulate the economy to create more jobs. In fact, we—[interjection] Well, we were the first out of the recession at that time. Towards the end of the period we tried to correct that, which we did, to increase revenues to pay off that, and we were doing that. You were the recipient, you were the beneficiary of that in 1988-89. That is a fact, and that is why Clayton Manness could come here and take \$200 million. He could have had a surplus, but he took \$10 million and put it in the fund.[interjection] I do not know. What was that again?

* (1140)

I said a lot of nice things yesterday about the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey). He was not here to see it, but he can read it. I just want to get that point across that our concern about paying down the debt is not necessarily, is not a monopoly, is not of the right. In fact, Tommy Douglas made many a speech about the need to not—[interjection] Two minutes? Is that all? Oh, God.

At any rate, my time is gone and I did not realize where the time has gone. I just wanted to state that in a relative sense our debt situation is not bad, and it was not bad when these people took office. When this government took office we were among the low in terms of—among the lowest, certainly not above average in terms of interest of our total spending paid towards the debt. I note now in '96-97 we are second lowest in the country, tied with Alberta. That is the amount of interest as a percentage of total spending paid on the debt. So in a relative sense we are fine. So I really think that the Minister of Finance is going around the

country more or less misleading people and saying this is the priority, this is the way we have got to go, rather than facing the reality and facing the facts that our debt situation is not that bad and that we have got some very serious social problems, very serious problems of undermining our education system, very serious problems in the quality of health care.

I wish I had more time because I could go into this in more detail, but I see my light is blinking and the Deputy Speaker is smiling at me, so I think I shall conclude with those few remarks and perhaps have an opportunity to discuss these matters again on some other occasion.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed honoured to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the constituents of Sturgeon Creek, and I have had this opportunity in the past and I am honoured once again to be able to speak about our government's past accomplishments, our current initiatives and our vision for the future of Manitoba. Before I came back to this Chamber, I was looking forward to the opportunity of participating in this throne speech, and let me just preface my remarks by saying that with the manoeuvring and the things that have been going on in this Chamber since we came back, since the throne speech was delivered by His Honour, we have seen everything but the debate on the throne speech with regard to the opposition members who have come in here with obviously another agenda.

You know, prior to the throne speech being delivered, I had the opportunity to travel a little bit throughout the area and attend different functions and business conferences, and it was really exciting to see what was happening here in Manitoba. But the opposition members across the way have come in here with an agenda because they seem to have difficulty dealing with the issues, the real issues of creating a great economy in the province of Manitoba.

When we hear the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) attempting to take credit for all the good will and the economic things that are happening here in the province of Manitoba, that is the

biggest farce that I can see and the biggest disservice that he is offering to his constituents in Brandon East. The honourable member for Brandon East should be ashamed of himself to be able to stand in his place and just deliver these remarks. The honourable member should know better after being here for the number of years that he has been here.

But let me not diverge on this aspect of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think what is important here is what is happening here in Manitoba, and they obviously have not come into this throne speech—at limited time. I have had to make changes with another colleague in order to be able to make this address because I feel it is important for me as the member for Sturgeon Creek. I have very limited time as an upper bencher to be able to give my remarks and the opposition members over there standing on points of privileges and all those things over the last week, and the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I mean he is part of that. I mean he stands in the back of the Chamber here with a big grin on his face, and he has had to apologize for the things that he has brought to this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition is a poor excuse for an opposition. The people here in Manitoba are realizing that. They talk about—and they stand on the matter of privilege in this Chamber with regard to putting out the lights.

I do not think any one of them have their lights turned on over there. They have not had their lights turned on, so how can we be looking at turning out the lights, putting out the lights on the honourable members across the way? I am ashamed as a member, I am truly ashamed as a member in this Chamber, to be in the same class and putting ourselves in the same class as what these members have done in terms of what has been going on in addressing the ills and the confrontations that they have been imposing on the Speaker.

This is something that they have brought in and they came in with an agenda, and it is obvious that they did not come in with the agenda on debating the throne speech. I have come here this morning to take the high road on this, but when I hear the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) stand in his

place and put remarks on, and maybe he feels that if he thinks this long enough it will come true.

But I think the people in Manitoba are smarter than the honourable member for Brandon East. If he thinks that he is going to be able to convince the people of Manitoba that he is partly responsible for the good wealth and the prosperity in this province under the leadership of Howard Pawley and Premier Schreyer, that is a real joke.

I do have to apologize for my somewhat aggressive approach to this, making this throne speech, but I just could not deal with this after the remarks from the honourable member for Brandon East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, getting back to where I thought I was going to begin. I would like to welcome everybody back to this Chamber, to be able to sincerely debate the throne speech because as I said at the beginning, I was really looking forward to what was happening in this province, because I work considerably long hours and put in a lot of time in talking to the people, in the business community especially, and the seniors in Sturgeon Creek to have an understanding of what was happening in the province of Manitoba.

There is a lot of good will out there. There is a lot of good understanding and comfort in spite of what the honourable members across the way say, but when I began this morning, what I wanted to do was not only to welcome all honourable members back to this Chamber but to welcome our new member, the newest member, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) to this Chamber. I do wish him well. I hope that he will have an opportunity to participate and learn as many of us have here since we have been here, and certainly since I have been here since 1990.

I also wanted welcome the pages, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that this is a real learning experience for them. I think that there is an opportunity that is offered to very few people in this province, students in this province of Manitoba, just like it is very rare for us as members. There are very few people. We are among the privileged to be able to represent so many people in this growing and prosperous province that we live in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I trust that the members of this House have been able to return to their constituencies and to be able to talk to the people that they represent because that is the real important issue here. I am real proud of the association that I have in Sturgeon Creek with a fine association, the Sturgeon Creek Constituency Association, a group of directors and executive members who work.

They are the eyes and ears of the constituency, and they enable me to represent with their help the people of Sturgeon Creek the way they should be represented. I hope that the people of Sturgeon Creek recognize their efforts and also appreciate what we are doing, because it is not only what I am doing as the MLA. I believe that we as members of this Chamber, because of the amount of time that we have to spend on those areas, do not have the same opportunities to be able to go out and talk to the people as often as we should and want to.

The throne speech of this government outlines a vision for the future, and Manitoba's future looks very bright. It is one that is growing in economic prosperity that will provide and protect Manitobans' essential services of health, education, and support the families of the most vulnerable. Fiscal management is the underlying theme of our economic strategy because responsible taxation and public spending are essential for economic growth and job creation. I think that is something that we as a province have been very fortunate to be able to achieve, the level of success that we have been able to achieve. I hope that my small part that I play in Sturgeon Creek in working with the businesses that I too will be able to make my contribution along with many of my colleagues on this side of the House who are working in the same direction.

The opportunities that we have been able to support and to be there for the business community and to work along with them hand in hand and be aware of what direction they are, I think it is most important that we do not go out there and take the responsibility of doing the things that they are capable of doing for themselves, but help them to create the environment to enable them to succeed. I support those businesses that are taking the risks that they are taking and the economic benefits that they are contributing to the framework that our

government has established and has been a catalyst for our provincial economy.

* (1150)

As the legislative assistant to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, it has always been a pleasure for me to discuss the economic growth and the bright future of our great province and the rewards of our economic stewardship are numerous. Manitoba's merchandise exports to the United States rose by 15 percent this year making the sixth consecutive year of double-digit growth in exports to the United States, and this year also marked the sixth consecutive year of growth in private investment. Private investment in any area of the economy is what makes the wheels turn. These are the people who are taking the risks, these are the people who are creating the opportunities for jobs. All we have to do is to go out there as members of this Chamber to encourage them and to support them in the efforts that they are putting forward.

These strong economic indicators have had a positive effect on Manitoba's job creation, and Manitoba leads the nation in job growth with more than 13,000 new jobs created this year alone. Astoundingly almost all this job growth has been in the private sector and most of these jobs are full-time jobs. This has driven Manitoba's unemployment rate to its lowest point in 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Quite an accomplishment for a province that just a few short years ago went through one of the worst recessions that this province has experienced.

This has driven Manitoba—the full-time jobs that have been created have driven Manitoba's unemployment rate to its lowest point, and it is because of this that November marked the eighth consecutive month that Manitoba's unemployment rate has been below 7 percent. The Conference Board of Canada has referred to Manitoba's strong job creation and has predicted that our economy will create approximately 23,000 jobs over a two-year period between 1997 and 1998. The throne speech has already said that there are more Manitobans working today than in any previous year in Manitoba's history, thanks to an economy managed by our prudent fiscal management. This is a record of which I and our government are not only proud, but we should be very proud, and we should be telling other

people. The opposition members tend to take us on another agenda. Our policy is strong fiscal management, and targeted tax cuts have been successful in creating jobs.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

At an open house and a ribbon-cutting ceremony yesterday, Madam Speaker, National Healthcare Manufacturing Corporation opened its new state-of-the-art robotic assembly line, and National Healthcare has provided tremendous economic and employment benefits to the constituency of Sturgeon Creek and to the province, and I am confident that that growth will continue. I am confident that it will continue because of the commitment to the people, the management and staff at National Healthcare and the support that I get from my colleagues, and I want to thank the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) and the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) for being there and participating in this ribbon-cutting ceremony. It meant a lot to the members of the staff and management at National Healthcare, and I think that those are things that we must continue to do.

National Healthcare's facility manufactures prepackaged medical and surgical trays for use in hospitals, long-term care facilities and dental offices in North America, and this venture serves as an excellent example of how governments can work with local entrepreneurs to create jobs and use technology to expand businesses, making them more competitive in the global economy. I sincerely congratulate the staff of National Healthcare for their continued efforts that help make Manitoba strong.

Many people are not aware of the number of large businesses that operate in the Sturgeon Creek constituency. Besides National Healthcare, many other companies play an important role in the provincial economy. Companies such as Boeing and MacDon Industries, among others, play an important role in our provincial economy, Madam Speaker. The employment opportunities they create are usually high-technology, high-paying jobs that offer skilled and talented workers a chance to work and raise their families in Manitoba. Sturgeon Creek is also the home

to the Canadian Forces base in Winnipeg, a major national defence air force base, and I was proud to take part a few short years ago to ensure that the long-term viability of this base would stay in Winnipeg. This government supported me in that task that I had to take responsibility for because of the federal government's decisions to make some changes with bases across the country, and I want to thank again because the people at the Forces base in Winnipeg have come to me many times, and I convey that without the support of my colleagues in government, that success would not have been achieved, so I thank all my honourable members and colleagues in the government for that—to be reminded of the efforts that they put forward in supporting me in that mission.

Employers such as National Healthcare, MacDon Industries, Boeing, the Department of National Defence are needed to create a solid employment base for Manitoba. Just in the Sturgeon Creek, the Murray Park and around the base—when we consider the number of employers, the job opportunities that these few companies offer, it is astronomical. It is encouraging to witness the growth that these industries in Sturgeon Creek are doing and the fiscal impact that they have on the province. Just this fall the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) and myself, along with our Premier (Mr. Filmon), participated in the expansion of another company.

Winpak Limited is located in Sturgeon Creek whose expansion is creating economic benefits for Manitobans and investing in this expansion \$33.8 million to create 81 more new jobs, boosting the company's workforce to almost 400 employees. This expansion will ensure that the Winnipeg plant continues to be Winpak's main manufacturing operation in North America, and as I said to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, there still are additional opportunities at Winpak as far as further expansions in the years, and we have to position ourselves and work with this company, along with the federal government, to ensure that this further expansion can take place here in Manitoba rather than somewhere else in the world.

Madam Speaker, our government will continue to seek out new economic initiatives for our province, and as such we will continue to support Winpak in their initiatives.

The other initiative that is really gaining lots of momentum in something that I think we all relish to achieve is the concept of Winnport, which is the result of a recognition by both the private and public sectors that an opportunity exists to develop Winnipeg into a major transportation and multimodal distribution centre. Winnport would be a major economic boost for the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba, and Winnipeg being well-placed strategically to capitalize on the need to transport goods quickly and efficiently between North America and markets in Asia and Europe.

Winnport would be a transportation and distribution centre for the future where providers of air, road and rail transportation, warehousing and related services would be located, along with manufacturing and distribution centres in a foreign trade zone. Winnport has the potential to provide significant economic opportunities for Manitoba in Manitoba, and it is estimated that if Winnport were to become a reality, 500 jobs would be created immediately in the province and 6,000 more jobs would be created in the long term. Winnport is also expected to generate \$595 million in revenues and \$105 million in civic, provincial and federal taxes. Our government supports the Winnport initiative for these economic benefits that would be provided to Manitoba. While I continue recounting the success stories of large businesses in the province of Manitoba, I would like to say a few words about the small businesses that are present and operating in Sturgeon Creek.

* (1200)

Small businesses employing fewer than 50 people are a powerful economic engine in this province. An article in the Winnipeg Sun this year indicated that small businesses provide 34 percent of the total employment in our province creating nearly 50,000 new jobs over the last decade. In salary alone, small businesses contribute \$272 million to the provincial economy.

Madam Speaker, I recently attended the Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention, and I was sincerely impressed with the level of enthusiasm the mining industry has about the future of mining in the province of Manitoba. Our government is committed to

supporting this thriving industry, so that it continues to grow in the future and the long-term future of this province. By streamlining the legislation regulations and procedures, our government has built a stable and attractive investment environment for mining in this province.

The mining industry has not always been as prosperous as it is today. I think if we look back in history, it has taken more than a decade to erase the effects of the NDP's mismanagement in the mining sector. I bring you back to 1975, when the NDP government under Howard Pawley, which the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is so proud of, and wants to bring back these times as being good times.

Under Howard Pawley, put in place a program that allowed the NDP government to enter into a mandatory partnership with mining companies. The honourable members across the way— I mean, it is really funny to see what humours these members over there. They are short visioned with their lights out and nobody home. [interjection] The honourable member says we keep punching their lights out. Like I said earlier, I do not think they have had their lights turned on, so how could we put their lights out?

Madam Speaker, the effect of this program was to discourage future mining exploration in Manitoba. However, a P.C. government under Premier Sterling Lyon rescinded that program in 1981, if we remember, and the slow process of rebuilding the mining industry in the province of Manitoba started to begin. Our government has worked with the industry to resurrect the mining sector to its present state. We have worked to encourage entrepreneurship and have strengthened the protection and security of property rights, particularly as it relates to mining exploration and operations and we will continue on this path.

Our government is aware that mining is the second largest primary industry in Manitoba, next to agriculture. Mining is growing by leaps and bounds. Mining contributes more than \$1 billion to the province of Manitoba economy annually and provides approximately 4,300 direct jobs, plus another 12,000 to 15,000 indirect jobs. It is an integral part of the economic and social life for many communities,

especially in northern Manitoba. Our government wants to support an industry that is so important to so many Manitobans and their families. By working with members of the industry, Manitoba has gone from the highest combined income and mining rates to one of the lowest in Canada for the new mine developments, thanks to initiatives such as the 7 percent investment tax credit, an improved processing of allowance deductions. We also phased out the PST on electricity used in mining manufacturing and exploration.

The mining sector has responded enthusiastically to the opportunities available in Manitoba. In 1996, exploration expenditures were up \$40 million, an increase of nearly 25 percent over the previous year. New frontiers await development in Manitoba, and there are companies ready to enter this growing industry in this province, Madam Speaker, companies such as Gossan Resources which is exploring Manitoba's Interlake region; ProAm Explorations which is examining opportunities in the area between Selkirk and Winnipeg; and Falconbridge, a company based in the Sturgeon Creek constituency, that is exploring for additional nickel deposits in the North along with Inco and other exploration companies.

* (1210)

Most Canadian provinces talk about supporting their mining industry, but our government does more than talk. It makes miners and explorers feel wanted in this province, Madam Speaker. I think in order to experience that, one would only have had to attend the recent mining convention that was held a few short weeks ago which I had the opportunity to attend along with the Minister of Mines (Mr. Newman) for the Province of Manitoba.

In addition to the mining economy in this province, the agriculture sector is another part of the economy that has performed well over the year, over the last few years as a matter of fact. The Winnipeg Free Press, as an example, reported that Manitoba farmers posted the second highest net income ever in 1996 and are poised for another banner year in 1997. I really wish our farmers well. They are certainly deserving of any wealth that comes their way, and I am sure that, Madam Speaker, the commitment that this government has in working with the farming community will assist them

in achieving their goals. Our government will continue to work with the farmers to encourage them to diversify their operations while we search for additional value-added initiatives that will allow Manitoba farmers to achieve consistently high results year after year. However, we will ensure through regulation that management of livestock waste does not harm our environment.

Madam Speaker, Tuesday's announcement by Maple Leaf meats that it will invest \$112 million to build a world-class pork processing plant in Brandon is another indication of how well the agricultural sector is performing in our province. When construction of this plant is completed in 1999, almost 1,200 people will be employed at this facility, and there is a strong possibility that an additional 1,000 people, a total of 2,200 employees will be employed by Maple Leaf meats in Brandon.

Why did Maple Leaf meats decide to develop a processing facility in Brandon, you may ask? Part of the answer can be found in the fact that the area has the cheapest food cost for livestock in the region. Another reason relates to an increase in hog production by Manitoba farmers, and some credit has to go to the City of Brandon which does not have a business tax, making it a desirable location for any employer. Other factors include our government's persistence in developing a north-south trade corridor from Churchill to Mexico City and our commitment to developing the Winnport initiative, which I have already spoken of. This initiative makes Manitoba an attractive place to invest, but most of all, what really made the difference was the Minister of Agriculture's (Mr. Enns) position on establishing dual marketing in the province of Manitoba for hogs.

The honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) says hogwash. I do not understand how this honourable member can represent a constituency that has an economy supported by many, many farmers, and I dare say many hog producers. The honourable member I think should go back and talk to his constituents because obviously he has lost touch with his constituents.

You know, Michael McCain, I think, said that best in talking about—and it is not this government that is

saying that, it is Michael McCain, the CEO and president of Maple Leaf—establishing dual marketing, we would not have had those 1,200 and 2,200 jobs in Brandon. So the people of Manitoba cannot think what the opposition were advocating but what this government, the role that this government played in establishing this dual marketing.

Manitoba's access to foreign markets and our government's continued efforts to develop trading relationships makes this province an attractive location for business that provides jobs for Manitobans. Manitobans' growing exports have made a strong contribution to the provincial economy with international exports doubling over the last five years. This is why our government will continue to capitalize on our economic growth by participating in a Team Canada trade mission to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile in January 1998. The throne speech stated that our provincial debt is beginning to be repaid, and Manitobans are starting to receive the rewards of our government's balanced budgets.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that I had the opportunity to attend some of those forums that the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) took around this province, which the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) criticized. Obviously he has not been talking to his people in Brandon East to get an understanding of that.

Madam Speaker, I see my time is running short. I did want to address another initiative that has caused the people of Sturgeon Creek and that is in the health care aspect with regard to the Grace Hospital.

Madam Speaker, one of the things in the last session we talked about and the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Health critic, criticized and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) criticized was our position in terms of the obstetrics decision that was made at the Grace Hospital. Although the member for St. James is in a position within her catchment area and is affected, and the people there are affected by the decisions that are made at the Grace Hospital, they made no contribution in terms of what the long-term economic viability of the operation of the Grace Hospital.

I can tell you, the staff, the nurses, the obstetricians, the administration at the Grace Hospital have to be commended for the decision and what they were standing for, because although this decision was probably one of the hardest decisions that I have had to deal with over the seven-plus years that I have been in government, I do want to take this opportunity to thank the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) for working with me and the administration and the staff at the Grace Hospital in coming to a very favourable resolve. Because it is the hip replacements and the knee replacement operations that are going to benefit the constituents of Sturgeon Creek far more because I have to remind you that Sturgeon Creek has the highest population of seniors in the entire province. It is those people who are going to benefit by those 184 additional operations that the Department of Health and the Grace Hospital are going to be able to participate in. That is going to ensure the Grace Hospital the opportunity to deal with the deficits and not be taken down the road that the honourable members across the way are advocating.

* (1220)

I do want to thank you for this opportunity to put these words on the record and I will have an opportunity at another time to complete my remarks. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to stand and rise once again to speak to yet another throne speech. I do approach this one somewhat different than I have in the past as many have observed from within the Chamber that our party seems to be in a state of unknown currently. Over the weekend we are hoping to see a little bit more clarity brought to it.

But having said that, for my constituents who are in fact my first priority are the people in which I will articulate no matter what happens, in terms of what is in their best interests. I would offer that assurance to each and every one of my constituents.

I wanted to welcome the members back to the Chamber, in particular extend a welcome to the new member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou); to our pages, in particular Melody, who is actually a

constituent of mine, lives in the area of Meadows West which is a wonderful area of Inkster; but to extend also a welcome to our new assistant clerk and a hearty welcome to all those who have come back.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to pay tribute to those Manitobans who put in so much effort in terms of the crisis of the year, that being the flood of the century, and the high sense of co-operation that was seen from all political parties, from all Manitobans. It makes me feel good about being a Manitoban when I see people working together as much as we did during that particular crisis. As I indicated earlier when I first stood, what I was hoping to be able to do by standing today actually is just to put a few words on the record with the idea on Monday of being able to articulate on exactly what I will be doing with respect to the throne speech.

There are a number of concerns that I have with respect to the government. There are a number of concerns that I have with respect to the official opposition and the role which they play inside the Chamber.

There is also a great deal of concern that I have with respect to my own party, the party that I have dedicated so many years of my life to. Over the weekend, as I have indicated to my wife, that there will be a great deal of reflection, self-reflection, as to what it is that we feel is in the best interests of my constituents.

Madam Speaker, I have indicated in the past that I will be, as much as possible, dedicated to the Liberal Party because I do believe in Liberal philosophy. But equally I believe that there has to be a provincial Liberal Party that has the ability to be able to provide all Manitobans the opportunity to vote for in a legitimate way. I anxiously await to see how 207 selected people from within the province of Manitoba will vote tomorrow. In fact, I understand over 140 of those individuals have voted.

There are some concerns that I have in terms of the way in which it has been conducted. I resent the fact that people have not been able to have a list of those delegates that are able to vote. I resent the fact that provincial Liberals, past candidates, individuals that have sacrificed so much over the years, not being

afforded the opportunity to review the leadership of our party. I am hoping that those 207 people that are eligible will recognize the importance of having a strong provincial party. On Monday it is my intention to indicate and to take action what is in the best interest of my constituents and all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, on Monday as I reflect over the weekend with my constituents, with my wife, with my colleague from The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), with my colleague from St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) who have been both playing very supportive roles for me, I will then make some sort of a judgment in terms of how I

can best represent my constituents between now and the next provincial election.

I see, Madam Speaker, it is now 12:30, and I will continue my debate on this important debate on Monday. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Inkster will have 35 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, December 5, 1997

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