



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

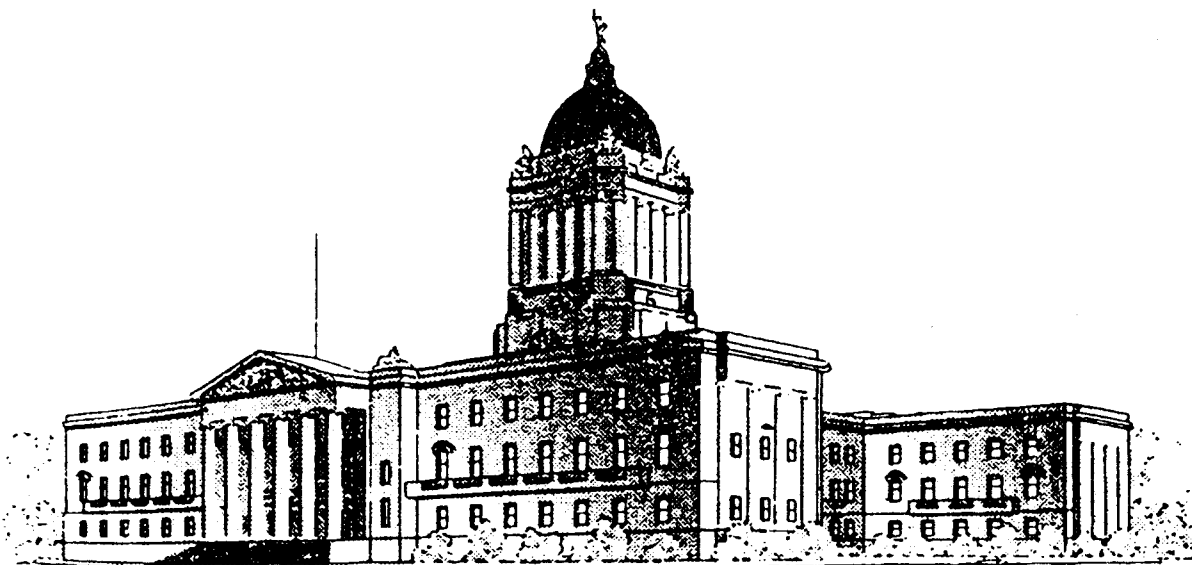
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions

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

As I reported yesterday, we have had heavy rain last week and more heavy rains this week, continuing to create flooding conditions in the Souris River watershed. Due to these conditions, we have localized flooding that is redeveloping in several areas. Several more areas received heavy rain last week and again last night, exacerbating the problems.

The forecast for the Souris River is unchanged from yesterday and calls for crests at a foot lower than levels in mid-April. However, if heavy additional precipitation develops, forecasts will need to be revised upwards. Since yesterday the Souris River rose a third of a foot at Melita and Napinka but remained relatively unchanged from Hartney to Wawanesa. The river is expected to crest at Melita between May 17 and 21. Gradual but steady rises are expected for the next 10 days.

A temporary dike is being constructed along Provincial Trunk Highway 3 after being taken down about three weeks ago following the last crest. It is anticipated the river will crest approximately within one foot of last month's peak. With the heavy rains over the last week, Madam Speaker, there is the possibility of flooding in some low-lying areas along the Assiniboine River between Portage la Prairie and Headingley. This is where the cumulative impacts begin to be felt, because flows in this area will be increased from 7,000 cfs to 8,000 cfs in order to reduce inflows into Lake

Manitoba. Flows from the Portage diversion have increased due to heavy rains, and outflows from Lake Manitoba will be increased from 4,400 cfs to 7,500 cfs to prevent this lake rising to excessive levels.

Farmers across Manitoba and particularly in the southwestern part of the province are eagerly waiting for the rains to stop so that they can return to their fields, and certainly we share their concern.

* (1335)

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for bringing this information to the House and bringing us up to date as to what is happening along the Souris River. We hope that the weather pattern will change so that indeed the flooding that is forecast will not actually happen.

We also realize that this is an ongoing problem with flooding in many parts of the province, and we encourage the government when this situation is finished that we look at some long-term solutions in many of the areas where this continues to be an ongoing problem, not only in the southwest part of the province but in many parts of the province. For example, in the Swan River area we are experiencing the same things, where every time there is a heavy rain there is flooding onto farmland, and it is a problem that must be addressed.

I want to say that all of us on this side of the House hope that the weather will change very soon and farmers can get on to seeding and putting the crop in the ground, a very important part of the economy in this province. When we look at the flows going into the Portage diversion, with the increased heavy rains we are concerned as well at what the implications will be in the Interlake region. We recall that the last time there were high waters, many people along the Lake Manitoba area suffered because of the high level of water. Around the Fairford area there were people who suffered, so I would hope

that the government would realize that there are going to be problems down the road in those areas, and they are going to have to deal with them as well.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1999-2000 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Health.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Education and Training for the year 1999-2000.

Hon. Mervin Tweed (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 1999-2000, Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to table today the 1997-98 Annual Report of the Department of Highways and Transportation as well as the 1997-98 Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon nine Grade 9 students from Linden Meadows School under the direction of Ms. Tag Haney. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

We also have nine Grades 6 to 9 students from Poplar Grove School under the direction of Mr. Garrett Froese. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers).

Also, twenty-six Grade 9 students from Sargent Park School under the direction of Ms. Rebecca Decter. This school is located in the

constituency of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Land Purchase Fair Market Value

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, Mr. Nestibo purchased one-fifteenth interest in 79 acres of land from Mr. Holden in the R.M. of Winchester for a \$1 consideration. I would like to ask the First Minister whether he has investigated whether in fact this purchase for \$1 is based on fair market value.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, some of these issues and information have come to my attention. I have asked various people for information concerning these different allegations and pieces of information, and the matter is being investigated. I expect to get more information shortly.

Investigation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): When this matter was first raised by citizens in the area, they wrote the Department of Rural Development. They were told that this matter would be only dealt with by the court. In fact, the department asked that they be kept informed with the court decision. In the media reports today, it is indicated the Department of Rural Development is investigating this matter.

Can the Premier indicate who is investigating this matter on behalf of the concerned citizens of that area?

* (1340)

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): As the member knows, this is a matter where Mr. Sexton has decided to take the matter to the courts. Under the provision of The Municipal Act, indeed that is the course of action that should be taken by an individual who feels aggrieved by the particular action. The

court will decide whether or not there was an impropriety. We have indeed, as a department, looked into the matter, and this is the course of action that should be taken so that if the law was broken, there are repercussions that will take place after the court has made its decision.

Ethics Committee Referral

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have not received an answer yet on the \$1 purchase for the one-fifteenth share of the 79 acres of land. We are getting conflicting information from people in the area that approached the department to begin with, then were forced to go, they felt, to the court, then were told by the department that they had to in fact keep them apprised with the court decision, and then the media is reporting from Mr. Downey, the member for Arthur-Virden, the present member, that they are in fact, the Department of Rural Development is dealing with this.

I would like to ask the Premier: in light of his announcement on the ethics committee formed by the Conservative Party, with the comment about enhancing the democratic process here in Manitoba, has this matter been referred to any member of the ethics committee established by the Premier, and are they doing any investigations concerning this election and its implications for democracy here in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I have asked the executive of the party to gather facts on the matter so that they can conduct their own investigation and review all of the allegations and suggestions of conduct in this matter. The code of ethics is in the process of final drafting for the committee to be set up and adopted, so it is not yet in place. So I have left the matter to be dealt with in the hands of the executive committee.

Land Purchase Investigation

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): After the Monnin inquiry, the Premier had Manitobans believe that he took the issue of ethics in politics and elections seriously, but in this matter the

Premier and the minister responsible for industry, trade and technology, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), have been aware of this for quite some time. They then proceeded to refer to the Department of Rural Development, including the Premier, by the way, and then take the position, well, it is going to be involved in a court case, so we do not have to do anything.

I am wondering now, flowing from the First Minister's answers, if now that it has been raised by the media—by the way, this Premier was at the nomination in which this individual was nominated. Are we finally going to get what should have happened initially, some investigation, not only in terms of legality of what happened but the ethics of what happened with Mr. Nesbitt purchasing land for 70 cents an acre in order to be able to vote in an election in that area?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as has been indicated, the matter was referred to the courts by individuals within the local area, the R.M. of Winchester, I believe, and that process is ongoing. Obviously, neither I nor the minister can or should intervene with that process. With respect to issues that surround our party and the potential of a candidate involved in it, we are doing our own internal investigation which we take seriously.

Mr. Ashton: I am wondering if the First Minister—and recognizing that we could be into an election some of us actually hoped today, but we could be into an election next week, for example. Will the minister give the assurance to the people of Manitoba, particularly the people of the Arthur-Virden constituency who are very concerned about this, that this matter will be taken seriously now, and indeed if Mr. Nesbitt was involved in any unethical behaviour, legal or not, that he will not be a candidate for this party? We want to find out—

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

Mr. Filmon: I assure the member that I take the matter seriously, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, when will the people of Manitoba determine from this First

Minister what will be happening in this particular case? When will we get an answer to once again try and avoid this kind of unethical behaviour that seems to be at the root of the Conservative Party in this province?

* (1345)

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

Mr. Filmon: I would expect that the member opposite would understand that there has to be some due process that has to be based on fact, that arbitrary decisions are not the way to handle issues of this nature.

Health Care Facilities Overcrowding

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I would like to quote from a May 2 letter that I received about a constituent in the member for Assiniboia's (Mrs. McIntosh) constituency. The quote says: "I would rather my grandfather had died on the battle field with dignity NOT in a hallway of a hospital that won't open a bed for him!"

These are the words of a family as they speak about their 78-year-old father and grandfather, Archie Butt, a World War II veteran. Mr. Butt just spent three days and nights in the Grace Hospital emergency room hallway and then endured another eight days and nights in observation.

My question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon). What does the Premier have to say to this family when they say, and I quote again: My father has been in and out of hospitals since January of 1998. In the past year and a half he has been in either ICU, the emergency hallway or in observation. He has never been in a hospital room.

Madam Speaker, what does the Premier have to say to that family?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, a number of steps have been taken to deal with the whole issue of hospital overcrowding, and I am certainly pleased to outline them for members opposite.

First and foremost, we now have committed over 800 net new personal care home beds, which obviously are important in terms of providing the care for individuals who should be in that kind of a facility as opposed to in an acute care facility. We continue to expand and enhance our Home Care program. Our budgeted amount this year is \$147 million for our Home Care program. That is up from about \$45 million just 11 years ago, again providing that kind of care as opposed to an acute care setting. We continue to make better utilization of our bed management co-ordination right across the city to again relieve the pressure on hospital beds. So a number of steps are being taken to ensure that people do not have to spend time on beds in hallways in our hospital system here in Winnipeg.

Mr. Reid: I will table the letters I have received from the family, Madam Speaker, so that the minister might see more clearly what the comments are.

Madam Speaker, my next question is for the Premier again. Will the Premier explain his government's policy where hospital patients of both genders are forced to lay in hospital gowns that flap open on a hospital stretcher in a hospital hallway for many days and nights without the benefit of adequate nursing care, with no dignity, no privacy, no opportunity to rest quietly in a hospital room or in a hospital bed? Is this the—

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

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we have said very clearly that it is unacceptable to have people on beds in hallways in our hospital system, and that is why we are doing a number of the things that we are doing. That is why we have dedicated in this health care budget an additional \$194 million, a 10 percent increase, which I am pleased to note that members opposite had the wisdom to support yesterday when they supported the 1999 budget that this government brought down.

I have outlined very clearly for the member the number of steps that are being taken in terms of more personal care home beds, expanded Home Care program, bed management right across the city-wide system to do just that, to

make sure that Manitobans, individuals do not have to spend time on a bed in a hallway in our hospital system.

* (1350)

Mr. Reid: Well, then, my question, Madam Speaker, is for the Minister of Health, since the Premier (Mr. Filmon) does not want to answer the questions. Will the Minister of Health then please explain to this family why their 78-year-old father and grandfather must spend 11 days and nights not in a hospital bed but on a stretcher in the ER or in observation when the Premier promised in the 1995 election that he would save health care? Is this how you are saving health care in this province?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, first of all, for the member opposite, this is a health issue and I would expect that he would ask the question of the Minister of Health who has direct responsibility for those functions. That is a pretty basic premise in this House that he should be aware of.

I have outlined very clearly for him the number of proactive steps that are being taken to continue to improve health care in the province of Manitoba, and that is at a time when we have come through several years of dealing with significant funding cuts from the federal government. In fact, his own colleagues in the federal system, in a brochure they just recently circulated, go on to talk about the Liberal government has cut from the provinces \$21.5 billion.

This year's budget increases health care by \$2 billion. This means that for every dollar that the Liberals have taken out of health care funding, they are restoring just 10 cents. During all of that time, we have not only backfilled the money that the Liberal federal government took out of the system, we put in more resources. This 1999 budget includes an additional \$194 million, bringing our total budget to \$2.1 billion to address the very issues that have been raised in this House today.

Health Care Facilities 1995 Capital Projects

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, would the minister not agree that in

1995, had the government not broken its promises to personal care homes, we would not be faced with the fact that on Friday the head of the Long Term Care Authority said the nursing home beds would not be available till the year 2001, that we would have had those nursing home beds, that the Health Sciences Centre, what the minister again announced yesterday, will not be ready till 2003, would have been ready had they not broken their promise, and these people would not be waiting in the hallways and we would not be facing the crisis, and the minister would not have had to have pumped all that money into this year's budget if they had done it properly in 1995 as promised?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): No, I do not agree, Madam Speaker. That capital budget that the member refers to back in '95, that was put on hold for the reasons that we have outlined very clearly in this House, the issue I have just pointed out to members opposite in terms of the significant funding reductions from the federal government during that period in time plus the fact that we were establishing regional health authorities. We certainly value the input of regional health authorities in terms of the kinds of facilities that should be in place, and today the majority of those health care projects are going forward.

As well, there are a number of projects outside of that program that are also going forward. Today we have over 850 net new personal care home beds committed here in the province of Manitoba. We can see examples of a number of them under construction, whether it be Misericordia, whether it be Concordia or a number of projects that are underway, but as well, to address the immediate need, we have put in place hundreds of interim beds. That is why, if you look at our health care system today, the number of panelled patients waiting for a personal care home bed have dropped from 250 slightly over a year ago to approximately 50 today. That is because of the action taken to put those beds in place by our government.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, would the minister not agree that the closing of 1,400 acute care beds by this government, according to government estimate statistics, has had a devastating effect even though the government

has, quote, committed to 800 new personal care home beds, and the reason the people are in the hallways is quite simply because we have to wait for this government to build those personal care homes that they promised in 1995 that are not built now, that are being built and announced in anticipation of an election campaign. They were dishonest then, and that is why we—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I do not agree with any of the preamble from the member opposite. If you look at our hospital system today, it is basically providing as much service to the patients of Manitoba, doing as many procedures as it has over any of the previous years. That has, again, been part of a shift to outpatient surgery being done in many cases today, but over and above that, you have 850 net personal care home beds under construction. We have an expanded Home Care program that is recognized as probably the best home care program in all of Canada.

We have a budget that we just brought down with \$194 million in it for health care, additional money for health care, which was supported by members opposite, by the way, and the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) keeps referring to one project in Oakbank, a personal care home facility. I encourage him to pay a little attention and do some research. All he needs to do is pick up Saturday's edition of the Winnipeg Free Press, and he will see the notice of tender for the Oakbank-Springfield personal care home under construction, again, part of the capital commitment that this government has made to provide personal care home facilities right throughout Manitoba, Madam Speaker. So he comes here trying to portray that a project is not going forward, but we know and the people of Manitoba know that project is going forward.

*(1355)

Personal Care Homes Regulations

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Thank heavens it only took four years to get that process to tender, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his final supplementary question.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the Minister of Health, and I would like to table a letter that I got from the previous Minister of Health, indicating that by April 1, 1999, the new regulation to personal care homes—that we have been waiting for since 1994, were promised in '95, were promised again in 1997—would be in place. I am wondering if the minister can outline when those new regulations for personal care homes will be put in place, since this letter says completion is for April 1, 1999, for the regulations for this standard for personal care homes.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): The member has raised this question before, and we are in the process of concluding the changes to the personal care home regulations. As I have indicated to him and as I have indicated when I have met with representatives of the personal care homes, I know it is something that the members opposite have difficulty accepting, but we have indicated to the people who run and manage those facilities that we will also go out and have further discussions with them in terms of the regulations that are being put in place, Madam Speaker. We certainly believe that keeping in contact and consultation is an important part of governing the province.

Crown Lands Purchase/Leasing Policy

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, last week I tabled a letter from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) to a constituent who assured him that the Crown lands lease policy would be adhered to. Today I am tabling copies of policy from the minister's department with the minister's signature on it, saying that the purchaser must qualify under The Crown Lands Act and must "own sufficient livestock or shall be the owner of sufficient livestock within one year of the date of approval of the lease to properly utilize the land." Where the lease provides the pasturing of livestock, the lessee shall pasture on such land only owned by himself or themselves.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture: could he tell this House how many others had applied for the same nine quarters of land to purchase or to lease? The minister ignored those applications—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I can tell the honourable member for Interlake that the complainant to the Ombudsman, one Mr. Woloshyn, I believe, applied for the purchase of that land from Mr. Malkowich.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I understand the tradition has been that, with our numbers, we are entitled to the fifth question. I know the opposition voted with the government and they are working together now, but still I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should be allowed his fifth question.

An Honourable Member: You got the vote.

Mr. Kowalski: I was paired.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for The Maples, I think the standard rule is who catches the Speaker's eye first, and I was not aware the honourable member for Inkster was indeed on his feet, if he was. I saw the honourable member for Interlake.

* * *

* (1400)

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

Mr. C. Evans: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The minister knows that if he reads his documentation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question. This is not a time for debate.

Mr. C. Evans: Will the minister explain why other individuals would be denied to buy or

lease this property for years so that this gentleman could buy the property and in fact then flip it in six months to Mr. Cubby Barrett? Why could the others not have done the same thing?

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, Walter Malkowich and his family were long-term lessors of this land, some 23, 24 years. Records show that he at all times lived up to full compliance of his lease requirements, was an exemplary lessor and, as such, was the qualified purchaser of that land. There was a period of time when, as a result of one family member leaving, he did not have sufficient cattle on the farm. That was brought to his attention by departmental officials. Departmental officials visited the farm, and he was in compliance with the lease when the approval for purchase of the land was made to Mr. Malkowich.

Mr. C. Evans: Madam Speaker, last week we tabled the report of the Ombudsman. Can the minister explain everything he said today? Can he explain when the Ombudsman said it was wrong, everything the minister said was wrong, to sell that property to Mr. Malkowich? He also stated that he did not understand that Mr. Barrett wanted the land. He also stated the Order-in-Council said that there was nothing mentioned of the Barretts.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, supplementary questions should be a question put to the House, not a debate.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, in fact the information the member was putting on the record is in fact the government House leader last week, when he rose on a point of order, indicated that Mr. Barrett was not part of the Order-in-Council, in fact the same Order-in-Council—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, I would indeed agree there was a point of order. The honourable member for Interlake was recognized to pose a question.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Would the honourable member please pose his question now.

Mr. C. Evans: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the minister tell this House when he, in the hallway, admitted he knew nothing of the desire of Mr. Barrett to purchase this land from Mr. Malkowich, and the fact the Order-in-Council dated November '96 that stated the quarters of land sold to Mr. Malkowich also stated three or four quarters of land sold to the Barrett family, the Barrett family—

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

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, I simply want to put on the record that the Malkowich family were legitimate purchasers of their Crown land in keeping with the long-standing policy of the Department of Agriculture, a policy which was in place for all the six years that the New Democrats were in office, and land was sold under similar circumstances to appropriate lessors of agricultural Crown land.

Government of Manitoba Polls/Surveys

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The phones in many Manitobans' homes have been ringing off the hook as all sorts of polling is being done, some of it of a private nature from the Conservative Party, and we can only speculate by the lack of the election call today is the result of those polls. But my question is more so with respect to the publicly taxpayer-paid polls.

Can the Premier indicate to this Chamber how many surveys and polls has this government commissioned in the last six months?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice and bring back the information.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, then can the Premier indicate to the House what sort of a cost are the taxpayers looking at having to foot because of this government's need to get a pulse of what Manitobans are saying? Does the Premier have any idea in terms of the cost?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, firstly, I will also take the question as notice. But I can assure the member that we do not ask a question about how people will be voting when departments do polling for particular research purposes. So there is no politics involved in that kind of questioning.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, would the Premier then recognize the importance of the polling and the surveying that is being done and therefore say to the House today that those pollings will in fact be released so Manitobans know the content of the polling that this government has done over the last six months?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the policy was announced within the last month, I believe it was, that indicated that all of that polling must be released, all that polling information, on a timely basis.

Household Hazardous Waste Program Collection Depots

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I have the responses to two questions taken as notice earlier in the session and would like permission to provide them to the House now.

The one question was regarding dates for the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Program. I am pleased to report to the House that the contracts have now been awarded: four contracts to Miller Environmental to run the Winnipeg and rural Household Hazardous Waste Program for the next two years. The Winnipeg depot will be open on Saturday, May 15, the second date on Saturday, May 29, at 55 Trottier Bay. After that, the depot will operate on the first and last Saturday of each month until the end of October.

After October, the depot will operate one Saturday per month.

The spring rural dates are as follows—the member had asked for specific dates and locations, so I bring them now—Brandon, the works garage at 900 Richmond on June 19. Portage la Prairie, the date and location is yet to be confirmed, but will be coming shortly. Morden, the fire hall, Stephen and Fourth on June 12. Selkirk, the fire hall, 200 Eaton Avenue, June 12. Pinawa, the town yard, Highway No. 221, June 5.

The fall rural dates will be in Brandon, Steinbach and Dauphin. The dates are not yet confirmed, but they will all be Saturdays. The northern run will include Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas and Swan River.

The member had asked for specific data. I will try to give them very quickly in summation. The funding has gone from \$244,000 in 1994 to \$350,000 in 1998. The quantities have increased from 113 tonnes in 1994 to 431 tonnes in 1998. The hazardous waste days have increased from 27 in 1998 to 29 in 1999. [interjection] Madam Speaker, I am responding to a series of three questions. They did ask for it, and I did commit to bring it back. [interjection] They are telling me to sit down; I am presuming they do not want the information now.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When a minister takes a question as notice and brings it back, indeed the response time allowed generally is within the same response time allowed for a regular answer to a question, which is one minute.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I was asked two questions, each with two supplementals, which, if the rules hold, would give me six minutes, I would presume.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of

Environment, it is her question, and I would suggest that she try to be recognized at a later point in Question Period for response to additional questions.

* (1410)

Sustainable Development Act Review

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I want to thank the minister for her answer. I am reluctant to ask her a question, however.

My question today is for the minister responsible for sustainable development. Two years ago, the government introduced a white paper on sustainable development that was rejected by virtually all the stakeholders in Manitoba. After passing The Sustainable Development Act, the government has now received a report from their advisory committee on the act, and the so-called COSDI Group stated, on reviewing the proposed developments, and I quote here: efforts are seldom made to co-ordinate decision-making processes, and there is often little concerted effort to ensure compliance with existing sustainable development strategies.

My question to the Premier: can the Premier explain why his sustainable development strategies have resulted in mountains of paper, but according to his own advisory group, are not being adhered to by this government?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I thought maybe the member was ahead of me, but I think he is a year behind me. The COSDI Group has been meeting on a continuous basis since the last review of The Sustainable Development Act and has recently provided us with their recommendations for long-term sustainable planning in the province. Having just received that, as I am sure the member is aware, there are some far-reaching and significant recommendations. But there was a consensus reached, and I am disappointed that the member would imply that somehow the thoughtful and far-thinking counsellors and others who were consulted across the province were in fact rejecting The Sustainable Development Act. They in fact supported it wholeheartedly, and they want to work with us through

the additional recommendations coming on the working group.

**Pine Falls Paper Co.
Consultations—Aboriginals**

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Given that the document concludes that consultation with aboriginal people is substantially deficient and recommends that a protocol be developed, my question to the minister: will the minister immediately adopt this recommendation and apply it to the Pine Falls negotiations currently underway?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I was right the first time. The member is out of touch.

The fact is, as I pointed out in this House about three weeks ago, Pine Falls Paper has indicated that they are actively pursuing additional input from the aboriginal First Nation communities and seeking their involvement in the future Pine Falls development. If that causes any aggravation to the members opposite, I am sure it is because they wish that they could find a fault with the process that Pine Falls is entering into, because frankly they are taking an enlightened and broad-based view of the future of the east side of the province and opportunities that they have for timber harvesting there, and they want to involve the First Nations.

**Education System
User Fees**

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, user fees in public schools have increased dramatically during the Filmon watch to the point where a single mother of four, Karen San Filippo, is completely overwhelmed. She has been forced to take on two jobs and borrow money from relatives so that her children can participate and attend our public school system. Will the minister admit that many children in Manitoba are being excluded from being fully participative in their public schools because of financial reasons?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): I can empathize with the situation respecting Karen San Filippo and her

family, Madam Speaker, knowing that for everyone raising children in today's society it is a very challenging responsibility. I know that many, many Manitoba parents take that responsibility very seriously and want all that they can have for their children, and I certainly share with them that sentiment.

There is a policy respecting school fees and the basics in our schools are to be covered by public funding. I saw the article the other day respecting Karen San Filippo and her children and their expenses, and while they are onerous, they are onerous right across the province for those expenses in Manitoba homes. We provide funding through the school system and through the provincial grant system for the basics of education, and we do not want families like the San Filippo family to be overburdened to deal with the basics.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, does the minister believe that parents should be forced, and I quote from Ms. San Filippo, to beg or humiliate themselves in front of school administrators to ask for a helping hand?

Mr. McCrae: No, I do not think that is appropriate, Madam Speaker, not unlike the situation in Brandon where the school division was dealing with issues related to physical education and music. Parents and parent councils, which we very strongly support here on this side of the House, and teachers got together and raised the issues related to concerns they had, related to physical education and music with the Brandon School Division. I see by the headlines today and the meeting I had earlier this morning that that may well not be the outcome, the one that was feared in the first place, and that is thanks very much to parents and teachers getting together to let their views be known, and also thanks to a school division in Brandon that I believe is very responsive to what it learns are the public's requirements, the public's demands and wishes for their children.

The honourable member's question goes to the whole issue of funding generally, and I was pleased to learn of the support of the New Democratic Party for—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, is the government then really prepared to admit that our public school system is underfunded and that perhaps they will be providing us with government subsidies to Manitoba families who cannot afford to send their children—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McCrae: I am having trouble here, Madam Speaker, understanding where my honourable colleagues opposite are coming from. There was a 2.2 percent increase for education last year, 2.6 percent when you include the \$2 million additional announced for special education this year and a commitment of 2 percent for next year. Honourable members opposite voted for that, so I am just having trouble understanding where the New Democrats are coming from.

A little while ago we were told that if there is an election and the New Democrats formed the government, the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans), the Finance critic, said the NDP would bring in their own budget, but they voted for ours. So what are Manitobans supposed to think about where honourable members are coming from?

Crown Lands Purchase/Leasing Policy

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): When I listen to discussions about what is happening in the Interlake with respect to the sale of Crown lands, it appears that members of this government are prepared to look after their friends but ignore others. However, there are many people in other parts of the province who want to purchase the Crown lands that they are leasing, but that is not happening.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture why applications to purchase Crown lands in the Swan River constituency by people such as the Ravards and Shewchuks have been denied even though they are bona fide farmers who have cattle and are interested in expanding their operations, but their applications to purchase Crown lands are being denied.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I am truly indebted for that question because it

enables me to explain more fully how Crown land is purchased. First of all, the Department of Agriculture does not sell any Crown land. The Department of Agriculture may offer an opinion that a long-term lessor is eligible for sale. Then it goes to a classification committee of various departmental officials to the Department of Natural Resources. If there are wildlife concerns, or if the Minister of Highways has aggregate and gravel concerns and it is deemed not to be in the public interest to sell land, then that land is not sold. It is only after having been vetted through that process does Crown land get sold by the Department of Natural Resources.

* (1420)

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for that information. I want to ask the government then: given that these people, particularly the Ravards, have met all those requirements, there is not anybody standing in the way—the municipality said that they did not oppose the sale—but the sale still is not going through, why are these people not allowed to purchase the leased land that they have while others in the Interlake that are friends of the minister are allowed to purchase?

Mr. Enns: I want to advise the honourable member that following that classification by senior bureaucrats that takes place and a decision is made, it is appealable, that decision, through the Provincial Land Use Committee of cabinet, of which my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) is chairman. I would suggest that if they are not satisfied with that designation, they appeal that decision to the Provincial Land Use Committee of cabinet.

Ms. Wowchuk: Given that the people who I am referring to have gone through all the channels, they have gone through the municipality and the municipality has removed their objection, they are still waiting for a purchase, they have not been able to get it, when is this government going to act and treat people in other parts of the province fairly?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): If I understand the question correctly that the member for Swan River is bringing forward, she is indicating that there

have been objections that were involved from the municipality, and they have now withdrawn them. That may be the first part of the answer in relationship to this question, because where the municipality has local objections, their objections are very high priority in consideration of whether or not a sale would proceed.

Secondly, and this should be a very important issue for the member for Swan River, given that we now have a lot of agricultural Crown land that has merchantable aspen on it that can be cut for Louisiana-Pacific, there is an issue around the value of that aspen, there is an issue about whether or not it should be returned to aspen stand after it has been cut and a multiuse program put in place for both grazing and the return of the aspen cover. That is an important policy issue, and it is no reflection on the area other than the value of the wood on the property.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Khalsa Anniversary

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): The year 1999 holds great significance for the Sikh community around the world as it marks the 300th founding anniversary of Khalsa Panth. On the auspicious day of Baisakhi, in the year 1699 A.D., the 10th guru created Khalsa. From that day, the Sikh Nations proclamation has become a turning point in history as it leads to the democratic process of social equality, freedom of beliefs and worship, liberty of civil rights, cultural integration and development of future generations of humankind.

In the international community, many states and cities are honouring these celebrations. It is a great honour that our Canadian government has released a stamp recognizing the importance of this historic Sikh Nations Day.

To commemorate the universal ideas of peace, prosperity, freedom and gender equality, the Manitoba Sikh community is organizing a Khalsa peace march starting from the Legislative

Building in the morning and congregating at the Winnipeg Convention Centre in the afternoon of June 12, 1999.

On behalf of the Sikh community, some of whom are guests in the gallery today, I would like to extend an invitation to all members of the House and all Manitobans to honour this historic event on June 12, 1999. Thank you.

Northern Airports

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, regarding northern airports. There have been no new northern airports constructed in the 11 years that the Filmon government has been in office. What modifications and improvements that have occurred during this period have only happened because of public pressure.

Over the past 10 years, many planes operating in the North are larger turbo-prop and jet aircraft. These aircraft need larger runways. Only half of the northern airstrips have such runways. Lack of modern lighting and navigation equipment is also an obvious need.

The December 1997 tragedy at Little Grand Rapids forced the provincial government to agree to a joint task force review of airport safety. More than 17 months after the crash, the only improvement has been the application by the provincial government for federal funding of basic beacon lights at all northern airports. Meanwhile, the other serious concerns at remote northern airports remain.

Last week one small plane was stuck at Lac Brochet for three days, stuck in wet gravel. A helicopter had to be used to medivac a young woman from the community. Calm Air has cancelled flights to Lac Brochet for at least a week because of conditions of the airstrip. Chief John Dantouze and council, along with the employees at the airstrip, are working to get the airstrip up to standard. It seems that it takes an emergency situation for the provincial government to even notice that there is a problem.

Northern Manitoba should not have to put up with second-class service and treatment, but under the Filmon government, second-class treatment has become routine for the North.

Millennium Program

Mr. David Faursehou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, the 21st Century is quickly approaching. In honour of this momentous occasion, a special provincial millennium program was recently announced. The Honourable Rosemary Vodrey, minister responsible for the provincial millennium program, and Paul Robson, chair of Manitoba's Millennium Advisory Council, made this announcement Friday last.

Manitoba's millennium theme celebrates the entrepreneurial and pioneer spirit of Manitobans, past and present, as well as future development of our province. In celebration, we honour the courage, creativity and perseverance of Manitobans who have built our community.

The millennium program is designed to stimulate partnerships with individuals and community groups, governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations. The program consists of \$10 million in provincial funding over two and one-half years involving the following: a \$2-million allotment for a Municipal Partnership Program to assist local governments and funding of one-time special millennium projects; a \$1-million fund for Innovation Manitoba Program to assist Manitoba-based organizations undertaking special millennium projects of regional, provincial, national and international scope; \$6 million earmarked for a small number of significant high-profile signature projects such as capital initiatives, endowments or trusts, mementoes, commissions, publications and many others.

A \$1-million fund has been created for the celebration program to provide Manitobans with the opportunity to mark the millennium through celebrations, festivals and special events throughout the year 2000.

Please join me in encouraging all Manitobans to celebrate our unique achievements and honour the pioneers, past and present, who have made our province such a dynamic place in which to live, work, invest and raise our families. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1430)

Winnipegosis Elementary School Operetta

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on May 4, I had the opportunity to attend an operetta presented by the Grades 7 and 8 class at the Winnipegosis Elementary School, under the direction of Mr. Pearson. It was a delightful production of singing and acting, with the entire class taking part in the choir, with the cast consisting of Sheila McGill, Karyn Cochrane, Melissa Barsewsky, Alisha Tumak, Andrea Buller, Hailey Clarkson, Randi Voigt, Jenna Natrasony, Greg Campbell, Greg Harrison, Harley Davies, Dusty Johanneson, Krystie Gibbs, Lionel Goossen, Sheree Menard, Mandy Routhier, Meagen Lynn, Ashley Poynting, Ryan Little, Jackie Isfeld, Gary McKay, Leah Tomlinson, A.J. Hrychuk, Rachael Boyko, Cody Zunti, Brad Warkentin, Travis Routhier and Barret Procysbyn.

Mrs. Bunka, one of the teachers, looked after the costumes, and Mr. Dan Brown looked after the lighting and the sound effects.

Madam Speaker, the opening of the program was a musical production put on by the Grades 1 and 2 class, called *The Little Red Hen: A Musical*, with the music provided by Mrs. Rempel. It was a very well-done production, a very entertaining evening by both the Grades 1 and 2 class and the Grades 7 and 8 class.

I commend all the performers for their efforts, and I look forward to seeing further productions by this young group in future productions. I want to commend the teachers and staff at the Winnipegosis Elementary School for offering these students the opportunity to show their talents, both in acting and in the musical field and give them the encouragement that they need to carry on their talents. Not all students are involved in physical activities; many have skills in music, and this was a wonderful evening where children could show their talents. I look forward to seeing further productions by them.

Khalsa Anniversary

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I stand in recognition again today to echo some of the remarks of the member for St.

Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) of a fairly significant year, that being the 300th founding anniversary of Khalsa. It is a very important anniversary within the Sikh community.

I can recall just a little while back we had a beautiful ceremony over at the City Hall, city of Winnipeg, where we had a flag-raising ceremony, and there is going to be another very special event. I know members of the community would welcome all members of this Chamber to be there in attendance on June 12 at the Convention Centre. It is going to be a wonderful expression of Sikhism. You will no doubt be enlightened by the wonders of this particular community in terms of the contributions that they have made in the past and in the present. [interjection] The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) reminds me of the wonderful food that is there. If you have never had the opportunity to taste East Indian food, it is an absolute delight, and I highly recommend it. It is somewhat addictive. If you have it once or twice, you are going to be more inclined to have that as opposed to the modern-day French fry, that is for sure. But it is a very, very special year for the Sikh community, and we look to give acknowledgement of that through the Legislature in a very apolitical fashion.

This is the second time that I have had the opportunity to speak on this very auspicious anniversary, and I look forward to participating with my friends at the Winnipeg Convention Centre in any other events. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MATTERS OF GRIEVANCE

Crown Lands Purchase/Leasing Policy

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I rise today on a grievance on behalf of people, producers and constituents, not only in the Interlake but other parts of Manitoba that basically have been in many ways wronged by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and the former Minister of Natural Resources who eventually signs Orders-in-Council for the sale or for the lease of Crown lands.

Over the past few days, we have raised this issue, finding how odd that this Minister of Agriculture and the then Minister of Natural Resources, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), would ignore the fact the policies that were put in place, signed by the ministers, were not adhered to and subsequently land was sold to someone who had violated the policies that were put in place by this government and our government, by our ministers previous and to the ministers now.

I have, and I put on record, absolutely no malice of any kind towards Mr. Malkowich. None. I wonder out loud where this Minister of Agriculture comes from when he himself, good friends with Mr. Cubby Barrett, 30-some-odd years, and he says in the hallway last week that he did not know that Mr. Barrett was even interested in this land. He just got back from Cuba with him. Now I am not saying that what they were talking about in Cuba was land, but when you are friends with someone for 30, 35 years, and when you look at the map of the R.M. of Fisher where it shows 50 to 60 quarters of land in the Barrett name, or in the Barrett company name, that is not just a home quarter, that is 50 to 60 quarters of land. That is over 9,000 acres.

For this minister to say: I did not know that the Barretts wanted the land. Madam Speaker, the land that was allocated, that was requested by Mr. Malkowich to purchase, which, according to the Ombudsman, over and over in his letter stated it was wrong that Mr. Malkowich obtain this land through the sale. He kicked up the guise. The minister did not act on this as he should have. The then Minister of Natural Resources should have acted on it. He did not. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) signed the Order-in-Council November 1996. Nothing was done.

On the Order-in-Council there are three quarters of land. Besides the nine sold or approved for Mr. Malkowich, there are three more approved for the Barrett family, not Mr. Cubby Barrett, but the Barrett family. Sixty quarters of land, and they wanted nine more.

Now the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says that there are certain policies and

regulations that have to be adhered to, and I agree. There are. One of them, I believe, is the fact that to apply for, it is taken into consideration by Natural Resources. If the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) could support me on this, I believe that it is taken into consideration if people want to purchase or lease near wildlife management areas.

November 1996, this land was sold to Mr. Malkowich. July 1997, Mr. Malkowich turned it over to Mr. Cubby Barrett, or Sleeve Lake Holdings, who, in turn, used one of the quarters of land nearest a wildlife management area for his hog operation. And the Minister of Agriculture says: I did not know that Mr. Barrett was interested in this land—the Minister of Agriculture keeps pushing the fact that the hog operations are a go in the Interlake—I was not aware that Mr. Cubby Barrett eventually would get this land. Does he think that we are all in a fog, Madam Speaker? It is deplorable.

It is deplorable when the point was also made that there was—he allows nine quarters of land to be sold. Then he turns down and he takes the lease away. In January of 1998, he writes to Mr. David Dmyterko of Fisher Branch, we are taking away your lease, forage lease No. 4735, southwest 332503. Do you know what for? Over account of leaves. Mr. Dmyterko went and got his own expert, a former employer of the Manitoba government dealing with this type of an issue, 25 years experience, saying for Mr. Dmyterko, Mr. Dmyterko is okay. He is doing the right thing. He is doing and continuing. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says: my department does not agree with that. You cannot have it.

Mr. Malkowich is a retired farmer, Madam Speaker. Yes, he has put in many years, 25 to 30 years, and he does not go through stop signs like some do, 25 or 30 years that this man—and I agree. I agree. If Mr. Malkowich had just cause to have that land and continue to have that land, I would say so be it and so good for him. But he did not. He did not do anything on it for years. He retired. He sold his cattle. He sold his machinery. Yet the Minister of Agriculture himself takes away a quarter-section of land from a gentleman, Mr. David Dmyterko, who

came with his wife and family to my office requesting that I assist him in convincing the Minister of Agriculture that what he has is right and what the minister is saying is wrong. We tried. The minister writes back and says: no, no, you cannot have it, two years after the land flip on the Cubby Barrett land deal.

In 1993, a Mr. John Jones approached the minister because the minister was going to take away some of his leased Crown land. What happened then? The minister took it away, and you know what happened? They went to court, and Mr. Jones got that land back, got the Crown land lease back. So on one hand, the minister is saying: oh, what is good for the goose is not good for the gander. Sixty quarters of land, not six, but 60, yet he takes away a quarter of land that a constituent and a producer needs to continue his operation. He takes it away from him.

* (1440)

Another interesting point in July of '96 from the Department of Natural Resources, a letter to a Mr. Larry Leschyshyn, who required a parcel of land for his operation. Thank you for your letter of June 10, it reads. The question of sale again was evaluated after your recent letter was received. It continues to be the region's recommendation the parcel be retained as Crown due to the wildlife values associated with this area. But he sells Mr. Malkowich, who in turn sells it to Mr. Barrett to put a hog farm right adjacent to a wildlife management area.

Madam Speaker, I can go on with these policies that this minister says that this government adheres to. The policies are only adhered to for those who are in the favouritism of the Minister of Agriculture, for no one else. Those are a few. Then, after this sale to Mr. Malkowich, flip to Mr. Barrett, it is tried again. It is tried again in the Dallas-Red Rose area. I cannot use names on this one, but I can tell you that the Ombudsman investigated this again. It was requested that the Ombudsman look into this situation.

It says that the deputy minister expressed his opinion that the system is working and stated that the application process has been stopped

because of eligibility concerns raised during the course of the circulation process. Those eligibility requests, concerns were the same as were raised on the situation of Mr. Malkowich, exactly the same, exactly the same. He did not do anything on the land for six years and then he applies to buy it. I cannot imagine whose money he was going to use. I cannot imagine what he was going to do with the land, but I can tell you that what is good for the goose should be good for the gander.

Again, I hold no malice against Mr. Malkowich. I have been in his home. He has been to my office. He is a wonderful man, Madam Speaker. How this came about, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and Mr. Barrett know how it came about. They should be held accountable for how it came about. They should be held accountable for the fact that, indeed, this land, this nine quarters, plus four, 13 quarters went to a person, a company, a family that already had 47 quarters. Now the total is over 9,000 acres. If you look at the map of the R.M. of Fisher, it is covered with the Barrett name, covered with the Barrett name all over, all over.

Madam Speaker, 60 quarters we counted—[interjection] In looking through the R.M. of Fisher map—[interjection] And it is a government document. The member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) says it is a government document. It is and I paid for it. I applied and I paid for it, and I had it laminated just so I could mark all the X's where the Barretts own land. That is what I did, and I paid for it, paid dearly for it, too.

Madam Speaker, I just believe—and I have brought a few of the issues on behalf of those people, those constituents and those producers who—I am sure my colleague from Swan River and I am sure from Roblin and I am sure from other areas have requested purchases or leases or permits for Crown land and for whatever reason have been denied, and probably for good reasons. But I would say, and I know, and I look at the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), who will not disagree with me, that if it is appropriate to do it, then do it. We brought an issue to him today. We brought an issue to him from a previous situation. If it is not appropriate, do not do it.

This, Madam Speaker, and the minister will agree, was not appropriate. It is a done deal, but it is not appropriate because the policy was not followed by the producer. The producer was retired. Now, if the policy was put in place, then why did not Mr. Barrett, along with the others, put his name in? Why did not the others, along with Mr. Barrett, put his name in under Sleeve Lake Holdings or any name that they so wish, put the name in and say if this land is available, can we be considered, our application be considered? The former Minister of Agriculture, I believe, knows that that is the way it works. So why not do that? Could not do that. He has already got 47 quarters of land. I am sure Crown Lands itself would look and say: What does Mr. Barrett need with another nine or 13 quarters?

So, Madam Speaker, on behalf of all the constituents, some that I have named today, who have not been able to obtain, who have lost, to buy or to lease Crown lands, I say shame on the minister, shame on the minister, and if the minister had any feelings whatsoever for some of these people that have been brought into this situation, he should be ashamed of himself. Thank you very much.

* * *

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to use my grievance, as well, to raise a concern that I raised earlier in Question Period today and just ask this government to recognize that there is indeed a problem in the way that Crown lands are being released.

I raised the issue of one particular family, and that is the Ravard family, who have been trying for some time now to purchase land that they are leasing and have not been able to do so, even though all of the conditions have been met. The municipality was the one that had indicated they had some concerns, and that was with regard to providing roads in there. The family met with the municipality, and that whole issue has been cleared up. This family would very much like to purchase this land, but it is not being allowed to happen.

Now the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) talked about the issue of the value of

the aspen in the area since Louisiana-Pacific came into the area, and that is true. The value of the land certainly has been changed since Louisiana-Pacific came into the area. Where at one time poplar was considered by many people to be described as a weed, it is now a valuable asset. What the government and the department have to look at more carefully is not to use that just as a blanket policy when they make a decision not to sell the land.

On this particular piece of land, the land that the Ravards are wanting and the land that the Shewchuks along Winnipegosis are wanting, the poplar on that land is very small. There is on the Ravards' land, there is probably no merchantable lumber on it, so it is not fair for the department to consider this a blanket policy. To say that just because there is a value on this aspen now, that no more land should be put up for sale through Crown lands, it should be looked at much more carefully than it is at the present time.

There are those people who have interests in expanding their livestock operation because, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is aware, many people are moving away from the grain industry and trying to provide for their families in different ways and expanding into livestock. These are families that are trying to do that. These are families who have been leasing this land for a long time and are not being able to do so.

So I encourage the government to look at the problem that has been raised by people in my constituency, in particular, where it appears to be a problem and find a way to resolve it, so that they can indeed proceed with their plans to expand their operations. It is not fair. The government should not look at things in a personal way, where friends might benefit or people they know, that this issue should proceed ahead, while others who have legitimate cases, people who are legitimately looking to expand livestock operations, should be held back.

* (1450)

These people have become very frustrated. They have basically given up on this government. I would like to see them show some good faith and look at this issue more

seriously, and in fact look at a way that this can be resolved. As I say, I do not like the idea that, because the government would use as an excuse, there is now a value on poplar, that they should use this as an excuse to prevent people who want to buy land and expand their operation.

In the case of the Ravards, it is a very important piece of land that they are now leasing and want to purchase. They own land on one side and own land on another side and want to be able to allow their pastures to go through the whole area. That is not available to them right now.

So, Madam Speaker, I bring this to the House and use my grievance today on what I feel is a very important issue for many people, not only for the Ravard family. I bring this grievance as well to support my colleague for the Interlake, who has become very frustrated, as well as the people of the Interlake who have become very frustrated, because of favouritism that seems to be played within government, where it appears that rules are extended for one person, where they are not legitimately holding a piece of land. They do not have the livestock on it, but then they are allowed to buy it, where in another part of the province there are people who do have the livestock on it, are meeting all the requirements, and the government uses a different excuse to ensure that—for some reason, to prevent them from proceeding with their operations.

These are difficult times for people in rural Manitoba with low grain prices, high input costs. Many people are struggling, and many people are trying to get a handle on their situation and feel secure that they can expand. But, with what this government is doing, that is not happening. I do not believe, Madam Speaker, that there should be favouritism played for anybody. People in Manitoba, no matter which part of the province they live in, whether they live in the Interlake, whether they are friends of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) or friends of any minister, should not be treated any differently from someone who is in the Swan River constituency or someone who is in Roblin-Russell constituency. If they have a legitimate case, if they have met the requirements, then their case should be heard and things should

proceed as they normally would. There should not be favouritism for people, and people should not be able to take advantage of the situation just because they may have friends who are in high places, so to speak.

So I encourage the government to realize that there are other people, the fact that these kinds of events are going on does not bode well for people in government, and in order to clean up their act, they have to admit that they have made mistakes in some of these situations, that favours to friends should not be allowed, and that all people in Manitoba should be treated fairly when they are trying to, in this case, purchase Crown land. So I urge the government to recognize that they indeed have made some mistakes and have put a black mark, another black mark, on the Conservative record as playing underhanded politics and looking after their friends.

We heard about it during the vote-rigging scandal when it was people who were part of the Conservative government that tried to sway, entice people to run as candidates for them. That put a black mark on them, and now we see this whole situation where one individual who was no longer involved in farming and had basically given up farming, then changed his mind and having the land flipped over to other people, does not bode well. So I would encourage the government to recognize that they have made some serious mistakes and start to look at other people who are interested in expanding their livestock operation and looking at some of those applications that have been sitting on the pile for a long, long time, and treat them fairly.

Certainly I am not asking for favouritism for the people in my constituency. All I am asking for is that they be treated fairly, that the land be assessed fairly, and if one of the reasons that land is not being sold in that area is because of the value of the aspen on the property, then have someone go out there and do a true assessment of the value of that aspen because some of the areas that are now defined as having valuable aspen on them are really very poor land on which the quality of the aspen will not meet the requirements for the mill and has to be addressed. So I encourage the Minister of

Agriculture (Mr. Enns), the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) and the people that are involved, who have staff involved in the allocation of land, that this be looked at, and to ensure that people are treated more fairly and that those issues are addressed.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, with respect to Estimates, I would like to table the sequence of Estimates as agreed to by myself and the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton).

Secondly, I would ask if you could please call for second reading Bill 22, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Praznik), that Bill 22, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999 (Loi de 1999 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, on April 29 it was my pleasure to deliver the 1999 Manitoba Budget Address. This budget marks the fifth consecutive year that revenues and expenditures are in balance, the first such occurrence in a quarter-century. The budget provides for increases in key services of prime importance to Manitobans: \$194 million more for health care; over \$49 million for education; another \$25 million for programs that will benefit children and families. The budget also provides a payment of \$75 million towards the debt.

These measures, along with the tax reductions I will now recap, are the government's response to the recommendations of the thousands of Manitobans who participated

in prebudget consultations. Bill 22, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999, provides specific legislative authority for the tax rate changes and initiatives we announced on April 29 as well as some technical amendments to certain taxation statutes.

Today I will briefly describe the contents of Bill 22, and I invite members to express their position on its content during the subsequent debate. I will also provide opposition critics with detailed explanations of the provisions of this bill prior to the committee stage. In fact, I have already done so. In many of the consultations we had with Manitobans, the priority for tax reductions identified by participants was the personal income tax rate. Again and again we were told the rate was too high, that it made living in Manitoba more expensive than it needs to be and made it difficult to maintain and attract the highly skilled labour force necessary to keep Manitoba competitive.

Manitobans asked us to follow on last year's reductions and to complement the reductions introduced in the federal budget with additional relief from personal income tax. I am pleased that Bill 22 will amend The Income Tax Act to reduce Manitoba's personal income tax rate to 48.5 percent of basic federal tax for 1999 and to 47 percent for the year 2000.

This reduction will provide proportional reductions for all Manitoba income tax payers. Approximately 520,000 Manitobans will benefit from this measure beginning July 1 of this year. For a single employee at \$40,000 of income, the rate reduction means savings of \$93 this year and \$184 next year. When added to the reduction in Manitoba tax due to change in basic federal tax, that taxpayer saves \$112 this year on Manitoba tax and \$254 next year.

As announced last September by my predecessor, the Honourable Eric Stefanson, the share purchase limit of labour-sponsored funds is increased from \$3,500 to \$5,000 per individual in respect of 1998 and subsequent years. This increase has contributed to an extremely successful selling period this year for Manitoba's two registered labour-sponsored funds.

* (1500)

This bill also provides the legislative framework for the Manitoba equity tax credit our government announced on April 29. The program provides individual Manitoba investors with up to 15 percent income tax credit over three years to a maximum annual amount of \$1,500. This credit will provide an incentive for Manitobans to invest in small and medium-sized Manitoba companies which issue new common shares on the Winnipeg Stock Exchange. The ability of companies to obtain equity financing in the local market strengthens both their ties to the community and to the local stock exchange.

I would like to add that since the Budget Address we have heard from several industry representatives on this measure. They have recommended a modification to the program guidelines which will focus the benefits of the program more exclusively on smaller Manitoba companies. To that end, I would like to advise members that I will introduce an amendment to Bill 22 at the committee stage of debate. The amendment I propose will reduce the maximum lifetime eligible share issue from \$10 million to \$5 million per eligible corporation.

In respect of small businesses, I am pleased that Bill 22 reduces the Manitoba rate of corporate income tax on businesses eligible for the federal small business deduction from 9 percent to 8 percent of taxable income on July 1 of this year. The rate will be further reduced by 1 percent at the beginning of each of the three succeeding years to settle at 5 percent on January 1, 2002.

Madam Speaker, the Film and Video Production Tax Credit that our government introduced in 1997 has been extremely successful in expanding Manitoba's film and video industry. The number and value of film productions in Manitoba have grown more than tenfold since the introduction of the credit. Bill 22 extends the credit for a period of two years to the beginning of March 2002 to ensure this sector has an opportunity to develop, grow and mature into a sustainable industry with the infrastructure and local labour market necessary to continue to thrive.

Bill 22 extends the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit for a further three years from June 30, 2000 to June 30, 2003. Since 1992 when our government introduced this credit the manufacturing sector in Manitoba has created almost 10,000 new jobs and continues to outperform Canada and other provinces in this sector. Extending the credit at this time will allow manufacturers sufficient planning time to develop further enhancements to their production capacity in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba provides a large array of personal and corporate income tax credits. Bill 22 also amends The Income Tax Act to incorporate and parallel new penalty provisions in the federal act which apply in cases where a taxpayer or a third party provide misleading or false information to claim or increase the value of income tax credits.

Among the other changes to Manitoba's taxation system that I announced on April 29 were two measures which strengthened the competitive environment for certain sectors or areas of the economy currently underperforming their potential. Bill 22 reduces the mining tax rate from 20 percent of mining profits to 18 percent for taxation years commencing after 1998. This reduction provides a clear signal to mine operators and developers that Manitoba is and will continue to be one of the most attractive places to develop and operate mines in years to come.

In order to support the development of Churchill as a port which attracts not only cargo but also tourist ships, the motive fuel tax will be removed from sales of diesel fuel to international ships which refuel at Churchill after April 29, 1999. To date, without this measure, ships have avoided fuelling in Churchill.

The Budget Address also contained two important exemptions under The Retail Sales Tax Act. Bill 22 provides that, effective from April 30, the exemption limit for children's clothing is increased from \$100 to \$150 per item.

As well, to enhance production of livestock and protect Manitoba's environment, an exemption from the retail sales tax is provided

for manure slurry tanks and lagoon liners purchased after April 29, 1999, and before January 1, 2001, for farm use.

Bill 22 also extends the first-time home-buyers' sales tax rebate program for an additional year. First-time purchasers of a new home are eligible for a rebate of the retail sales tax paid on materials used on the construction of their home to a maximum rebate of \$2,500.

Finally, I would note that last year the retail sales tax was removed from the modification or purchase of custom computer software. As a complement to that measure, as announced in the budget, Bill 22 removes the sales tax from custom software which is sold in the sale of an ongoing business or which is sold to a wholly owned subsidiary. In addition to these measures, Madam Speaker, Bill 22 introduces technical adjustments to The Retail Sales Tax Act regarding the application of tax on maintenance and warranty service, contracts, and it clarifies the list of sales tax exempt telephone numbers to ensure that related toll free numbers other than 1-800 also qualify for the exemption.

Changes included in this bill to The Corporation Capital Tax Act clarify a receiver's responsibility where a corporation ceases to exist in Manitoba and makes certain provisions for policy reserves consistent between resident and nonresident insurance companies.

Madam Speaker, the measures contained in this bill will continue to stimulate Manitoba's expanding economy and help create more jobs and opportunities for our children in Manitoba. I commend Bill 22 to all members.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I want to put a few brief comments on the record. I know our Finance critic will also be addressing this bill. I anticipate that we will be able to deal with this bill in separating this afternoon and proceed with Estimates discussion later on, and I want to indicate that I recognize that this bill is essentially a companion piece of legislation to the budget, that essentially puts into place much of what was announced in the budget.

I want to indicate, Madam Speaker, that what we want to point out as we debate this is the fact that this bill, in particular, shows that while there were some positive initiatives in the budget—most importantly on health care—the government has ignored a very critical area for many Manitobans, an area which we intend to deal with through this bill, and that is in the area of property taxes. I was quite astounded, quite frankly, that this government in its polling—now publicly available—did not even ask the question about property taxes. It was not even on the agenda. I realize the sensitivity of members opposite, because in many ways it is a problem they have created. Since the government came into power, the burden on local taxpayers, especially in terms of school taxes, has doubled. The level of property taxes, especially for schools, has virtually doubled in the last 11 years.

I point out that if you talk to people in my community in Thompson or people in the city of Winnipeg or people in rural Manitoba, you will get much the same message. In fact, I find it amazing that the minister talks about tax relief, did not even ask the question about property tax. Now I suspect it is because of two reasons: one is it is directly a result of their actions, their underfunding of education, in particular. But I also suspect, Madam Speaker, it is a result of the changes that were made in 1993 whereby they actually reduced the property tax credit by \$75 and instated a minimum tax of \$250. Before if you had a tax level that was of a certain level and you had the equivalent property tax credit, that property tax credit will be applied fully against the amount of tax payable. But what this meant was many people I know in rural Manitoba on very limited incomes, ended up all of a sudden going from zero property taxes to \$250. The bottom line is that that is not acceptable.

I want to stress that we will be moving an amendment to this legislation in committee that we feel would deal with that, that would provide a balanced approach to the tax issue in this province. I think we all recognize that many working families in this province, many lower- and middle-income people in particular have been hard hit the last number of years. There has been a small percentage of people who have

benefited very significantly from this government, but the irony is they are the ones, according to the government's plan in this budget, who will be the biggest beneficiaries. Some of the people who have gained the most will be some of the biggest beneficiaries.

We believe there needs to be a balanced approach that recognizes the need to do something fairly significant on property tax. That, by the way, will benefit many people on a lower- and middle-income level far more than the proposals put forward by the government for essentially a two-part income tax relief. I say to the minister that we were, quite frankly, very surprised that this was not even considered by the government.

*(1510)

I think that when we are dealing with the finances of this province, we need a balanced approach. We all, I think, recognize one of the main reasons we did support the budget yesterday was certainly the money that has been put forward into health. We have been arguing this for quite some time. I think it would have been very hypocritical of us to say spend money on health care and then turn around and say, well, whatever. I acknowledge, too, that it is not usual that you end up with an opposition party supporting a budget, but it did happen in 1989, as the minister knows, and did happen in 1973, as well, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was a member of the NDP government at that time, the Conservative opposition did vote for it.

But our approach is essentially that we can do better. This is one of the significant areas we will be pointing to that this is a far better approach, rather than having everything focused on income tax, to have at least some relief focused in on property taxes. We will be moving an amendment on that, Madam Speaker, and I believe it is something that is needed.

I also want to focus on another aspect that we will also be moving an amendment on. We have expressed concern about the clawback of the child tax benefit. This clawback is on the lowest income people in our society, and they are people on welfare. I find it ironic that we see

a situation in which we are providing what we would call corporate welfare. To use the words of David Lewis, we have enough corporate welfare bums who have been receiving corporate welfare, but when it comes to people on social assistance, they have been specifically denied the child tax credit. That, by the way, takes approximately a thousand dollars a year out of their income, a thousand dollars a year.

We will be moving amendments both here and also in Estimates to put our position very clearly, that we believe that the child tax credit should go directly to all families regardless of the source of their income. We believe in this. The province that has ironically the highest level of child poverty in the country, that we, of all provinces, should be applying that money from the child tax credit and saying something that I think is equitable across the board, that says basically we will provide that child tax credit to all Manitobans.

I want to put on the record that our approach is far more balanced and equitable than the approach taken by this government. While we certainly, as I said, do not honestly believe the intentions of the government in spending the money on health care, we did support that component of the budget. I think what we are saying is that our position yesterday was yes, but—yes, there are elements in the budget that we support, but we can do a heck of a lot better in this province.

Our plan, by the way, which we believe is affordable and sustainable, is balanced, would provide for the first step of the income tax cut that has been outlined, that would be in place by July and would provide an alternative approach for the second step, Madam Speaker, which would focus on property taxes rather than on income tax. I stress again that that is how we can ensure that there is equity across the board and that we do not only provide some relief to people that have certainly a benefit. I guess I always think of the brokers who made the millions of dollars on the sale of MTS, for example.

This bill will give them the biggest benefit. They will be the biggest beneficiaries of the Tory taxation policies. I am proud, by the way,

of the NDP tradition in this area. The Schreyer government brought in the property tax credit system, brought in a system that did recognize that and specifically for seniors in this province, who are often in the ironic position of paying significantly increased property taxes for schools when they are well past the time in their family's life where they have kids in school. Seniors are quite willing to contribute. I know, towards our education system, but, you know, I think there has to be some recognition of the fact the burden has gone too far.

That is our approach, a balanced approach. I want to stress, as well, that we very much view this as a way of putting forth our agenda for government.

We are obviously disappointed that the government chose not to call an election today. I must admit I was ribbing the government about whether they were going to be wearing a chicken suit today. We will see if they are wearing their chicken suit next Tuesday. I will not make a prediction on that other than the notice that they certainly seem to be trying on the proverbial chicken suit. I can understand their concern because, quite frankly, a lot of people out there have had it with this government. They see a government that is long, not only passed its prime, but long in the tooth, a party that has run out of steam, that, in particular, is relying on cynical recycling of election promises on health care.

One of our messages to the people of Manitoba, one of the reasons on the budget vote that certainly we did what we did is that we want to say exactly not just what we are opposed to but what we support in terms of initiatives, obviously more resources for health care. We have been arguing that for four years, mostly to deaf ears on that side, but now they have come around. They would have you believe they are born-again defenders of the health care system. We have some doubts about that, but we are building on that by making specific proposals in this bill, proposals that will be part and parcel of our campaign and our agenda for government.

I want to stress by the way, Madam Speaker, that I believe strongly that you will see in this bill some of the key differences between this

Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. Let us not forget that in addition to eroding property tax credits, this is a party that has increased the tax burden significantly on low- and middle-income people. Let them not kid you. In addition to the overall growth of revenues, the billion dollars, quite apart from that, they did extend the sales tax base. It is interesting, by the way, because in Saskatchewan now, they not only have under the NDP a lower sales tax, but they have a lower sales tax base than here in Manitoba. A very regressive move on their part, and there have been only minor adjustments to that.

We have seen similar changes by the way that have affected Manitobans in terms of user fees. I want to stress as well, by the way, that we are also ahead of our time in terms of small business taxation. I note in fact in Saskatchewan some of the moves that were made there to ensure that small businesses are productive. British Columbia as well. We, a year ago, proposed that. We feel this is an appropriate way to proceed. We are pleased to see the government respond on that.

I want to put one other item on the record, an area that I think needs some focus right now. It is in mining. I know from my own experience in my community, we are in a situation where northern Manitoba, unlike the puffery and the rhetoric of the Conservative government opposite, believe you me, we are having difficult times. I recognize that governments only play so much of a role. Obviously, one of the key factors, the main factor is the price of basic metals. But the reality is that we are in significant danger of being uncompetitive with our other jurisdictions.

I would point to the minister, specifically the recent tax changes and treatment of mining in Saskatchewan, something the government chose not to follow through on here. I am concerned that we are in an environment where, in the mining industry, we need to be competitive not just nationally but internationally. We are dealing in the case of nickel, for example, with nickel in Australia, nickel in Russia, nickel in Greece, nickel in various countries throughout the world. I do not believe the government has

listened to the mining industry. I certainly know the proposals that they put forward.

I want to say to the minister that he should look in conjunction with the Minister of Energy and Mines at some of the steps that were taken by Don Orchard when he was Minister of Energy and Mines, steps that I fully supported and advocated as Energy and Mines critic at the time, which did update our mining tax regimen and make it more competitive. I want to stress, that took place, as the minister will know now, in '93-94. I would suggest, strongly suggest that he sit down with the Minister responsible for Energy and Mines and come up with a tax and royalty structure in the mining industry that is competitive.

I want to stress that, Madam Speaker, because our approach certainly in the election and our agenda in government would be very much aimed at a number of things. I think it is important to stress this. A lot of times you hear us talk about health care in this House. I think our commitment to health care is well known. You will hear something about social policies; our commitment in terms of social policies is well known. But I also believe that there is an economic agenda that the people of Manitoba expect from any party, that the wish is to put itself forward as a potential government.

* (1520)

I found interesting yesterday the comments from the First Minister, still years later has not learned the reality of the fact that when the NDP has been in power, it has proven its ability in terms of economic development. I cite Limestone, which he criticized yesterday. I mean, the great thinkers on the Conservative side in the 1980s, their proposal was what? Their proposal was to buy power from the United States. The Liberal leader called it Lemonstone. The Conservatives echoed it. I want to put this on the record, because we built that dam for a billion dollars under budget—a billion dollars under budget. It is interesting, by the way, because I often like going to party events, NDP events, and what my favourite question to ask people is, quickly, name me one Hydro dam that the Conservatives built in the last 30 years. It is a trick question. The answer is none. None.

Not a single development. This party, when it is in government, tends to rely on a number of things to drive its economic development policies.

One is sort of a good dose of ideology. I find it ironic now that the minister talks about the role of balanced budgets and creating jobs. It is interesting, because they did not balance the budget for seven years. They had the highest deficit in Manitoba history. It interesting in dealing with that. The bottom line here is that we are in a situation where we do not need any lessons from this government on economic policies. The bottom line is that we will be putting forward an economic plan, and our economic plan, by the way, is aimed at all Manitobans and will result in both commitment to health and education and social policies, social and economic justice for all Manitobans.

We put this forward in this budget. I challenge the government to listen to us, and to listen to many Manitobans who were saying that they want a balanced approach, and that they want some relief. They want to start the process of giving them some relief on the incredible levels of property taxation we are seeing in this province.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I just have a few words to add to the debate on this bill in second reading, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999, Bill 22, and echo some of the comments made by my colleague the MLA for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the opposition House leader, regarding some of the elements that are before us, particularly in regard to income tax changes.

Madam Speaker, I just want to point out at the beginning that many people in Manitoba may not understand this, but this legislation is absolutely necessary in order to put the tax changes into effect. We may pass the budget, but the budget is simply an outline of general policy. Legislation is needed in order for any kind of a tax change to take effect, even if it has been announced saying retroactive. I know some of the miscellaneous retail tax cuts were made retroactive or effective at a date prior to the implementation of this bill.

So the fact is, we have to recognize, people have to realize that if there were an election called before this bill was passed, the government really is offering them nothing, because there would be no tax cut put in place. All we would be doing is promising the people of Manitoba that this was an intention, but there was no legal basis for the income tax cut or, indeed, any of the other tax changes. So we have to recognize that a budget is really an outline, a document, giving a general indication of taxation and spending.

Madam Speaker, I want to put it on the record that, as my colleague the MLA for Thompson indicated as well, the New Democratic Party agrees on certain kinds of tax cuts that should take place. I think it is true that many people in this country believe that they have been overtaxed, and there are complaints from many groups in our society. But it is really important that, when you decide that you can have a given level of tax reduction, you do it in a way that is going to be equitable and fair and help the people that really need the help the most.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, there is no question that a reduction in a progressive income tax means that it is regressive. This is the irony. It is a progressive type of tax. The rate goes up as you increase your incomes, but when you cut the tax, it has the regressive effect. So this income tax cut that is being proposed, there is no question, is going to benefit wealthier Manitobans more than the people at the lower end of the income scale.

We made an argument, Madam Speaker, that far more equitable would be to look at the property tax burden and to implement some form of additional property tax credit, which will reinstate the property tax credit that was eliminated a few years ago under Mr. Manness when he was then Minister of Finance. I can note why people are concerned about the burden of taxes in the province because I have noted by looking at the tax revenues received by this government since 1988-89 when it first came into office that the income tax revenue to the year 1988-89 increased 38.8 percent whereas inflation in this same period was only 32 percent. So there is no question that the rate of

revenues that this government has received from income taxes has far superseded the rate of inflation so that there was a real increase in the burden on Manitobans collectively paying income taxes to the provincial government.

One of the reasons for this, of course, is the system that we have got in conjunction with the federal government that is often referred to as bracket creep which automatically gives governments more and more money. I note, even with this rate reduction proposed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that in his Estimates he shows, even so there is a three-point reduction being proposed, there is going to be another increase in the revenues for income tax. I see him sitting there smiling about this because he does need money for some certain expenditures. But the income tax will go up from \$1.48 billion in 1998-99 to \$1.646 billion in '99-2000. In other words, Manitobans are going to continue to pay more income taxes to the Province of Manitoba.

One could argue that even a retail sales tax cut would be far more progressive than a cut in income taxes. I realize one point in retail sales tax is much more than this government is giving up now by way of a rate reduction. I am looking at the summary of the 1999 tax reductions and tax credit measures and see that what the government is offering with its personal income tax rate reduction is approximately \$81 million, although we are also seeing a reduction due to federal changes of \$31 million. I realize if you bring in a one-point tax cut on retail sales, you are well in excess of a hundred million. I am not sure what it is, \$120 million, \$130 million, around there, so it is more. Although I suppose you could say, well, let us add the income tax rate reduction to let us say the corporate income tax cut and some of these other credits, and you may be getting close to one point in sales tax.

I guess you could even argue that a one-point cut in sales tax is just as stimulating and maybe more stimulating than corporate income tax cuts which brings me to the point to ask: to what extent do these credits, these rate reductions, that the minister is proposing in this budget, the small business rate reduction and the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit extension, will they have a buoyant effect on our economy?

I am not suggesting they have a negative effect, but what I am going to propose is that they really affect a transfer. It is a transfer of income to that particular sector, to those particular owners, those particular manufacturers or business establishments. That is essentially what this is doing, it is transferring money to them, and they will be glad to receive it.

* (1530)

But whether this is going to stimulate the economy, this is the reason why our economy will be stimulated, why the investment level will go up, you can debate, Madam Speaker, because I would argue that there is no correlation between the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit and what happens in the real world of investment. In fact, reading the minister's 1999 budget document, there is reference made to manufacturing investment dipping slightly in 1998. There had been a higher rate of increase prior to that, but in 1998 actually the level of manufacturing investment dipped. In 1999, this current year, manufacturing capital investment is projected to decline by 22 percent based on a Statistics Canada survey of investment intentions. The information is charted here on page 115 of the economy section of the budget. So what I am suggesting is the evidence itself shows that there is no direct correlation between any type of manufacturing investment credit and what happens to the level of investment, whether you are talking about manufacturing investment or indeed even if you are talking about private investment in total, because private investment in total is also projected to decline this year by Statistics Canada. Quite a substantial decline is being projected in the private sector by Stats Canada.

Madam Speaker, there is no question in my mind that a property tax cut of some nature would be most welcome by the people of Manitoba. It would be far more equitable, and it is a serious area that governments have to look at. I am pleased that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has finally acceded to the urgings of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) to include property taxes in the Lower Tax Commission's mandate, in its terms of reference, because that is a big issue, and it affects the economy in so many ways. I believe someone in the real estate

industry today was commenting on the burden of property taxes and how it was affecting his industry, how it was affecting the development of urban areas. This is a big area. It goes beyond just property tax credits, of course. It goes into the whole question of education financing and so on.

I have long felt that the burden of property taxes was excessive in this province and that the province had a responsibility to address this particular problem if we were going to look at ways and means of developing our urban centres and indeed some of the rural areas. So, while we like to talk a lot about the stimulative benefits of income tax cuts, we often forget that property taxes play a very real role in the burden the people see imposed upon them by governments.

I just want to conclude, Madam Speaker, by noting that, over the years, the people of this province have been paying more taxes, even though the government boasts about no major tax increases. There has been the bracket creep phenomenon that I mentioned so that people are paying more anyway. There has been the reduction of the property tax credit and there has been offloading by the government onto municipalities, offloading of certain responsibilities. There has been an increase in fees; the whole Pharmacare program has been scaled back so that the average Manitoban has to pay more, the user of pharmaceuticals, prescription drugs has to pay more by way of fees and costs for those needed prescriptions.

Certainly, another example is the fees that have gone up in the nursing homes. They have gone up tremendously, so much so that some people who are in nursing homes, some of the elderly who are depending on pensions, find that they can qualify for provincial social assistance because the rates are so high. They have taken all of their pension money to the point that they have insufficient for personal needs and basic needs, even in accordance with their social assistance rules, so that they can indeed, residents in my constituency, elderly in my constituency who live in nursing homes who have had so much money taken from them that they could qualify and have qualified for social assistance payments. This is ridiculous, but it does go to indicate the point I am making, that

is, there are all kinds of user fees that have gone up, and these in the real world are a burden as well to citizens.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to conclude by noting that, while the budget does have some impact on the Manitoba economy, it has an impact whether it has a deficit situation—if it has a deficit situation, it is stimulating the economy, as a matter of fact. For all the criticisms that deficits get, the fact is that deficits are stimulative. On the other hand, surpluses tend to have a negative impact. They reduce the aggregate demand in the economy, so we can recognize that.

But, having said that, Madam Speaker, I believe the more important factors that affect the state of the Manitoba economy are beyond us, one of which is the national interest rate policy. Fortunately, we have a lower level of interest rates than we had certainly back in the mid-'80s. Maybe they should even be lower than they are, but the fact is that a relatively low interest rate regime has benefited economic expansion across this nation, including Manitoba.

Certainly we have been beneficiaries of a cheap Canadian dollar. There may be some elements in our economy that are unhappy with the lower dollar vis-a-vis the American dollar, but basically and generally speaking, that cheaper dollar has caused our exports to greatly increase, to the United States in particular, and that in turn has created jobs. I dare say that if our dollar became more expensive vis-a-vis the American dollar, our level of exports to that country would drop and we would feel the impact in this province.

The third point, of course, that we have to recognize is the U.S. economy itself. The U.S. economy has been booming for the last few years. It has had a positive impact on the Canadian economy, including the Manitoba economy, but if the American economy should slow down in any serious way, we would soon feel it, regardless of what our budget said at that particular time. So let us call a spade a spade and realize, while the government likes to take credit for job creation, likes to take credit for economic growth, let us recognize, let us face the truth, that these are the fundamental factors

that are affecting it. In fact, I know of some conservative economists who would say the same thing as myself. I think Mr. McCallum, it was stated not long ago in the paper that as far as predictions of the Manitoba economy are concerned, it may be rosy, but if interest rates should rise, if the dollar should rise in value vis-a-vis the American dollar or if the U.S. economy should falter, all bets are off as to what is going to happen in the future to the buoyancy of the Manitoba economy.

So, Madam Speaker, on this side we will have more to say about the bill and the specifics of the bill as we get into the committee stages where we are going to discuss this clause by clause. I would just point out that many of the features, many of the items referred to in the bill deal with very miscellaneous things, very miscellaneous things that do not really involve much money. Even the fact that the minister talks about a custom software exemption on sale of ongoing businesses, well, you are only talking about \$200,000 in this case, or indeed the exemption to farmers for manure slurry tanks, we are talking in total \$1 million. As the budget goes, this is not very much money indeed.

The biggest cut is personal income tax, \$81 million followed by a reduction due to federal changes of \$31 million, and that followed by the small business rate reduction of 24 and then the next most significant is the manufacturing investment tax credit extension of 13, but all the rest are very, very tiny, very miscellaneous of nature and will not have any impact of any significance on the economic situation in the province. It may have an impact on one or two people who are directly affected, of course, and they will welcome it, I am sure.

There are some areas of this budget, some areas of specifics, specific areas that I can agree with. I just want to comment before sitting down, and that is the Film and Video Production Tax Credit extension. That is something that I agree with a hundred percent. I think it has been beneficial in the past. This is one area that I would support a hundred percent. No problem. I want to go on record again for myself and for our side saying: we are not opposed to tax cuts per se, but any tax cuts that we do bring about should be as equitable, as fair as possible,

recognizing the social, economic situation that we face in this province.

* (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): It is with pleasure that I stand to rise to speak on Bill 22. I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) actually gave us some of the committee reading notes, which give a little bit more detail on it and assists in our vast research department in their abilities to be able to do a good, thorough job on this particular bill. I think that in principle it is a bill which can be supported. In fact, last week I had a call from one of the Free Press reporters. The Free Press reporter had said that the government was wanting to see a taxation bill passed before the election. I guess the Premier (Mr. Filmon) had talked to the reporter, and he says: So what do you think? Part of the response goes: Well, this is the first time I heard anything of the government, the Premier, actually wanting to see this bill passed, but who are we in the Liberal Party to deny something that Manitobans have been calling for, and that is to get some tax relief—

An Honourable Member: Maybe the two House leaders conferred and they have already agreed.

Mr. Lamoureux: No, I do not know. I do not think they had—the opposition and the government—come to an agreement. What I can say, Madam Speaker, is that we were not consulted as a party in regard to getting some sort of a speedy passage, but I had indicated to the reporter at the time that the party would in fact be very receptive to having this bill passed in order to even accommodate an election today. So we were quite prepared.

I do not know if the 35-day—it might be that time line is actually passed, but if this is the only thing that is preventing the government from calling the election, I would appeal to members to let me know. I will cease and stop, and let us call the election.

I am a little bit sceptical, you know. We were having a discussion earlier today within our caucus room, and there were all sorts of jokes.

The common theme in the jokes happened to be an animal called the chicken. In fact, some had suggested that maybe what we have in the Legislative cafeteria would in fact be chicken soup for next Tuesday. So, if in fact there is no election call next Tuesday, we will at least be able to go and have some chicken soup. You can just see now all of the debates and the chanting. I think the animal of the chicken, the great Manitoba chicken, will in fact be in appreciation on that particular day.

An Honourable Member: The provincial bird.

Mr. Lamoureux: We will speculate—at least the provincial bird for a day, as the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) makes reference.

But, you know, Madam Speaker, I guess if you are here long enough, no doubt the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) will be able to tell you how things kind of make circles. There has been a very interesting circle that I witnessed yesterday. This particular bill, which talks about taxation, deals with revenues coming in. This government has been very, very tricky in the way in which it portrays things, the way in which it takes things into account. I recall back in '88 when the government of the day—and to their credit they did take a mess of a budget, the '88, that was forecasting hundreds of millions of dollars in debt. They were able to somehow turn that budget into a surplus. But, not wanting to show Manitobans that they had a surplus budget, what they did is they borrowed money in order to create the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Lo and behold, you had the New Democrats supporting the government in that fiscal stabilization, in that fooling or attempt to manipulate and fool Manitobans back then. Well, yesterday the circle has been completed. The New Democrats, who like to perceive themselves as an opposition party, once again hold hands in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the Conservative Party, thereby completing that full circle.

You know, the uniting factor again in the Liberals was in our motion of substance, saying that this government has lost the confidence of Manitobans because of the way in which they trick or attempt to trick people in terms of the financial accountability. That was the central motion that I and the member for The Maples

(Mr. Kowalski) brought forward. What do they do? They voted against. I think that is the first time where an official opposition was against a motion that we put forward that just suggested that this government has lost the confidence of Manitobans.

One has to ask: where have they been? Do they not recognize the problems in our health care system? Do they not recognize the problems in education? It was a complete and absolute surprise that they would have, in fact, bought into what the government is doing, that full circle. As I say, before they borrowed in order to create a debt. This budget, they are borrowing money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to create a surplus, and, again, the New Democrats are supporting it. First you say you do, then you say you do not, if I quote the one minister today inside the Chamber—absolutely totally amazing how things have unfolded over the last couple of days.

But, Madam Speaker, while I will wait until the election is called, if the election is called—we do not know. I speculate that if the election is not called on Tuesday, you know, we could be seeing at least the potential of Clayton Manness coming back or someone else in terms of seeking the leadership of the Conservative Party as they attempt to change the leadership in order to try to get the popularity of their party back into the polls where they feel comfortable enough in order to go into an election.

But, Madam Speaker, it is really and truly amazing as I sat inside the Chamber, and the question was called, and you hear—well, I like to think my voice was somewhat strong at the very least—one individual saying no on behalf of the Liberal Party and then forcing the issue. I trust the message that I will be sending to my constituents, the constituents of Inkster, the message I will be sending is that in Manitoba there is only one alternative because the Conservatives and the NDP are proposing the very same budget. Both the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and the government members voted for a budget which we in the Liberal Party could not support. We cannot support this budget, in part because of a major gap in this piece of legislation, that this legislation does not take into consideration the

greatest injustice in terms of taxation and that being property tax.

The member for Wellington does not recognize that what the people of Inkster really want is to see some relief on property tax, and that member, along with the New Democratic Party, voted for this budget, unbelievable. As the current MLA, part of my responsibility is to ensure that the constituents I represent today are very much aware of the position, of the lack of responsibility that the New Democratic Party demonstrated yesterday as an official opposition, Madam Speaker. You know, at times I like to think that I am somewhat generous in my comments, but I do not believe Manitobans as a whole were provided good, solid opposition to the budget.

I really believe that, Madam Speaker. I believe that as an opposition party, you have a role to provide an alternative to Manitobans, to the government that is in power, and that is something which we in the Liberal Party take very seriously. We believe that there is a better way to govern Manitobans, and we will, in due course, provide a budget proposal that will, in fact, address some of the shortcomings, huge shortcomings in this particular budget. We will bring in the legislation that is necessary in order to make this bill that we have today a better piece of legislation.

* (1550)

We will bring in the legislation that is required. [interjection] We, as in the Liberal Party, will bring in—the real opposition today will, in fact, bring in legislation, Madam Speaker, that will address the issue of taxation, of fairer taxation, and deal with property tax. We are not going to leave on the side what is a huge, huge issue to so many Manitobans.

We challenge the government as to why it is. We asked the question today in regard to polling. Does this government have any idea on how Manitobans are upset with the way in which the property tax is being brought in or collected? If you look at the comparisons of property tax, if you talk to what people have to say, and when you start paying \$3,000 for property tax on a

house of \$100,000 of value, you have to start questioning in terms of, is that not too much?

Why is the provincial government not recognizing it? You go into some areas, and the fluctuations are so great. You compare St. James to Winnipeg 1, or the constituency which I represent which, I will argue, probably pays the highest property tax in the province of Manitoba. That is why it is an important issue not only because of my constituents but for all Manitobans.

I am telling you, the Liberal Party will take a very strong stand in terms of addressing this issue. We recognize that we cannot continue to allow the growing reliance of funding public education on property tax. That has got to stop, and the Liberal Party will ensure that that will occur, that we will see a decrease in property tax. We are not going to play the games of the New Democrats who, while in government, again watched property taxes grow in funding education while at the same time the general revenues were again freezing or nowhere near increasing in comparison to the amount of revenue coming into government or in terms of the economy and the economic performance of our economy.

You know, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) says: how? A good question. My best guess is that, had the Premier (Mr. Filmon) called the election today, I would be able to tell very specifically to the member for St. Norbert how the Liberal Party proposes to do it. I will even go a little bit further. Hopefully, some time next week I might be able to have an enlightening conversation with members of the government and share with them a way in which it can be done not only in the long term but also in the short term. That is something in which the Liberal Party is committed to doing.

But, when we look at this bill, I challenge the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) to demonstrate any gestures from the government that address through their polling, through their canvassing, through the meetings that the Minister of Finance had throughout the province, any gesture whatsoever where this government attempted to either get feedback from Manitobans or try to promote feedback from Manitobans on the issue of property tax. I

challenge the Minister of Finance to be able to be very clear and concise with all members of this House as to what this government did to try to ensure that that particular agenda item was in fact dealt with. I do not believe it was, because if it was, I believe that the government disregarded that because there is absolutely no indication, whether it is in this particular bill or the budget of this government, that they were prepared to deal with this issue.

I started off by saying that it is, in fact, a positive bill. I do believe that it provides tax incentives. We have seen some very strong areas where the government has done reasonably well on its taxation policy. We look at the film industry as an example, and we have seen a significant growth. Part of that is because of some of the tax relief, which is a positive thing.

Madam Speaker, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) should not be prodding me because I am liable to get off topic and going on the New Democrats again, and there is a lot to attack when it comes to financial responsibility in that area. The greatest positive of Bill 22 is something which my constituents and Manitobans see as a very strong positive, of course, is the decrease in personal income tax, but— [interjection] I definitely support a decrease in personal income tax, but because I support that, it does not necessarily mean I have to vote for your budget. There is a lot of stuff in that budget that, put quite frankly, is crap. I do not know if that is parliamentary. Madam Speaker, if that is not parliamentary, I withdraw the word "crap." I withdraw that particular word.

But the point is, as I would suggest to members of the government, that as you go page by page through the budget there is a good chance there are some things that you are not necessarily going to care for in that budget—at least I trust that that is in fact the case—but because it is a government document you are going to support the budget or you are going to suffer the consequence of the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) who has been holding a fairly tight ship, the Whip, the party Whip, the government Whip. But as I say there are some of the positives and I have made reference to that and in keeping a relatively good spirit of seeing this

bill pass through second reading, I do not see any problems with it going into committee.

I would hope that we could even possibly have the committee meet relatively soon with ensuring that members of the public do have the opportunity to make presentation, or it goes into Committee of the Whole, I am told. Well, hopefully there will be some sort of a time allotment towards getting this particular bill passed if this is the bill that the government is in fact waiting for in order to call the election, because ultimately we do believe that the government has gone through its course. Obviously it has the support of one opposition party, but it does not have the support of the Liberal Party, the budget I am referring to, not necessarily this bill. This bill, as I say, does have a number of positive things. I will add some more words whether it is at committee or at third reading, hopefully just to address a few more of the specifics of the bill, but I did want to address it in principle this afternoon in order to allow for it to go into committee. With those few words we are prepared to see it go to committee.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Finance, to close debate.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments put on the record by members of the Legislature. I do sense there is a sense in here to pass the bill and look forward to dealing with it in committee.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1999. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe we have

tabled the sequence of Estimates that the Clerk should have. There was one error that the opposition House leader and I corrected. The Department of Housing showed on two spots on that list. [interjection] Yes, I know the minister was quite excited about having two sets of Estimates, but the correct place for that department was not, I believe, on the Chamber side, but rather in Room 255. I think that was corrected and initialed in the sequence that was tabled. [interjection]

Oh, absolutely, and it has been filed, and I have copies for members of the House. So any member who would like it—I have for Mr. Lamoureux.

Madam Speaker, I would now move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

*(1600)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Does the honourable Minister of Education and Training have an opening statement?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Yes, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure for me to be here to present opening remarks to mark the beginning of the Estimates process for the Department of Education and Training.

I am very grateful, as Minister of Education and Training, to have the opportunity to work in partnership with so many hardworking, talented groups and individuals dedicated to helping our

students become some of the best educated in the country.

Indeed, Nuala Beck recently pointed out that in Manitoba we have a high level of highly skilled people. Some 39 percent of our workforce falls into that category, and Ms. Beck points out that is among the best of records anywhere in the world. That is something that we should be proud of. We should also use that to remind us that we want to stay there and improve that record even further because the more highly educated our workforce becomes, the more satisfying life in Manitoba will be.

Whether it be work to create effective classroom learning environments, to teach, establish school plans, run divisions or institutions, volunteer at schools or assist children with their homework, the efforts of all partners are working to transform for the better the standard and quality of education provided to Manitoba students. Through continued collaboration and teamwork, we can continue to accomplish and achieve many wonderful things for the education system and for our students.

In my short time as minister, I have made efforts to consult with many different education stakeholders, and I look forward to ongoing consultation and dialogue with all educational partners. Meaningful partnership allows all of us to better understand the challenges and opportunities that exist today and to continue the important work of ensuring our students' success now and in the future.

I am pleased to note the efforts of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) as legislative assistant to the Minister of Education and Training. The honourable member for Pembina has distinguished himself in his private life and now also in his public life in his dedication to duty and his commitment, and I personally have appreciated his assistance in the onerous conduct of the responsibilities of this department. I thought I would say that since he is listening at this moment.

Our government continues to make education one of our top-funding priorities, second only to health care. In the last 10 years, education spending in Manitoba has increased to

19.3 percent of total spending as of 1998-99, up from the 17.7 percent commitment of the previous administration. This has been achieved despite the challenges facing us earlier this decade, when our country went through the second-worst recession on record. It has been achieved despite the massive reductions in transfer payments from the federal government. It has been achieved despite the massive debt load Manitobans have carried on their shoulders.

When I think that the cumulative effect of debt payments in Manitoba over the last 11 years exceeds \$6 billion, and I think of all that we could do if we had had \$6 billion at our disposal over these last 11 years, it boggles the mind and renders somewhat suspect the whole debate about commitment. Nonetheless, these are responsibilities Manitobans have had foisted on them and we will continue to discharge that debt. Unfortunately, it does not take very many years to put us into that situation, but it takes a lot more years to get us out. I hope that it is a lesson for us and a lesson for future generations.

*(1610)

Our schools have improved over the years. We have taken a very good education system, which brought us to the point Nuala Beck spoke of, and it has made that system better. We have to ensure that we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that all our students are learning to their maximum potential.

My government's vision for education renewal is very clear. Manitoba students, in an environment of inclusion, care, support, safety and rigour, will be among the best educated in Canada. This vision is supported by a belief for each student in high standards for academic achievement, the establishment of a personal desire for lifelong learning, and a fulfilment of their individual potential. Those are high-sounding words. Making it happen is certainly the challenge, and we recognize how great a challenge that is.

My government believes that all students should have the opportunity to achieve success at school, and that is our responsibility, in partnership with the education community, to provide our students with a high-quality of

education. To that end, my government is continuing to introduce world-class standards measured through province-wide standards testing as a means of ensuring our students are learning at the levels required by today's society and to provide both students and parents with accurate, well-balanced and well-rounded profiles of students' growth and achievement. This also serves as an assist to teachers in their work.

As part of an overall effort to better inform the decision-making process, my government is working in consultation with stakeholders to develop a series of indicators. Through these indicators, government will be able to establish reliable base-line data in support of greater accountability. Manitobans have told the government they wanted higher standards, better programs, more parental and community involvement and the integration of technology in the classroom. We have responded with measures that give our students a strong educational foundation and the fundamental skills for success.

Consistently, the government's goal throughout this process has been to ensure that our young people can read, write, think, compute and solve problems at a high level. A defining feature of the improvements to the education system includes an increased emphasis on the four foundation skill areas of literacy and communication, problem solving, human relations and technology. Another area of fundamental importance is special education. We welcomed the recent Special Education Review which we commissioned that provided us with a number of sound recommendations. It is clear that this issue is larger than something government alone can address. It is a societal issue that needs the co-operation of all partners, including parents, teachers, trustees and government all working together.

In my initial time as minister and in my consultations with all of these partners in education, I have detected a clear willingness to do just that, Mr. Chairman, to work together. There is a clear recognition that special education issues are issues for every child and every student, every parent and every teacher in the education system. If we can handle special

education issues effectively, everybody benefits. Implementation will be costly, certainly not something government can do in one fiscal year, but we are addressing this. Most recently, in our first step in implementing the recommendations, our government announced an additional \$2 million for this year to help meet the needs of students aged five to 12 who are at risk of failing due to behavioural difficulties, bringing our total commitment to special needs and students at risk to \$111 million, double the level of funding a decade ago.

The government is committed to accelerating opportunities for all Manitoba children by continuing to create inclusive learning communities. As well, government has facilitated the special needs administrative process for schools and provided key resource supports like Success For All Learners: A Handbook on Differentiating Instruction, and Individual Education Planning to assist schools in their provision of high quality educational opportunities for all children.

The government is continuing its work to improve interdepartmental co-ordination in order to enhance service delivery for children, families and schools. The government also recognizes the importance of laying the groundwork for success early on. This government has increased its ongoing support for early intervention programs and expanded the tremendously successful Early Literacy Initiative.

Results from this program indicate that struggling learners are benefiting significantly from intensive one-to-one instruction from trained Reading Recovery teachers. Research indicates that over 75 percent of these Grade 1 students will require no further assistance in reading and writing because of early intervention. This program ties in to my government's recognition that early identification and intervention is a key to prevention and ultimately to success.

Literacy is an important building block for student success, and the government wants to instill in our children a love of learning and ensure that all Manitobans have the opportunity to learn to read and write. Prevention and early intervention are key components of our commit-

ment to look at the whole child and the whole system. The education system will continue to be strengthened through emphasis on the core subjects, the establishment of regular assessment to measure student performance and by providing parents and the community with greater opportunities for involvement.

Through information sharing, consultation and partnership, my government wants to give parents a strong voice in school decision making. Parental involvement strengthens student learning, and as our children's first teachers, parents play a vitally important role in shaping a child's love of learning. The government introduced legislation to enact advisory councils for school leadership, effectively strengthening the role of parents and enhancing opportunities for meaningful involvement.

As well, the government provides resources and supports to the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. I recently held a series of consultations with parents that will be instrumental in shaping the future of parental involvement. I am committed to working with parents and parent groups for the benefit of Manitoba students. I have to say that that experience, in addition to being a learning experience for me as a minister, was an extremely enjoyable experience to meet with some 600 parents and others across Manitoba who care so much about what is happening with the kids in our schools. It certainly was indeed an education for me, even though I am a parent and have had many of the experiences they have had. It is wonderful to see the commitment that Manitobans feel.

If we are to ensure our children are prepared to compete and succeed in today's global marketplace, we have to ensure that they are being provided with the skills and tools that will allow them to do so. To help students develop important skill sets in an information age, the government has increased the level of technology resources available to all Manitoba students. Total annual spending for this area has now reached just under \$10 million.

In order to increase access to computers in the classroom, the government provides ongoing support of \$200,000 for the innovative

Computers for Schools and Libraries program, which uses donated computers, refurbishes them, and distributes them to schools. It is a good idea. It also makes sense in terms of not wasting these resources and not having them end up as environmental issues.

My government has also donated over 7,000 computers and computer parts to the program. The government will provide a further \$5 million in new funding for wiring and cabling for computer and computer network installation, Internet linkages and curriculum-based technology requirements in schools.

* (1620)

The government has established a special operating agency, MERLIN, to provide cost-effective technology products and services to the education community. MERLIN continues to provide substantive cost savings in the provision of technology services as demonstrated by a recent negotiation of a special academic rate with Microsoft to reduce the costs of software to Manitoba's educational institutions.

As well, the government has developed a technology continuum that integrates the development of technology skills for students throughout the curriculum. These initiatives support the integration of technology into teaching and learning and reflect its importance as a key foundation skill.

To ensure Manitoba is able to retain a skilled and knowledgeable teaching force, the government has provided additional supports and resources for professional development opportunities.

The government also continues to partner with stakeholder groups to develop appropriate strategies and action plans so that teacher education programs and certification requirements can adapt and be supported as change occurs.

We have increased funding for public schools by \$17.7 million for the 1999-2000 school year, with a further commitment of at least an overall 2 percent increase next year.

This increase, in addition to the special needs funding announcement, brings our funding commitment to public schools to 2.6 percent for 1999-2000. This commitment represents an increase of over \$149 million to public schools since 1987. Schools will be able to usher in the new millennium with a capital commitment from government of \$77.6 million for Manitoba's public schools and the children they serve.

This significant commitment consists of the regular capital support program, dollars under the Aging Buildings Program, and a further commitment to the Aging Buildings Program of \$30 million. As a result of this funding, more than 250 capital projects will be initiated, benefiting virtually all school divisions and districts in the province. Also, more than 1,000 construction-related jobs will be created in implementing these initiatives.

As part of our efforts to support continuing education beyond the K to S4 system, I was also pleased recently to announce more than \$12 million in additional support to the province's post-secondary institutions, an increase of 4.3 percent over last year's support. This additional funding brings the total provincial support to this area to just under \$299 million. Further, we are committed to increasing overall post-secondary funding by a minimum of 2 percent next year.

Manitoba currently enjoys some of the lowest tuition fees in the country. As part of a concerted effort to ensure post-secondary education remains affordable and accessible, we introduced a \$25-million five-year commitment to the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. We are committing up to \$5 million annually to match eligible contributions dollar for dollar. Up to 10,000 students can benefit from the initiative each year. The \$5,000 we make available brings out another \$5 million from the community. Indications are that all those dollars will be matched. That means the student comes out the winner.

In addition to the provincial contribution, post-secondary institutions have raised \$11 million for the Scholarship and Bursary Initiative in the last two years. This initiative, combined with the Manitoba Learning Tax Credit, is helping to provide students with

valuable support to offset tuition costs. Our Manitoba Learning Tax Credit, the only one of its kind in Canada, offers a 7 percent refundable tax credit for a student's post-secondary tuition costs, up to \$700 per student. This credit will contribute \$15 million in support to Manitoba students and their families. Through our participation in the national harmonized student loans program, we are reducing duplication and providing better assistance to students and recent graduates.

In 1999-2000, we will devote \$2.2 million to our interest relief and debt-reduction program. More recently, additional funds in support of full-time post-secondary students are being provided through the Canada Millennium Scholarships. Starting in January 2000 and for the next 10 years, approximately 36,000 Canada Millennium Scholarships will be distributed to students in Manitoba, representing some \$108 million in additional funds for student financial assistance.

I was very pleased last week to be the minister from Manitoba who was honoured to be able to sign that agreement with the federal government. Often we find ourselves to be critical of the federal government, but on this particular occasion there was nothing to criticize. We are delighted to be able to take advantage of the Canada Millennium Scholarships.

Another exciting development is the Colleges Growth Plan, developed to expand student enrollment and college programming to respond to provincial labour market needs. We have allocated \$4 million for this growth plan, which is expected to increase enrollment by an estimated 1,000 students. This plan will help meet labour market needs by expanding high-demand college programs and creating new ones. The Colleges Growth Plan has been designed to expand enrollment in programs with significant waiting lists. This was raised recently by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), the issue of people waiting on lists to take advantage of education opportunities in our colleges.

There will be programs that respond to aboriginal students and programs that use educational technologies, as well as programs

consistent with the demands of the growing provincial economy. It is very important that we match education opportunities with the real opportunities that exist in the workplace at a time when Manitoba can take advantage of growth opportunities. We are also allocating \$1.3 million to the Post-Secondary Strategic Initiatives Fund with \$800,000 targeted for strategic program development at the universities and \$500,000 for system restructuring within colleges and/or universities. These funds are provided for new and innovative ways of providing education to Manitobans.

Further, we are continuing our commitment to the Manitoba Innovations Fund to provide support for the acquisition and development of research infrastructure at the universities and colleges. This \$35 million-five-year commitment enhances Manitoba as a centre of innovation. As well, we are providing \$16 million to assist post-secondary institutions in meeting their capital requirements. Of this amount \$14 million has been allocated to specific projects, and a new fund of \$2 million has been established to address priority restoration projects at the universities.

Our efforts to create a strong education system, supported in the context of a healthy economy, are showing results. Our economy continues to grow, and our employment picture is strong. To ensure that all Manitobans can take advantage of the growing number of job opportunities in our province, we are expanding our Apprenticeship Program, focusing our Youth Employment programs and targeting training to available job opportunities.

The capacity of our apprenticeship system will be doubled to support 6,000 apprentices. We are devoting an additional \$2.4 million to further expand our in-school Apprenticeship Program. Doubling the size of the system will improve the range, quality and accessibility of apprenticeship training programs. This will provide the diverse sectors of Manitoba industry with the skilled workforce they require for growth and will widen career opportunities for Manitobans as skilled qualified individuals.

We are also continuing our work to develop new opportunities for our young people. For

example, in the past year we introduced three new programs: Business Mentorships, Youth Serves Manitoba, and Part-time STEP programs to increase the flexibility for students in obtaining work experience. Last year 16,000 young Manitobans took advantage of youth employment programming. In 1999-2000, we will provide over \$7 million for these programs. The government also funds, co-ordinates and supports the development and delivery of workplace and community-based adult literacy programming, including family literacy and literacy with an employability focus. I am pleased to provide an additional \$100,000 to community-based literacy in keeping with a five-year commitment made by the Premier of Manitoba.

Our government helped almost 10,000 Manitobans develop the skills and knowledge they needed to find jobs last year, and we will continue our efforts to provide EI claimants with access to training opportunities that complement the needs of the provincial economy. My government is also committed to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, that is, our ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The government is working with the Manitoba Round Table on Sustainable Development on an education strategy to increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of sustainable practices.

* (1630)

Starting at an early age and continuing throughout the learning experience, the government is committed to sustainable development as an important decision-making process that achieves a balance between quality of life, the economy and the environment. The government is also committed to continuing the important work of partnering with the aboriginal community and to assuring success with high-quality educational opportunities that recognize and include aboriginal perspectives throughout the learning experience. One successful initiative is Partners for Careers. Government is directing an additional \$100,000 for this program in 1999-2000, with our total expenditure reaching \$400,000. This job place-

ment program has helped place 520 unemployed aboriginal high school, college and university graduates in career-oriented entry-level positions with private-sector employers.

I am also pleased that we signed an agreement with the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres that will double the size and reach of the Partners for Careers program. The agreement is supported with provincial funding of \$550,000. Additionally, over the past year this government has undertaken a number of actions to help strengthen aboriginal education and training in this province. Firstly, the role and mandate of the Native Education Directorate has been significantly expanded to ensure a greater voice in all areas related to aboriginal education and training. Secondly, the government continues its efforts to increase graduation rates of aboriginal students, increase aboriginal labour market participation and strengthen partnerships with aboriginal communities.

Finally, many steps have been taken to ensure programming is responsive to the needs and aspirations of aboriginal people through ongoing teacher preservice and in-service initiatives. The government will continue to work with all education partners to help meet the needs and aspirations of aboriginal people. My government believes that all students can achieve success at school, and further, that all Manitobans should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The government is committed to investing in the future of our most valuable resource, our people. As we continue our work to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium, I would like to express my thanks to our education partners for their continuing efforts, commitment, and dedication to our students.

Our education system is changing for the better, and that is translating into prosperous futures for our young people. More people are working in our province than ever before. Manitoba gained almost 22,000 new jobs in the private sector in the past two years. Our province also enjoys the lowest unemployment and youth unemployment rates in the country. We live in a wonderful province that is poised for sustainable economic growth, growth that is

creating additional opportunities for our young people to build successful lives for themselves right here at home.

Lastly, I would just like to say that it has just been about three months that I have been Minister of Education and Training. I have been quite taken as a new minister by the legacy of progress with which I have been left. I can take off my hat to my predecessor and her predecessor and I guess her predecessor, because I come into a system where everywhere I go, the people—maybe I left one or two off—but the people involved, you know, I guess I could even go back further than that and say that other Education ministers before the ones of the present administration played their role and did their part as ministers, but other people did too, all throughout the piece.

It is a pretty gratifying experience to come into an education system that is not without challenges but has already greeted and met and succeeded in meeting many, many challenges already to put us in the position that we are, economically and socially, as a place to live here in Manitoba. So it is a proud thing for me to do, to take on the job as Minister of Education and Training. I take the duties very seriously.

I have also been very pleased to be met and greeted by a department and a deputy and at other levels in the Department of Education and Training who have demonstrated to me a commitment that is pretty impressive and has been extremely helpful to me as a minister in getting through these initial few months. I look forward to a long association with them.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the Estimates review and to whatever flows from here on. I do have copies of these opening comments. I know they will be reproduced in Hansard, but perhaps the honourable member would like to have a copy, and perhaps one for Hansard for their assistance.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), have any opening comments?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman, I will put a few comments on the record. I want to thank the minister for his opening comments, for his recognition of the work of all Education ministers, and for his submission of the Estimates in the Legislature this afternoon. I should note that these were submitted to the Legislature at two o'clock this afternoon during Question Period, so the opposition has only had a couple of hours to look at these Estimates. I would not expect that this was the minister's intention. It is a very brief time for a very large department. I am sure that other things have intervened and that perhaps it was not the minister's or the government's intention to be here today.

Nevertheless, we will do what we can this afternoon with two hours' notice of the Estimates and to acknowledge with the minister that we all want to see well-educated young people in Manitoba. We want to see them equipped for citizenship. We want to see them equipped for work. We want to see them dedicated to a life of learning and to the enjoyment of learning. We want to see them able to adapt to all the changes that they are going to face in a millennium which certainly holds promise of being one that will require enormous adaptations in the lifetime of any individual.

We also want to see an equality of education. This is an area where we feel that this particular government has fallen down. Perhaps I will outline some of the reasons we think that as we go through the Estimates period.

As I mentioned in Question Period earlier this week, or last week I guess it was, I think what is happening is a reversal of the kind of policies which were introduced very courageously and with great difficulty by Duff Roblin. The moves that he made to amalgamate school divisions to create an equality of education across Manitoba, both at grade level and in terms of subjects offered, I think is something that we are in danger of departing from. As opposition, I want to alert the government to that, that there is a sense that there is a growing inequality in education and that parents, and the minister has talked to many of them, for which I have commended him, I think he will get that sense. It may not always be articulated

in that way, but there is a sense that there are wealthier schools, there are poorer schools, and that that gap is going to grow.

As I mentioned in Question Period, the issue of physical education is only one of a number of issues of curriculum changes where there are clearly schools which are going to be able to provide a much broader education and schools which are beginning to narrow their education and their program offerings in a way perhaps that even had not been anticipated by this government.

We believe in a broad education, one that opens doors for all students, regardless of where they live, what their level of income is, what the parental education has been, and in fact schools which make a difference to the lives of students. The school must be the place where the student is opened to areas of knowledge, areas of lifelong learning, which they would not otherwise have the opportunity to have.

What we see in the government's education policy—and it is partly funding, it is partly timetabling, it is partly curriculum—is a narrowing of the kind of education that is being offered to young people. I think there is a genuine difference of opinion here. The government would like to call it back to basics. If I were them, that is not the name I would choose, but that is the name I think that would ring the bells in the kinds of educational ideology that they have adopted. I think we as opposition want to see a much broader education, one where the school does make a difference in the lives of individuals and in families and that the school is able to compensate for areas in life where children are not created equal. I think what the government wants to see is what they would call back to basics. They want to emphasize, I would say in a quite narrow-thinking way, literacy and numeracy. It is not that we would disagree with the outcomes, but I think the way in which the government has gone about introducing what they believe is a back to basics is one that has inevitably narrowed the curriculum in many areas. It is one I think that could have been dealt with differently.

* (1640)

I think the government could have made the same points about literacy in particular, that it could have made a much more concerted and integrated effort to deal with literacy across the curriculum. It has tended to do it in terms of defining hours and time. It has done it in terms of particular types of examinations, and what it has done is to focus people's minds on only one type of literacy. The Grade 12 exams, for example—and the minister I know has received some discussion and criticism of the Grade 12 exams, but one of the areas is that it seems to me that examinations in other parts of the world emphasizes oral communication. That, to me, is an important part of literacy. It is an important part of any student's ability to have a presence in the workplace, to express themselves clearly and concisely and to give them some control over their own environment. I mean, that, in a sense, is what that kind of oral literacy is.

Now, the government has defined literacy in a much more narrow framework, and I think that is unfortunate, because I think our goals are similar, but I think that the way the government has done it has been done in that context of that back-to-basics movement which I believe is very narrowly defined, and it is a context which I do not think is going to serve students well in the next millennium. People need to be competent orally. They need to have confidence in their ability and self-expression, and that is not achieved just through writing, and there are ways of testing that. If the government is committed to test, there are ways of doing that.

So I regret the kind of narrow approach to curriculum that the government has forced and which has intensified with the examination schedule that has crowded out other parts of the curriculum. In areas and in subjects which are being examined, teachers and schools and parents are concentrating on cutting out other areas, so that we are losing through timetabling, through the nature of the government's definition of literacy and numeracy. We are losing out in the areas where I think the school can and should compensate for things which families can no longer deliver—music, physical education. There are many areas where parents do not have the ability to open those doors. In some they do; in some they do not. Some communities can; some

cannot. That is where the inequalities are creeping in.

So I would like to look at that as we go through these statements, to discuss that, I think, quite clear difference of opinion and difference of approach to education. I think the government has wisely increased the funding to Education this year. I think it is unfortunate from their perspective that they have done it on an electoral schedule. I think it does make people much more skeptical of government promises, and, unfortunately, it has the effect of making people much more skeptical of governments generally. I think that is a long-term disservice that this type of funding, that this type of political policy and political approach has for any province which undertakes it.

But there has been an increase in educational funding. It, unfortunately, will not compensate and does not compensate—and I know that parents are telling the minister this—for those severe cuts which were made around the time of the early '90s and after the last election, as well. What education needs, and I am sure the minister will be made well aware of this, is predictable and stable funding. To some extent, the government has responded to that as it has tried to give some assurance to divisions of what they may expect in subsequent years, and they have been very late in doing that. And it is this lateness, this ad hockery, this adherence to a politically determined election schedule, an election in education funding, which I think has seriously damaged the reputation of this government in education.

So the government can increase it by 2 percent or 2.6 percent this year. In fact, it is not a 2.6 percent increase to all divisions. As you know, from the Education funding, Mr. Chairman, those increases translate in different ways in different parts of the province, and because I think about 1.6 percent of the funding this year was tied to particular programs which some divisions might be able to take advantage of and others might not, again that sense of inequality and unequal opportunities in education is there. Because of that, it is not really the 2.6 percent increase that the minister would like to assure divisions that they received. I think they are very well aware of what they did

receive, and, of course, as we have been pointing out on numerous occasions in the Legislature, the actual dollars which are going into the FRAME document to the public schools is considerably reduced. I think it is about \$26 million, \$27 million, from 1992.

So the actual dollars that schools have received for their general programs, for their broad educational purposes, are much reduced, and we are not even talking about inflation. As I mentioned in the House last week, there are areas that are obviously beyond the government's control, whether it is the increases in textbook price, the increases in gasoline price. Those are things which are costly and which are increasing, many of them beyond the rate of inflation. Those are things which are not in the control of any one government, but the responsibility to respond to that, to recognize that that flexibility has to be there and to recognize that school divisions too have expenses which are beyond their control and yet which are crucial, transportation, texts and material resources for the classroom which are crucial to the kind of quality of education which is to be delivered in Manitoba.

The minister always responds—I do not know how much longer we are going to have this ludicrous kind of debate—with the percentages of dollars which are allocated by different governments to education. I speak of actual dollars; the minister wants to respond in percentages. Now this is an apples and oranges debate. It is not one that I think you would want to see at the—perhaps the Grade 6 level in the nature of the debate. I think you would want students to be able to make differentiations in that. Critical thinking alone would suggest that there are two different arguments going on here. There is a third argument, of course, which I have made earlier reference to, and that is the purchasing price of dollars. So it would be, I think, helpful if the minister would respond on the actual dollars. He may want to respond on the inflationary costs, some of which I am prepared to accept are beyond his control but still need to be taken into account.

In terms of post-secondary education, the minister has made a number of comments. Obviously, I am aware of the Millennium

Scholarships that the minister has signed, the arm's-length agency that he was dealing with, of course the money coming from the federal government, a federal government which of course has also over the years substantially reduced its commitment to the provinces in terms of health and post-secondary education. The Millennium Scholarships Fund, as it is emerging and as it is developing, of course is an attempt perhaps on the part of the federal government to repair some of that loss. But it is an attempt to fill a gap which indeed they were in part responsible for creating.

The other side, of course, of the Millennium Scholarships issue and of all of the government's policies in dealing with tuition fees, the tax credit that the minister has mentioned, the \$5 million per year matchable grants that recently has been initiated in the province—all of those deal with only one side of the issue of accessibility. The other side of it is the fees themselves and the rate of increase which they have progressed at under the term of this government over the last 11 years. They have been very large and the pace has been increasing, and we have a government which is not prepared now apparently to deal with anything more than two digits, double-digit increase in a single year in tuition fees. That, to me, makes a mockery of policy. If you only have one side of the policy, many of those awards can be eaten up by the rapid increase in the tuition fees.

In 1995, just before the last election, the government had a policy of capping at 5 percent. This time, five years later, at a time when fees are actually rising even more rapidly, the policy is not even to look at it until it gets to 10 percent. So I think there are some serious issues there that the government has not looked at or is not prepared to look at. I tend to think after five years of arguing these positions that the government is not prepared to, and what they have simply done is to promise year after year, and it actually has been an annual promise, to produce a tuition fee policy. An interim transition committee looked at it; then the Council on Post-Secondary Education looked at it; then the council had another committee which looked at it; then the council put something out on a website, two pages I believe, which

purported to be a proposal for a tuition fee policy—no sense of public discussion around that and no sense of the kinds of responses that Manitobans made or of the broader discussion with parents, particularly those parents of students who are now in Grades 10, 11 and 12, because those are the people who are more seriously affected, I think, and who need to have the public discussion on tuition fee policy. But none of that has been done.

* (1650)

This is a government which has been in power for 11 years, and it is a government which in 1993 was given basically the blueprint for much of this on tuition fee policy and upon the need for a policy by the Roblin commission. It was given the blueprint and the argument for the expansion of community college places, and here we are seven years later and nothing has happened. The government, in this budget, the pre-election budget, has some money for the expansion of community college places. That is not something which can be done overnight. It is the range of programs and the capacity of the colleges to expand in those areas that are possible in Manitoba which speak to the Manitoba economy and which speak to the potential for Manitoba students coming out of the current high school programs. It seems to me that a broad-ranging program needs to be dealt with. The council—to me, there is no evidence; I should not say they are not—but there is no evidence because this is not a council which particularly encourages public discussion or public debate. So I think there is a very serious issue for the government, and that is one that certainly affects the long-term future of Manitobans.

We intend to be looking, should we have the chance in Estimates this session, to look at the unemployment insurance provisions that Manitoba has made, again an area of tremendous secrecy and an area that does affect the position of young people. Some of these obviously are changes that the federal government has brought. Some of them are interpretations of the agreement that the provincial government made with the federal government over unemployment insurance payments. But it is the young workers in particular who are not able to get the hours

and the time they need on unemployment insurance to get them into the training programs that they require that will give them the start that is needed to give them the opportunities for productive citizenship. So I am certainly looking forward to more information on that.

The government has talked about apprenticeship and the doubling of apprenticeship. Well, you know, that is a broken record. How many times have we heard that? Again, the amount of public information which is available on that is very limited. The government spent over a year. If this was such an urgent matter, why was there more than a year spent before the government proclaimed the last apprenticeship act that went through the Legislature? I believe it was actually proclaimed in the last couple of weeks. That does not seem to me to speak of a government which is particularly well organized or particularly clear about the direction that it wants to take, it can take, any innovations that it might want to make in apprenticeship.

In the K to 12 area, I have spoken about the unequal education which we fear is developing. Part of it, I believe, is the result of the nature of the testing the government is introducing. I do not think it necessarily does or should do that, but I think that is the effect that it has had. Part of it is due to the timetabling changes that the government made, particularly under Mr. Manness. Part of it is due to the decline in funding and the inability of some school divisions to retain all of the options that would make for equal opportunities across Manitoba. One particular area, of course, concerns me, and that is Canadian history. I am concerned that Manitoba no longer intends to teach history, that it intends to teach social studies. It is very difficult to determine because, again, this is not a government that actually shares its plans or encourages public discussion, what its proposals will be for social studies and/or history in the future. I am sure the minister is aware, and I expect that this government does listen to the heads of Bell Telephone, the CEOs who are now expressing their concern about the lack of a historical understanding amongst Canadian students.

Manitoba actually has been one of the last provinces to teach history. I am very interested

to see whether the government, in fact, intends to eliminate that history because we know, of course, that in fact Mr. Manness and his subsequent minister, the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh), did approve a system whereby students could graduate from Manitoba high schools with American history and yet not Canadian history, and they were prepared to remove the mandatory requirement for Canadian history. It seems to me in a global world, where students more than ever need a sense of place, that that was a very backward move, and it spoke, I think, to the very clear differences between this government and the kind of broad education for citizenship and for work and a dedication to a life of learning that we would advocate.

Aboriginal education, of course, is a concern for prairie provinces, in particular the high proportions of aboriginal students, both on reserve and off reserve. What is remarkable about this government is the 11 years it has taken to develop an aboriginal education strategy. Now I noticed in the throne speech that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) intended to announce an educational strategy for aboriginal people this year, and I certainly look forward to that. We have not seen that yet. I wonder if that will appear before the election or whether that will be an election announcement. My understanding is that that aboriginal education strategy, unless they have actually got some of the blank pages filled in, actually was approved and has been discussed in the department, as we discussed it in Estimates last year, and is not necessarily something new. So I am interested to know whether the minister has anything new to say on that.

It had basically two elements, as I remember. One was to increase aboriginal graduation rates, and I believe one—what was the other one?—to increase participation in the labour force. This is after, at that point, I think nine years in office. It was absolutely stunning, mind-bogglingly stunning that that was the aboriginal education policy of this government after 10 years, and now the Premier says in the throne speech that he wants to reannounce that. I think there had better be something more than that if that is what he is planning on announcing, otherwise it will be, I think, the laughing stock.

Report after report since 1990 has spoken of the need to increase the aboriginal graduation rate. Report after report from economic agencies across the Prairies, across this province, in Winnipeg 2000, every economic development agency, the Economic Innovation and Technology Council, every council that looks at the economy in Manitoba makes the point about aboriginal participation in the workforce and the aboriginal graduation rates, and yet after nine, 10 years, the government last year simply had a policy but very little in place that would give you the confidence as to how this was to be achieved. So it was late; it was ad hoc. I think it was done with very little consultation.

The government's argument, I think, at the time was that the consultation was done in conjunction with the urban aboriginal strategy, but an educational strategy is more than that. It needs to be more specific; it needs to have very strong support of parents; and it needs to be developed with a great deal of commitment and direction on the part both of school divisions and of this department. So I am interested by that, and we will see where that one goes.

We have raised in Question Period, as the minister knows, the issue of user fees. My colleague from the current riding of St. James has raised this again and again. We have talked about the amount of money that teachers are paying out of their own pockets to deal with issues and fees that are being created in the school divisions. We are looking at unequal policies across the province on this, things which are paid for in one division are not paid for in another, and we are looking at many families who have been on fixed incomes, who have seen no wage increases for seven or eight years who are having to meet the shortfall in funds as a result of the severe cuts that this government has made in previous years. They are having to find that out of their own pockets. At the same time, they are also having to face increased property taxes.

The minister knows in his own city of Brandon that in the last few years, for a number of reasons, the tax increases have been quite large.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

When the committee again sits, the honourable member will have approximately five minutes remaining.

Committee rise.

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Does the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism have an opening statement?

Hon. Mervin Tweed (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Tweed: Thank you. I am certainly pleased to be before the Estimates committee to review the '99-2000 Estimates for the Department of Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism. Before I go into some of the details of my department's programs, I would just like to express my thanks to the staff who have helped me prepare for this and hopefully will continue to serve with me as the questions come. I do have a fairly lengthy statement, and I would beg the committee's indulgence. Just again, being a new minister, there is a lot of good news, and I would like to have the time to put it forward.

* (1610)

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): If it would help the minister, I would be glad if he would table it, and then we could both read it overnight and come back tomorrow with a real sense of this opening statement. I would be very pleased to receive it that way.

Mr. Tweed: In the sense of again, I guess, first time out, I would like to read onto the record my comments.

In short, Mr. Chairman, 1998 was a very good year for the province of Manitoba. The conditions were created in the early to mid-'90s as Manitoba's exports expanded dramatically, especially to the United States, and our growth

in exports was soon echoed in overall manufacturing shipments, capital investments, job creation and low unemployment.

The most dramatic and concrete reflections of these developments were a series of major new ventures, announcement, relocations and expansions that have taken place in the last year. Looking at economic growth and investment, our economy generated \$28.5-billion worth of goods and services last year which was a record high. Manitoba's economy outpaced the national average for a third consecutive year in 1998.

The province's unemployment rate has remained the lowest in the country in the first four months of 1999 and more than 2.5 percentage points below the national jobless rate. Manitoba's overall unemployment rate has been the lowest in Canada in seven of the last eight months. More Manitobans were working than ever before in 1998, a record of 546,100 persons. In the last four years Manitoba's economy has created 35,000 new jobs, of which almost 31,000 of those have been in the private sector, nearly 90 percent of our total job gain. Statistics Canada data shows that all of our growth over the last four years has been in full-time employment, a total of 35,000 new full-time jobs. That is a 9 percent increase in full-time jobs for Manitoba, above Canada's 7.8 percent gain and the third-best performance among the provinces. Only Ontario and Alberta did better. Almost 440,000 persons had full-time jobs in Manitoba in 1998, and that is the highest percentage of full-time workers since 1989. Our strong job gains over the last four years have pushed the unemployment rate to just 5.7 percent in 1998, which is the lowest in Canada and the lowest for Manitoba in nearly 20 years.

For experienced workers ages 25 and over, the rate was even lower, just 4.6 percent, again, the lowest in the country. Manitoba's jobless rate has been on a steadily improving trend for six consecutive years, our best performance in at least a quarter of a century. Over the last four years, the number of unemployed Manitobans fell by more than 19,000 people, a 36.9 percent drop. That is the largest improvement in unemployment of any province and more than twice the improvement at the national level.

The province's exports to the United States outpaced the national average for the fifth straight year in 1998, reaching a record \$6.1 billion. Our growth rate in 1998 was 13.1 percent, following a very strong 19 percent gain the previous year. The value of Manitoba exports to the U.S. is now almost three and a half times what it was in 1990. Manitoba now has had seven consecutive years of double-digit growth in exports to the United States. Through the past six years, the value of Manitoba exports to the United States grew by 227.6 percent. That was the second strongest export performance among the provinces and far above the national gain of 143.7 percent.

Equally important to maintaining our economic momentum is the fact that new capital investment by the private sector recorded a seventh consecutive year of solid growth in 1998, reaching a record \$3.9 billion. Total private-sector investment in Manitoba is now nearly \$1.7 billion higher than it was just a few short eight years ago. Consumers remain confident as well. Total retail sales were a record \$8.8 billion in 1998. In the last four years, retail sales in Manitoba—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Crescentwood, on a point of order?

Mr. Sale: No, Mr. Chairperson, I am just wondering on a point of clarification if I might ask the minister, I just was not sure of something he was referring to. Was he referring at all to the level of import growth in the trade deficit, or was he just speaking about exports?

Mr. Tweed: I was referring strictly to the exports.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to go on.

Mr. Tweed: Thank you. In the last four years, retail sales in Manitoba have grown by 25.4 percent, the second strongest gain among the provinces and again well ahead of the national increase of 19.1 percent over the same period. On other fronts, Manitoba manufacturing shipments rose 7.1 percent in 1998, the best in the country, and more than twice Canada's 3.1 percent gain for the same period.

Last year also marked the third consecutive year in which Manitoba's growth rate has outpaced the national average. Since 1996, the value of Manitoba manufacturing shipments rose by 28.5 percent, more than twice Canada's 13 percent gain and the second strongest gain among the provinces. In fact, most of this decade has seen very strong gains by Manitoba's manufacturing sector. The total value of shipments has gone from \$6.2 billion in 1991 to \$10.7 billion last year. That is a 73.1 percent total gain, the second largest increase among the provinces, as well above Canada's 59.8 percent increase over the same period.

Employment in Manitoba's manufacturing sector averaged 64,000 persons in 1998, a total gain of 4,100 over 1997. That equates to a 6.8 percent increase, the best performance among the provinces, and above Canada's 3.9 percent average. Our longer term performance has also been excellent. In the last five years, '94 through '98, Statistics Canada data shows that Manitoba has created an estimated total of 14,400 manufacturing jobs, for a growth rate of 29 percent. That is the third best performance among the provinces, as well, above Canada's 18.8 percent increase over the same period.

For all of 1998, Manitoba recorded 1,856 housing starts in urban areas, an 11.5 percent increase over '97, second place provincially, and far stronger than Canada's 5.2 percent decline. Last year was the second year in a row that urban starts in Manitoba have outpaced the national average. In 1997, Manitoba recorded 1,664 urban starts, a 33.9 percent gain over the previous year. That was also the second best performance among the provinces, and again well ahead of Canada's 21 percent increase.

The role of Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism is to use its policies and programs to help maintain the momentum of our economic growth, working for the most part with individual companies or within specific industrial sectors. I should remind members that my department is divided into four main program areas: Industry Development, which focuses on key industries across the province; Manitoba Trade, which promotes trade and inward investment in the province; Business Development, which provides information,

advice and other support to small businesses; and Tourism or Travel Manitoba, which oversees and co-ordinates campaigns to attract visitors to all areas of the province.

The department also has official responsibility for the Manitoba Call Centre Team, the Industrial Technology Centre and the Economic Development Board of cabinet, which is chaired by the Premier.

In 1998-99, consulting services staff of Industry Development provided a core competency in Manitoba's industrial sectors. It takes a leadership role in identifying and assisting companies to pursue opportunities for growth. It provides sector expertise that identifies opportunities for trade and investment, and supports the development of new and existing industry.

* (1620)

The Consulting Services branch is responsible for leading industrial development in many sectors of the provincial economy. Current activities are focused on the development of three technology platforms. These are considered to be the drivers of the economic development in the 21st Century. These three platforms are the information technology, IT, biotechnology, and advanced materials in manufacturing. In the traditional manufacturing industry sectors, efforts are focused on enhancing quality standards and introducing technologies that lead to increased global competitiveness.

I would like to now just mention some activities in a few economic sectors. In food and beverage processing, our largest manufacturing sector, our department is working closely with Manitoba Agriculture and Manitoba Rural Development as well as the Manitoba Food Processors Association. A good portion of our government's activities in this area have centred on promoting the hog and pork industry abroad, especially in Asia Pacific, mainly by working with the industry to encourage more companies to export and expand value-added production.

Our staff has been working with several manufacturers as well, including Winpak, with

an additional \$25-million expansion for the manufacture of vinyl-based packaging film. This company was originally located in Chicago but moved to Winnipeg because of its previous experience in dealing with our province.

K & G Mushrooms in Portage la Prairie, with a \$5.3-million expansion, will create 40 new jobs and maintain 130 others. It is an environmentally friendly operation with all production exported to the United States. Castle Metals in June '99 will be officially opening a new \$4.5-million steel processing facility in Selkirk to supply steel components for customers in the aerospace, agricultural machinery, and transportation equipment industries. The new plant will also create 18 additional jobs. Inmetal North America Limited has established a \$2-million manufacturing facility in Pierson to produce precision metal castings using state-of-the-art lost foam technology. It is anticipated that the facility will create 40 jobs in its first four years.

Manitoba's biotechnology industry made significant strides in 1998-99 with several announcements made including the establishment of a Monsanto Crop Development Centre, expansions of the Cangene Corporation, the establishment of the National Centre for Agri-Food Research in Medicine at the St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre.

Another continuing initiative of note is the Manitoba Centres of Excellence Fund, which seeks to attract and maintain world-class research and development activity and to produce economic spin-offs for local companies and nonprofit agencies. The fund provides grants to research projects at the University of Manitoba contingent upon support under the federal government's network of Centres of Excellence initiative. Manitoba's contribution amounts to 20 percent of the federal total.

Meanwhile I note that increasing access to risk capital for small- and mid-size Manitoba companies continues to be a major priority for our department. We have been working hard in partnership with industry and the financial community to address this difficulty.

A recent study by the Business Development Bank found companies backed by venture

capital were creating jobs at a 23 percent annual growth rate, sales at 31 percent, exports at 36 percent, and taxes paid at 39 percent.

The Manitoba government, working with private sector partners, helped boost the annual supply of venture capital in Manitoba from less than \$4 million in 1993 to roughly \$30 million in each of '96 and '97 and \$20 million in 1998. The goal is to increase this supply to \$60 million by the year 2000. To do this, the government has sponsored several significant venture capital funds for loans in the \$100,000 to \$3.5-million range. These funds include the Vision Capital Fund, the Manitoba Capital Fund, the labour-sponsored Crocus Investment, and ENSIS growth.

Our department, through our Financial Services branch and the Economic Innovation and Technology Council, has also been working to match potential investors with promising young companies seeking financing. This year 20 companies made presentations to investors at the Invest Manitoba Venture Showcase '99, the fourth investment forum of its kind in Manitoba. To attract much needed capital to small businesses with the potential for rapid growth, the Manitoba government committed \$7 million to create the Renaissance Space Capital Manitoba Ventures Fund. This fund aims to attract up to \$7 million of private risk capital, which it will use to assist companies in information technology, health care, communications, and value-added agriculture.

Finally, the Manitoba Equity Tax Credit Program announced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) is expected to leverage up to \$20 million per year into risk capital for local businesses. The details of this program will be addressed by the Minister of Finance. The Manitoba Trade and Investment Corporation, or Manitoba Trade for short, is the focal point of Manitoba's efforts in promoting more exports to an ever-widening range of world markets and at the same time encouraging inward investment in this province. A large part of its work is to help exporters and export-ready companies to enter new markets by leading strategic trade missions, hosting delegations from our major trading partners and helping companies attend trade shows in various industrial sectors and regions.

Specifically, Manitoba Trade's objectives are to increase exports of value-added goods and services to \$10 billion by 2001, to continue to increase the number of actively exporting companies by 10 percent per year and to increase investment in Manitoba. Mexico remains a high priority for Manitoba companies. In 1998, Manitoba's exports to Mexico totalled \$105.7 million, an increase of 14 percent over 1997. Manitoba Week in Jalisco, Mexico, last October was highly successful with more than 24 companies, businesses, education organizations and Manitoba visual and performing artists represented. This was Manitoba's largest trade mission outside the country in 1998. Manitoba Week resulted in a significant increase in Manitoba's visibility in this important market and provided an opportunity to showcase the upcoming Pan American Games. The governor of Jalisco is scheduled to bring a 90-person delegation to Manitoba this summer for Jalisco Week in Manitoba.

In 1998-99, Manitoba Trade supported 73 new exporters and 45 companies undertaking market diversification in the U.S. Our trade specialists continue to work closely with Manitoba companies to help them qualify as new exporters and also to assist businesses in their efforts to diversify their markets. While Manitoba Trade is helping companies to diversify overseas, the continued development of the U.S. market is important, as was demonstrated by the downturn in Asian markets. Priority sectors included health industries, food and beverage services, processing, apparel, building products, original equipment manufacturers and subcomponents, including agricultural equipment and machinery.

* (1630)

In 1998-99, Manitoba Trade organized and managed seven group trade show events in the United States with 35 Manitoba companies taking part. The companies reported a total of \$4.5 million in projected sales as a result of these shows. Meanwhile, South America continued to be a priority export market for Manitoba companies with specific focus on Brazil, Argentina and Chile. Within these countries, Manitoba Trade has centred its efforts on regions that are compatible with Manitoba's

capabilities. Manitoba Trade managed four missions to South America in 1998-99 involving education, agribusiness, building products and construction. During 1999-2000, we will be looking to identify other markets within South America for Manitoba companies.

Japan, despite the economic crisis, continued to be Manitoba's second largest trading partner for 1998 with exports to Japan totalling \$319 million. Agricultural commodities make up a large portion of these exports, although in recent years Manitoba building product companies have seen a dramatic increase in sales to Japan, notably in the prefabricated houses.

We are confident that conditions in Asia-Pacific will continue to improve. In the meantime, it is important that we maintain our presence in these markets. Manitoba Trade is currently helping to represent building product companies in Osaka at the 15th Annual Construction Material and Equipment Fair. In September 1998, Manitoba hosted the Kansai-Canada West Business Forum, continuing to establish recognition in Japan for our province and our province's businesses. China continues to be a priority market, and my predecessor led a successful mission to China last June when eight companies, including both experienced exporters and companies new to the China market, participated. The mission resulted in supply contracts for power transformers, simulation equipment for the hydroelectric power sector and the opening of a joint venture education facility.

The Middle East is also growing as a market of interest to our exporters. We have established relations with the government of Egypt and have been active in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Turkey, and Morocco. I expect to be announcing some further developments in our Middle East activities within the next few days.

Europe continues to be very important to Manitoba exporters, and we will continue to maintain our export promotion activities with trade foreign representatives in the UK, The Netherlands, and Italy. We will continue to provide leadership in the development of the Mid-Continent Trade and Transportation

Corridor. Manitoba Trade is an active participant on the Manitoba-Winnipeg Corridor Partners Committee and supports the activities of the Red River Trade Corridor and the Central North American Trade Corridor. It represents the province on the North American Superhighway Coalition and has been successful in promoting Manitoba as the northern gateway to the corridor.

Finally, making use of foreign trade representatives continues to be a highly successful strategy for Manitoba Trade to assist companies planning to move into certain regional markets. In addition to Europe, Manitoba Trade has representatives in Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, and Chile. This use of part-time contract agents has been recognized as best practice by many other jurisdictions in Canada who are beginning to follow Manitoba's lead.

On the investment front, Manitoba Trade has developed high-quality promotional materials, and it is also leading a number of provincial and federal departments in establishing a common investment strategy and is actively participating in the development of a national site selection database project.

In 1998-99, Manitoba Trade initiated 20 investment projects and attracted 15 new business immigrants to the province. Since 1990, business immigrants have invested over \$17.5 million and created over 500 jobs in our province.

A word about our department's special operating agency, the Industrial Technology Centre. It provides a wide range of technical services to clients, which vary from start-up entrepreneurs and mid-size companies to large firms seeking specialized technical assistance. The centre's expert capabilities in forensic document services are unique in Canada, and it actually provides services to clients across the continent and abroad. It is proving to be yet another example of the SOA special operating model for delivering public services. It will further reduce its reliance on government funds in 1999-2000 by enhancing its own sources of revenue.

Meanwhile, the Manitoba Call Centre Team, a joint venture led by my department, continues to market this province as a premier location for call centres, despite the keen competition. This team has done an admirable job in expanding this industry so that it now includes more than 20 major call centres and a workforce of more than 8,000 people. Last year it saw several high-profile call centres, including the Royal Bank, Air Canada, Gage Marketing and Angus Reid, expand employment opportunities in Manitoba. The team is also working closely with the Manitoba Call Centre Association to develop a qualified and sustainable pool of human resources to meet the demands of the growing call centre industry in Manitoba.

The Call Centre Team has been one focal point of special strategic initiatives by Manitoba's Economic Development Board. The Economic Development Board helped attract several of the call centres I mentioned, as well as other major economic projects. These include companies in diverse sectors. For instance, in value-added agriculture, the emerging Maple Leaf Foods plant in Brandon will ultimately employ approximately 2,200 people; the Isobord strawboard plant in Elie will employ 100 staff; and agricultural research will gain from Monsanto Canada's recent announcement of its intention to create a \$10-million crop development centre at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Sale: Just to clarify, the minister just said that the Isobord plant will employ. I thought the plant was open, I thought they already did employ. Could he maybe clarify?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that when it is in full production, the plant will employ. It is currently in production, but is gearing up to go into full product, at which time the staffing will be 100 people.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Tweed: Just on a side note, I would certainly encourage members opposite to take a tour of the Isobord plant in Elie. It is a wonderful example of innovation and tech-

nology, and we look forward to your comments.
[interjection]

* (1640)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having a little difficulty hearing the honourable minister. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Tweed: In the film industry, Prairie Production Centre's plan to create a \$7-million state-of-the-art sound stage in Winnipeg will further reinforce Manitoba's recognition as Hollywood of the Prairies.

In manufacturing, American Bixis Inc., a joint venture company with Winpak and a Japanese firm as partners, will build a \$25-million plant in Winnipeg to produce nylon film for packaging.

In venture capital, the newly created Renaissance Capital Manitoba Ventures Fund will invest in small- and medium-sized Manitoba businesses, helping to support new and expanding businesses in Manitoba.

The Tourism and Business Development Division of my department is also a high priority. Job creation is one of the most important economic contributions made by small businesses, and small enterprises remain one of the driving forces of the Manitoba and Canadian economy. In 1997, there were 50,655 business establishments with less than 50 employees making up 96.7 percent of the total business establishments in the province of Manitoba. Over 17,000 of these enterprises were self-employed entrepreneurs. It is estimated that there are over 70,000 home-based businesses now operating in Manitoba.

I am pleased to share with you some of the successes of the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre, a very successful partnership between the federal and provincial governments that opened its integrated service delivery on April 1, 1998. During the first year of operations, the centre responded to 67,000 business- and trade-related inquiries, including 7,050 business counselling sessions. The number of Internet requests for information was 257,000 for the year ended March 31, 1999. The

centre continues in its strong support for the growth and development of small business through a wide variety of business development tools from resource manuals, electronic publications, comprehensive library services, access to information through the Internet and business counselling. The centre responds to a wide variety of specialized needs for the woman business owner, young entrepreneur, persons with disabilities and the growing aboriginal business community.

The Business Start Program, originally introduced in 1989 as a five-year program, is again extended for another two-year period. This program, which provides a training workshop and a \$10,000 loan guarantee for working capital, has assisted in the creation of 1,790 jobs since its inception.

My department continues to support the Economic Development Committee of Bilingual Municipalities as it focuses on raising the profile and economic success of Francophone communities and businesses in Manitoba.

The new Manitoba Cooperatives Act, introduced through the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, facilitates the creation of new generation or value-added co-operatives, something that the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) takes great pride in seeing come to realization. My department will be proactive in the promotion and support of new generation co-operatives designed to add value to agriculture, to add value to resource-based production, creating new jobs and economic growth in rural communities.

Tourism has started off on a positive note for 1999. Travel from the United States increased year over year by 14 percent or 7,000 visitors in the first two months of this year.

In 1998 Manitoba experienced an increase of 6 percent in the number of U.S. direct entries to Manitoba and a 19 percent increase in the number of direct foreign entries. The most exciting and largest tourism event of 1999 will be the Pan American Games, scheduled from July 23 to August 8. I extend a personal invitation to all in attendance to partake in the games in some form. The games, as we know,

are the largest ever sporting event to be hosted in Canada, and it will position Winnipeg and Manitoba on the international stage creating a new level of awareness for our capital city and our province.

In terms of direct expenditures and indirect spin-offs, the games themselves are expected to pump some \$225 million into our provincial economy. The 100,000-plus visitors are predicted to spend \$28.5 million and spin off another \$14 million right here in the province of Manitoba. The Pan Am Games economic development initiative will focus on fostering long-term cultural and business relationships between Manitoba and the participating countries.

We will deliver a business hosting program for visiting delegations to increase the awareness of business development opportunities with Latin America. We will deliver a media tour program targeted to the 1,000 visiting media representatives to maximize media exposure to the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, again, if the minister would indulge me just to clarify where he is talking about an initiative in tourism, and I am unable to find it. Perhaps he could just point me to where he is referring to.

Mr. Tweed: It is part of the Pan Am Games economic development initiative.

Mr. Sale: That is what I am having trouble finding.

Mr. Tweed: Well, perhaps when we get further into detail, we can flush it out for the member.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to go on with his remarks.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, we will deliver and produce a series of Manitoba vignettes in partnership with the CBC and Tourism Winnipeg featuring Manitoba's unique products, places, and people. The Travel Idea Centre at The Forks will be renovated to showcase Manitoba as a great place to live, to work, and do business, and a great place to vacation.

A dynamic new marketing campaign with a strong focus on adventure, travel, and eco-tourism will be launched to position Manitoba as a prime destination in the new millennium. The Travel Manitoba interactive Web site, which attracts over 100,000 hits per month, will continually be updated to ensure that potential travellers receive the latest in information.

* (1650)

In order to become a prime tourism destination, Manitoba's tourism businesses and communities must continue to strive to deliver quality services with high standards. The objective of tourism development is to ensure that Manitoba capitalizes on viable product development opportunities that will generate new tourism revenues, lever private sector investment, and create long-term employment.

To support the industry and our communities, my department will offer the following programs: support for the tourism standards consortium through the Manitoba Tourism Education Council, which provides training and education within the tourism industry; product development grants, which will provide support of up to 30 percent of approved capital project costs in support of new tourism market development initiatives by individual operators, regional groups, or consortiums of tourism operators; product development grants of up to \$10,000 for new marketing and development initiatives.

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

With the support of the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet and in partnership with Natural Resources, a trails coordinator will be hired to work with the Manitoba Recreational Trail Association, the TransCanada Trails, and all other stakeholders to develop policies and initiatives relative to trails development in Manitoba.

Support is being provided for the newly organized Manitoba Aboriginal Tourism Association dedicated to the development of aboriginal tourism products in Manitoba.

We are extremely proud of the entrepreneurial spirit in Manitoba, and we will continue to assist and support the growth of small business and tourism as an important segment of our economy.

Mr. Chairman, on this note, I would like to conclude my overview of the main initiatives and activities of the Industry, Trade and Tourism department and my introduction of the department's Estimates for '99-2000.

It certainly promises to be an exciting and productive year for the province of Manitoba. I look forward with all my colleagues, staff, and outside partners to another year of challenge and growth.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my department for their continued support. In the time that I have served in the department, I have found them to be knowledgeable and helpful with the idea that good service provides good service to the people of Manitoba and will continue to enhance the growth and productivity of the province of Manitoba. With that I will conclude my remarks.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): We thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Crescentwood, have any opening comments?

Mr. Sale: I do, Mr. Chairperson, but I wonder in light of the fact that it is five minutes to five if we might just call it five o'clock and start this again tomorrow.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): Is it the will of the committee to call it five o'clock? [agreed]

The time being five o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Health. Does the honourable Minister of Health have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, yes, I do. As we approach the millennium, it is an honour and a privilege today to present the Estimates of the Department of Health for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000. Today I am asking this committee to support my department's request for \$2,119,306,400 inclusive of capital and operating expenditures. This represents about \$194 million over last year's budget. It represents an increase of 10 percent, far above the inflation rate. It also represents our ongoing commitment to quality health services for all Manitobans. I certainly note that a large majority of this House voted just yesterday to approve our 1999 budget. We have recognized a need and are responding to it with unprecedented new resources, more than \$2 billion in the context of a comprehensive plan.

First, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank on behalf of Manitobans the ongoing work and dedication of the many health care providers in the provision of health services to their fellow Manitobans. I also want to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the staff and boards of regional health authorities in developing and co-ordinating local health services specific to the needs of regional residents. I am pleased to acknowledge the tremendous progress made by the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority and the regional health authorities over the course of the last one to two years.

Mr. Chairman, I want to provide the context for this unprecedented Health budget. Health care is a high priority for our government, as it is for the people of Manitoba. It is too important for Manitobans and Canadians to be the subject of rhetoric and empty posturing. When the health care system makes the news day after day, it is all too easy to point fingers and to be negative, but if we are honest and fair, we all know that the health systems of Saskatchewan and British Columbia, the health systems in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, the health systems of every other province and territory are facing many of the same challenges that we are facing right here in Manitoba. That is why today I want to emphasize the positive.

Mr. Chairman, health care now represents approximately 35 percent of the Manitoba provincial budget. It is by far our largest single expenditure. It is a higher priority for us than almost any other province in Canada, and it has been sound management over many years that has allowed us to make health care such a high priority. If over the years our government had not stressed the importance of building a strong economy and getting our financial house in order, we would not have been able to secure and improve the quality of life in Manitoba. But now, with consistent balanced budgets and a vibrant economy, we can protect and enhance the services that are so important to Manitobans.

Our plans make this commitment. We are determined to maintain and sustain our health care system for now and for the new millennium. For example, we are recognizing and supporting our health care providers, our nurses, and supporting them in positive ways. That is why I intend to introduce legislation to update The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, The Registered Nurses Act, The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act and The Physiotherapists Act. This existing legislation is more than 20 years old, but the role of nurses and other health care providers has changed dramatically.

Many nurses have told me that much of their frustration comes from not being recognized in the ever-increasing responsibilities that they have taken over the years. It is safe to say that nurses from 30 or 40 years ago would have some difficulty recognizing the profession today. The legislative changes will recognize these new roles and will include enhanced public representation on governing bodies and committees.

Last month I was also pleased to announce a \$7-million nursing fund to assist in training and recruiting nurses. The fund will be overseen by a six-member committee and will help to make Manitoba a leader in making sure that there are enough nurses at the bedside and in our facilities.

Mr. Chairman, the members of this committee will have to acknowledge that Manitoba's health system has been able to sustain and protect itself and begin the complex

change that we need for the new millennium better than any other jurisdictions.

The real story is fundamentally a good news story. Let me give just a few examples. Since becoming Minister of Health just a few months ago, I have talked to many Manitobans, to physicians, nurses, who have assured me that the service they received and have provided continues to be excellent. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that much of this credit goes to the dedicated professionals who work in our health care system even when it is undergoing the needed, and some might say, overdue changes. After all, it is people who are the key to success of our health plan. I am proud of the professionalism and additional efforts made by our health care workers during this transition period while we are putting the finishing touches of our plan into place. They are placing Manitobans first, and I am committed to making sure that we can continue to keep these dedicated professionals and that we can continue to attract the health care workers that we need.

In addition to the nursing fund I already mentioned, nursing issues are being addressed by attracting more nursing students and exploring incentives to attract more nurse specialists. I am pleased that nursing programs are now offering more courses at rural and northern sites. I am also pleased that employers are converting more part-time and casual nursing positions to full-time permanent positions. As we have outlined in our plan, more physician specialists are being attracted in high-demand fields such as anesthesia and neurology. Allied health professionals have been added and will continue to be added to support rehabilitative care and other important areas of patient care.

* (1610)

In 1997 our government put in legislation to recognize the profession of midwives. I was pleased to be able to follow up on The Midwifery Act with an announcement last week of over \$1 million to support the first 20 midwifery positions. This is true and solid commitment.

We are also accelerating the recruitment of doctors for rural and northern areas. Medical

students have available to them a program offering loans in return for services to communities where doctors are needed. To encourage more medical students to consider rural practice, Manitoba Health also offers paid summer work experience with family doctors in rural areas.

One of the interesting things that I have learned recently is that studies have been done which show that physicians who have had rural and northern experiences tend to view them very positively. So often the decision to stay or go has little to do with money but in some cases has something to do with lifestyle preferences or other family choices. We certainly need to do everything that we can to support physicians and their families in rural and northern practices.

Some of the members of this committee may remember that when we began the process of restructuring the health system, our government made a commitment to strengthen community care. We are meeting that commitment. Our Continuing Care Program now has almost tripled its budget. We have added significant numbers of long-term care beds. We have initiated many exciting new examples of delivering services closer to home where people live and work.

I have talked with many seniors who have told me that they want to live independently as long as possible regardless of the health-related challenges that they might face. The Support to Seniors program consists of 226 projects at a cost of \$3 million annually. Manitoba Health has recently added \$445,900 for development of 26 new and 32 expanded support services to seniors projects. These projects assist Manitoba seniors in maintaining their health, remaining in their community longer and reduces the need for other home care services.

Another area where we are fulfilling our plan for the new millennium is mental health. Over the past 10 years our mental health system has become a much more community-based, people-focused service. With new community services in place, more Manitobans with mental illness are able to remain independent. This approach helps them build a local support system to cope more successfully as they continue to build their lives within their community.

What I especially like about this approach is that it is people helping themselves and each other with our support.

Another example of innovative community-based approaches resulting from the implementation of our plan is the new mobile breast screening service which was put into place this past summer. The program takes two mammogram units on the road to communities throughout all of Manitoba. With this equipment, 11,000 more women can be screened each and every year. In fact, in this year alone we expect that more than 33,000 women will be screened under this program alone, as many as in the last three years combined.

Providing services closer to home where people live and work has also meant developing new ways of doing business. A key example is the way in which we have created a regional structure for managing and delivering health services. As outlined in our plan, there are many advantages to the new regional system. For example, we are linking prevention, population, health and treatment into a seamless continuum of care. We are using evidence-based decision making and creating a broader base of service planning and delivery. We are providing more consumer choice and involvement.

One interesting new option for seniors is companion care. Companion care will be another new choice for people who can no longer live independently. Through this Winnipeg Community and Long-Term Care Authority program, care providers welcome older people to live in their homes where they will receive many of the services offered by a personal care home as well as home cooked meals, use of kitchen and garden and the opportunity to live as part of a family with dignity and respect. We all know that companionship and a sense of belonging are essential elements in keeping people healthy. No institution, no matter how good, can substitute for the kind of companionship found in a family setting.

I acknowledge that there are things that still remain to be done. Just recently I was proud to announce, together with the honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, \$1.1 million in new funding for

better services for speech, language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy for children. More than 1,000 preschoolers will benefit. This additional funding is part of a continuing goal to reduce waiting lists for children's therapy. The children will benefit from children's outreach therapy programs partnered with the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities and the Rehabilitation Centre for Children, in addition, rural and northern regional health authorities with the expanding speech and hearing services for children.

We are also expanding rehabilitative and therapy services for seniors. In fact, one important example was the announcement that we made on April 12 to provide \$400,000 to expand rehabilitative and therapy services for stroke patients in Winnipeg personal care homes.

I also know that more needs to be done to protect women's health. Thanks to a \$3.5 million grant for the Health Sciences Centre Women's Hospital, the hospital will be constructing 17 new, specially equipped birthing rooms for labour, delivery and post-partum care. The result is that mothers will be able to deliver their babies in a more comfortable home-like setting.

Less than a year ago our government contributed \$5.6 million in funding for the development of a comprehensive breast health program. We will provide funding to develop a new site for the program and for a rapid-access diagnostic centre. This leading-edge centre will bring breast expertise and services to one site and the time it takes to diagnose a suspicious lump will go from weeks to days.

Our plan also includes the development of a comprehensive strategy to address aboriginal health. The strategy will establish policies related to aboriginal health which will include establishing a strategic direction for aboriginal health and wellness within Manitoba Health and throughout the government of Manitoba and its agencies, also to provide leadership to, and to work with, all partners to promote aboriginal health and wellness; as well, to provide leadership to all government departments and agencies to ensure that aboriginal health is provided in a co-ordinated manner and that

resources are maximized and to create a comprehensive analysis of priority aboriginal health issues with all partners participating in this process; as well, to set priorities for and allocate funds to programs and projects that promote aboriginal health and wellness. Negotiating source of funds must be a priority of both the federal and provincial governments; as well, to partner with governments, government departments, agencies, aboriginal organizations and the private sector to ensure that aboriginal peoples have access to opportunities for good health; as well, to present a comprehensive negotiation strategy to the federal government in all areas that concern aboriginal health and wellness.

We are seeking outcomes, as well, Mr. Chairman, a healthy aboriginal population that is based on the determinants of health; as well, increased family and community involvement in health and wellness and, as well, sustainable programs and services that demonstrate consistency with the goals of achieving a healthy aboriginal population. We know that the health and well-being of every person is impacted by many factors, including prosperity, income and social status, education, social support networks, employment, working conditions and so on.

We also know that the physical environment, clean air, safe drinking water, housing, are all important parts of health factors. We know the important role that healthy child development plays. Only a part is played by biology and genetic endowment. So while health care is important, it too plays only a part in health and wellness. Many of these factors are influenced by some of the living conditions of our aboriginal people while under federal jurisdiction. It is clear that the health status of aboriginal populations will require partnerships between the federal and provincial governments, the aboriginal leaders, and those programs capable of generating holistic solutions.

Another area where I acknowledge that we need to do more is to give Manitobans even faster access to tests and treatments. That is why one of the highest priorities for our government, and certainly for me, is to reduce waiting lists. I am committed to making sure that our access to service is among the best in Canada. Two new

MRI machines will help us provide more than 3,500 new scans this year alone. Our capacity for CT scans has increased by about 15 percent, and with the expansion of ultrasound services about 8,700 more procedures can be performed this year. Additional funding for cardiac care will provide echocardiograms for 3,000 more adults and 300 more children, and cardiac catheterizations for 800 adults.

* (1620)

Bone density services have been introduced into Brandon, and have been expanded in Winnipeg. More than 8,000 additional screenings can now be done each year. As we move toward a population that is aging, an increasingly important quality-of-life issue is the provision of hip and knee replacement surgery. I am committed to providing faster access to hip and knee surgery. That is why there will be a \$7.8-million increase for orthopedic surgery. Up to 600 more Manitobans could receive faster relief from hip and knee problems this year alone.

But, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned before, one of the pressures that the system will be facing is the complications resulting from diabetes. I am pleased that we have recently expanded our dialysis capacity by 15 percent, which is making it possible to provide 15,000 more treatments annually to meet the growing demands. Dialysis services have been added in Ashern and expanded in Portage la Prairie and The Pas. In the coming years, we will continue to meet the challenge of diabetes faced by a growing number of Manitobans, but prevention is by far the most important way to protect the quality of life of Manitobans at risk of this disease. Diabetes is the No. 1 cause of blindness in Manitoba, and this summer we will be working with the regions to develop a province-wide program for the prevention and support of diabetic eye disease.

Another critical priority for us and for our government is to relieve hospital overcrowding. Hospitals should be used for what they were intended, as places for acute care. This coming year, we will be adding more than 600—in fact, with the additional capital announcement as part of the Health capital budget, we are now up to

850 net new personal care home beds to provide better accommodations for people needing long-term care who are now in acute care beds. Let me repeat, we have tripled the budget for home care since we began restructuring, and we will continue to enhance this program which is so vital to relieving demand for hospital beds. Our plan also encompasses exciting new approaches for emergency care. Misericordia's 24-hour urgent care centre is a new service that is taking the pressure off Winnipeg emergency rooms, and is contributing to improved access to health services.

I also wanted to briefly mention some of the highlights of our \$123-million capital program for our province in the upcoming year. This capital program is the result of extensive consultations with communities and regional health authorities. In total, the capital program will support over 36 new projects, including examples such as major redevelopment of Beausejour and Gimli hospitals, replacement facilities in Carberry and Emerson, new obstetrics and a neonatal intensive care unit at Brandon General Hospital, a new personal care home in Neepawa, 40 additional beds in Morden and Winkler and 160 beds in southeast Winnipeg, five new primary health care facilities, a new facility for the Rehabilitation Centre for Children for ambulatory care for disabled children, major renovation at St. Amant Centre, six bed pediatric extended treatment unit at the Health Sciences Centre Children's Hospital, new nursing station at Wabowden, renovation of neonatal intensive care and obstetric services at Brandon General Hospital, 20 bed expansions at Tabor Home in Morden and Salem Home in Winkler, the integrated health facilities at Emerson and Carberry I have already mentioned, renovations to the Flin Flon Hospital to support dialysis, chemotherapy and other health services, redevelopment of out-patient, radiology and laboratory areas of The Pas Health Complex, an addition to Rest Haven personal care home in Steinbach.

In addition, the capital program supports modifications of existing space for new uses, assessments of new project proposals, addresses building maintenance and safety issues and addresses new equipment to help to reduce waiting lists.

Another important area where we are improving access to health services is through primary health care, the basic care that is the first line of defence in the treatment of illness and in the promotion of health. Several primary health care models are being tested in Manitoba, including four community nurse resource centres. For example, we have already implemented the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, and several additional primary health care centres around the province are in the planning stages. Examples of such initiatives include proposals for the Francophone centre and primary health centres in other communities. But no matter how good our illness care system becomes, it is far better to keep healthy than to suffer the burden of illness or injury.

The Manitoba government has been a leader in reducing incentives to smoke through our antitobacco smuggling initiatives. I am told that this has been a major factor in slowing the growth of tobacco use among Manitoba children and youth. Mr. Chairman, I already mentioned our challenge in preventing and treating diabetes. It is important to find ways to encourage good health at the earliest age. This approach also makes good economic sense because obviously it helps reduce the long-term demands on our health care system.

Let me just list a few examples of the innovative programs that help families raise healthy children and that lead to the promotion of good health. Women and Infant Nutrition, WIN, provides up to \$65 per month to help women on social assistance eat well during pregnancy and the first year of their child's life. Stop FAS works with women at high risk for delivering babies with fetal alcohol syndrome. BabyFirst funds visits by public health nurses and home visitors to help new parents provide good care and nutrition, and EarlyStart helps families meet the ongoing health and development needs of growing children.

Another important area of health protection in keeping Manitobans healthy is preventing the spread of infectious disease. We are expanding vaccination programs to fight infectious illness, such as measles, flu and hepatitis B. To help agencies stop the spread of HIV, our government provides about \$1 million annually in funding

and has established a province-wide co-ordinating committee.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to acknowledge that as a new Minister of Health I am building on foundations that were laid by my predecessor. I am proud to continue the work of building on a plan to ensure the system is here today and into the future. We are very fortunate in Manitoba. Our economy is strong, our fiscal house is in order. We have the ability to build on very strong foundations. If we all work together, if we have the will and if we have the vision, we will build the health system that Manitobans need and deserve. So, in the new millennium, we will need to continue to make new choices and decisions. All our efforts are aimed at one goal, a high-quality health system that is sustainable for now and for the future.

I want to remind all of us that the health system is far too important for narrow interests. We all have a responsibility to avoid being unduly alarmists or negative. This is the time to build not to destroy, that is what Manitobans expect of us, that is what Manitobans deserve, and that is certainly the path to a new millennium that we can all share.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to make a few opening remarks.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Has the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Kildonan, any opening comments?

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, normally during the course of Estimates debates, I have forgone the opening statement portion, but I could not help but make some notes respecting the minister's comments and thought that I should reflect upon some of the minister's—

An Honourable Member: You voted for it.

Mr. Chomiak: You know, the member for Roblin made a very good point. He indicated we voted for it. I want to remind the member for Roblin that almost every initiative that I heard from—Roblin-Russell—every initiative I have heard from the minister's mouth at one time or

another was recommended by members on this side of House, not last year, not the year before, not the year before that, nor the year before that, but going as far back as certainly 1993 and earlier. I would like to go through that.

Never, I do not think, in the history of this province have we seen so many health announcements. The health announcements that we have seen in the last month or two by this minister and this government dwarf anything they have done for 11 years. Now, does that suggest something to you, Mr. Chairperson? Does that suggest that perhaps there may be a political event or some other event that might be on the horizon? I suggest that.

In fact, I want to go further. Had the government listened to some of the initiatives we had suggested earlier, we would be in an election today, because you would not be facing terrible poll results amongst the people of Manitoba with respect to how you have handled health care for the past 11 years. If you had only listened to some of the initiatives that we had pointed out, you would not have been so busy the last two months on a daily basis literally making announcement after announcement after announcement of programs that we had recommended.

* (1630)

I want to go through them point by point so that the minister does not suggest somehow that we are being unduly negative. If we are being unduly negative, it is only because of the frustration from members on this side of the House and from Manitobans of having to wait so long for the minister to put into place initiatives that we had suggested, that had been recommended, that we had implored.

The minister said in his comments that he wants to have amongst the shortest waiting lists for diagnostic tests in the country—laudable, support you 100 percent. That is why we voted for this budget. But I tell the minister and all members of this House that we pointed out five years ago that our waiting lists were amongst the longest in the country. Minister after minister denied that until last year when the Winnipeg Health Authority published its document that

said: "our waiting lists for diagnostic services are the longest in the country."

An Honourable Member: Not anymore.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister says "not anymore." The minister knows full well that they denied it for four years. Only when we set up our waiting list line, only when we made our initiative in this Chamber did the government all of a sudden move.

Bone density scanner, the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) mentioned to this government two years ago that there was a two-year waiting list for bone density scanner—two-year waiting list. Did the government do anything? The former Minister of Health promised and promised and promised. What did the government do? Yes, they put in a program. I believe it was during the course of the Portage by-election that they announced with \$83,000 they would reduce the waiting lists from two years to zero. Subsequently they did, and then the lists went back up. Then last August the former Minister of Health made a long-term announcement finally to reduce bone density scanners. That was two years after it was raised in this House by the member for Brandon East, Mr. Chairperson.

The mobile breast-screening unit was raised in this House by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) four years ago. I sat here when she asked the former former minister to put in place a low-cost, effective way of doing breast screening for women in Manitoba. Now the government has announced this initiative. Yes, of course, we support that initiative. We have been calling for it for four years.

The minister talks about nurses and working with nurses. This is a government that laid off over a thousand nurses. This is a government that said there is no role for LPNs. Last Friday the government announced that they had a role for LPNs. They were going to re-educate LPNs and expand the capacity and the graduation levels of LPNs, something that was recommended in 1992, 1993, 1994, and I cited those three reports in this Chamber in Question Period yesterday. Of course we are going to

support that initiative. We have been calling for it since 1992.

Hip and knee replacements—five years we have been calling for this. I held press conferences in this Legislature asking the minister—now, you know, it is not a complicated task to expand the number of hip and knee replacements in this jurisdiction. You simply have to expand the capacity of the operating rooms and the allocation which was capped under this government as to the number of hip and knee replacements particular specialists could do. It was capped at each facility. We said raise the cap; we said that four years ago. Now the government has discovered they are going to do 600 more. Of course we are going to support that initiative. We have been calling for it for four years.

The minister said he has discovered that physicians in rural and northern Manitoba can be attracted to those areas because of the lifestyle. The minister had a committee that studied that in 1994 and recommended changes along those lines. We said in this House five years ago that lifestyle was a key factor in attracting and maintaining physicians with respect to physician retention in northern and rural Manitoba. We talked to graduates who said we would go to rural and northern Manitoba, based on lifestyle choices, if certain parameters were put in place: the ability of doing ongoing education, the ability to further your education, the ability to take advantage of vacation provisions so that you were not on call 24 hours a day, et cetera. We made those recommendations. Of course we are going to support the government's initiatives. We have been calling for it for five years.

The minister talks about tripling the budget for home care. Do you think we are not going to support that? Mr. Chairperson, we told the government in 1992 that the way—if you are going to cut the acute care hospitals and you have \$150 million a year cumulative, then you better put some of that funding back into home care. So what does tripling the budget do? It does not even go 30 percent of the way of the cutback in the acute care hospitals. Now the argument can be made, of course, home care is cheaper. We agree. Do you know that your capacity and your volume of home care patients

only increased two years ago? You did not even increase your volume of home care. You were not even making up for the people who were removed from home care in the cuts of 1993-94. Are we going to support an expansion of home care? Of course we are going to support an expansion. Should you have eased it in earlier? Yes. Should you have done more—you know, it is almost as if the government had photocopied our 1995 election platform. It is almost as if they had done that, particularly with home care. It is almost as if they did that.

Companion care. Now, companion care, the minister has prompted it and the member says it is a great idea. I have reservations on companion care, and I want to see a lot more details on the companion care before we would be prepared to give our wholehearted support to it because it is a very difficult area to monitor and regulate, and given some of the concerns and problems that have occurred in the area of group homes, I have some concerns about the initiative. I want to see a lot more details before it is touted.

I mean, if I compare and if I use by analogy in companion care what the government has done with their new initiative for the care that is done at Rosewood and other centres, then I think that it is well that we question that particular initiative, because we had a case where we were providing Level 2 care and Level 1 care, and the government said they were getting out of Level 1 and Level 2 care. Now, subsequently, they are going back into Level 1 and Level 2 care, except they are now going back in it on a profit basis.

The minister said that they have now discovered and they have put money in the last few months into speech and language training. You know, the minister asked did we support it. We supported it in 1995 when we put it in our election platform as a result of a recommendation in the Postl report that said you had a two-year waiting list. The previous, previous minister put out a report in 1995 that talked about a two-year waiting list. We put it in our platform in 1995. We urged the government in '95, '96, '97, '98 and '99. Of course we are going to support the initiative today. It is about time, and as the minister has grown fond, I am certain,

of my comments at press conferences, most of these ideas were fine four years ago.

The minister talked about expanding and providing services for stroke patients, another great initiative. I want to point out in this House that we questioned the government when it cut off the services of physiotherapists by providing Filmon Fridays to physiotherapists. We stood up in this House six years ago and said that was a bad decision. I note that the expansion of this program was one of the initiatives by that organization, Voices, that has been set up to deal with people in personal care homes. I urge the minister to contact and do work with that organization because they are a body that can be very helpful to this minister and this government with respect to personal care homes and individuals in personal care homes. I note that was one of their recommendations, and we support the government's initiative in this regard, after having criticized the government for cutting back the program six years ago.

*(1640)

I noticed the minister did not say that they had a program for aboriginal health. I know the minister said, and I stand to be corrected, they are going to establish a policy for aboriginal people. Now, forgive me for being critical. I know the minister wants us to be positive, and we certainly have advocated an aboriginal health strategy for eight years. I do not want to slip onto the negative path, but I do note that the minister did not say there was an aboriginal health policy. I do note that after 11 years of government, the minister said they are going to establish an aboriginal health policy.

Now, midwifery, which has been supported by members of this side of the House since the government first mused about it eight years ago, continues to have our support. Of course it has our support, and it has had our support for eight years. I note we will have another press conference and there have been announcements about it, and I note in the last few months the money is going to be forwarded.

The minister indicated that there would be an increased number of echocardiograms as well as catherization for heart patients. I just want to

point out to the minister that these recommendations were in a report in 1995 by doctors that was forwarded to the government and that we endorsed four years ago. Of course we support the initiative today. We supported it four years ago.

The minister talked about 815 new personal care homes, net. We have commented on that on a few occasions in this House, and I would probably venture to guess several hundred occasions outside of this House. I guess if there is a single failing, because there are many, of the health policy of this government, it was the failure to adhere to their own 1992 report that recommended 1,600 personal care home beds to be built in the city of Winnipeg by 1996 to deal with the aging population.

The government promised it in 1995, cancelled it, cancelled most of them. Subsequently we are in a mess. Probably the single biggest reason the hallways are crowded in the city of Winnipeg is because of the government's failure to proceed with the personal care home bed construction that was promised. Do we support it? Of course we support it. We supported it in 1992 when it was recommended. We supported it in 1993. We supported it in 1994. We supported the election campaign promise in 1995, and we have been calling for it every year since. Of course we support the initiative recently undertaken by the government in this regard.

Now, I would like to have the minister pay special attention to this particular issue, because it deals with something that I think is fundamental and perhaps illustrative of the government policy. I want to be positive, as I have been, as I have indicated throughout. All of these initiatives we have supported for five, six, seven, and eight years, and, of course, we support them today. But when the pediatric services were consolidated at Children's Hospital, it was pledged in this House that services would expand. We waited and we watched. Rather than have services expand, the latest publication for the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation indicated that the services for children had, in fact, contracted.

Now, let me be illustrative. The minister wants to talk about positive issues. I just want

this to be illustrative of perhaps the mythology that is out there about politicization of health care. Several years ago there was a proposal at the Children's Hospital to increase the number of intensive care beds for children because there was not enough. At the time, Dr. Brian Postl was the head of Children's Hospital. A proposal went into the labyrinth at the Health Sciences Centre. Consequently children were faced with the prospect of being flown out of the province to have life sustaining or life enhancing surgery undertaken. There were several crises.

Last year during the Estimates process, with the WHA in attendance and the new regime, not in the Legislature but in the committee room, I asked where that six-bed proposal was. I was told it was somewhere in the process. Now the minister has announced, on the latest capital initiative, the six pediatric beds. Did I support it? Good heavens, I almost begged the minister last year to do it. I had a family member in attendance, and I read, and I tried to understand the process. I tried to understand how it was that a six-bed pediatric unit that had been recommended for years could not get done and kids were forced to fly out of the province. I just could not understand how a system could allow that to happen knowing that everyone in the system supported it.

The minister announced it recently. Did we support it? Of course we supported it. I still do not understand how and why it took years to have a six-bed pediatric unit established when the need has been demonstrated. It is beyond me, but I think it is illustrative of the frustration that Manitobans have with the health care system, but being positive I want to reiterate that we not only recommended it, we supported it, and, of course, we support it in these initiatives.

I noted the minister said, and I do not think it was a mistake in wording that there was a new way of doing business, and then he made reference to the regional health authorities. I do not think that was a mistake in wording, but I think it is illustrative of the approach to health care as a business and a bottom line, and I think that that is regrettable. One can perhaps pigeonhole other government activities and other government areas as a business, and I have seen many people come into government and politics

saying if we only ran it like a business. The minister knows full well that you do not and cannot run it "like a business," because it just is not the bottom line. It is far more than that.

We have the new health authorities in place. We are very anxious and I want to tell you about the health authorities issue. I remember sitting in that committee stage and one thing was promised for health authorities. I remember the former minister—or was it the former, former minister, it escapes me—indicating that local facilities would have the option of buying into the process or not buying into the process. When the bill was passed and the new regime came in place, local institutions were told you can go in or buy into the process or not buy into the process, but the only problem is your debts will not be paid unless you come into the process.

* (1650)

Indeed, last year at springtime we saw an example of this taking place when the hospitals in Winnipeg were told: the hospitals who purportedly had set up the frozen food system "on their own," were told by the Deputy Minister of Health that unless they came into the frozen food system, their debts would not be picked up by the WHA. I guess on the regional health authority, we had said all along that you were moving too quickly, that you were doing your needs assessment after you had put the structure in place, and we had grave difficulties with that, and we still have some fundamental difficulties with the operation of the regional health authorities.

The minister talked about the women's program, the stop FAS, the BabyFirst programs. I want to remind the minister and I agree, we agree, of course we support those programs. We supported them in 1995 when they were first recommended. Of course we support them, and I have to chuckle here, Mr. Chairperson, about the BabyFirst program where nurses are visiting first-time moms. That is a terrific program and when you cancelled the program in 1993, we asked you why you were doing that, and you cancelled the program. But you brought it back, you brought it back the last few months, and, of course, we are going to welcome the program,

but we do not know why you cancelled it in the first place because it was a good program then, and, of course, it is a good program now. We have supported it consistently. You have not.

Primary health care centres, that came out of the Capital budget. We are awaiting a description of that. Perhaps that will be another three or four press announcements, depending upon when the election is going to be called. I might add, Mr. Chairperson, one can gauge when the election will be called because they are running out of announcements, unless they re-announce some that have been reannounced. They are starting to run out of announcements. They have pretty well covered most of the territory, but I suspect in terms of the primary—if we are going into a fall election, I suspect we are going to see several announcements about the primary health care centres, although I suspect we will see three or four announcements.

I want to see what the criteria are of those, and I want to see what initiatives. I know they have been recommended for many years, but, of course, they have been announced recently. I do not have to repeat my earlier comments. Like most of the initiatives, of course we supported them five, six, seven years ago and have consistently. It is only now that they have been announced by the government, so, of course, we would support these initiatives. But I want to see what the primary health centres look like.

You know, there will be a legacy of the government with respect to health care, and I think it could be probably summed up in about four areas. The first area is one of broken promises and last-minute initiatives leading up to a provincial election. The second will be one the minister did not mention in his comments, and that is frozen food. Now, I noticed that members opposite, most of the members opposite sent out letters to their constituents talking about all the money that would be saved on frozen food that could go into our health care system to use for other services like bone density scanners and like hip and knee replacements. The minister says it is a great idea. The only problem I have now is: how is it that the \$2 million in losses rather than the \$5 million in savings or the \$7.5 million in savings or the \$3.5 million in savings or the half of that in savings,

whatever numbers you want to use that have come out of the Urban Shared Services, who is now paying the costs not only of the losses but of the fact that Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface have to pay for a system that they are not obtaining? What services are being cut back as a result of that initiative? Frozen food will be a legacy of this government.

Now, I am sorry to be negative, but I want to tell the minister, we did not support your frozen food concept. We did not support your frozen food concept, and we do not continue to support your frozen food concept. [interjection] The member for Arthur-Virden—well, I want to continue on this positive vein, but I have to get negative here, and I have to tell the minister, we did not support frozen food and we still do not. I want to tell the minister we did not support your SmartHealth initiative. Now, that is not to say we did not support the technological changes, but your SmartHealth hundred-million-dollar boondoggle we did not support. That is what it has amounted to, because the minister ought to know that by according to their own chart you should be realizing millions and millions of dollars in savings as we speak.

But I dare say continuing on the third legacy of this particular government and health care, just like frozen food, the savings are not there, and we told you that. So I do not want to be negative. I am trying to be positive. But I have to tell the minister, we did not support your SmartHealth concept as you illustrated it. We said it was a Cadillac. It is not a Cadillac, Mr. Chairperson. It is an Edsel, to carry the analogy. It is an Edsel or a Corvair. The Corvair was a problem. That is disputable.

But the point is, it seems to me that with a lot of the initiatives we did not support, our concerns have come to fruition. We warned you about problems with regional health authorities. We warned you about problems in frozen food. We warned you about problems in Smart Health, and they have come to fruition.

I do not want to be negative. No, I am trying to be positive, as the minister has indicated. I indicated during the course of my remarks, almost every single initiative that is positive that this government has announced has

been something that we have proposed in most cases six, seven, eight years. I suppose we should be thankful that the government finally has recognized a lot of these initiatives and we are. That is one of the reasons why we voted for the budget because, good heavens, Mr. Chairperson, this was the only time that I have been in this Chamber since I have been elected that I have seen the government actually recognize many of the issues in health care and actually address them.

Do not forget, the minister—I do not question his integrity or his commitment, but I have sat here, the minister sat here when subsequent ministers said outright, said our information was wrong. They subsequently came around and agreed. I would like them to put on the record whether we were wrong when we said the bone density scanners were two years, whether we were wrong when we said the waiting lists were the longest in the country, whether we were wrong when we said you should not lay off a thousand nurses, whether we were wrong when we said that closing all those hospital beds and not opening personal care home beds would cause hallway line-ups, whether we were wrong when we said frozen food, whether we were wrong when we said Smart Health was a problem.

I defy the government to point out where we were wrong on those points. So we take a lot of credit as an opposition, and that is why we had no problems supporting—now, that is not to say that we support in sum total the allocations in this budget in terms of the funding. I have a real concern about the numbers. I want to spend some time on that during the Estimates. I am advising the minister we will be spending some time in terms of the financing and the numbers because there are some real concerns on our part about how the government has undertaken to finance and to illustrate some of the numbers that are proposed in this budget. As the former Finance minister, I am sure the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) will have no difficulty in enlightening this committee as to some of the information. Indeed, I can recall the former Minister of Health indicating—when I had questions in this regard—to talk to the Minister of Finance and now I have the double opportunity since he is the former Minister of Finance. Am I

being given the ultimate time signal, Mr. Chairperson?

In terms of administrivia, the minister will bring in his staff, I assume, when we next meet which will be, is it tomorrow or Thursday?

* (1700)

Mr. Chairperson: That will be up to the House leaders. At this time the honourable member's time has expired. The House leaders will decide when we are coming back in to deal with the Estimates again.

The hour now being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 6—Balanced Budgets

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faursschou),

"WHEREAS balanced budgets allow public resources to be directed to socially relevant areas such as health care and education rather than increased interest payments; and

"WHEREAS the recent upgrading of Manitoba's credit rating to AA level by Moody's was largely attributable to the fiscal responsibility demonstrated by the provincial government through passage of the toughest balanced budget legislation in Canada; and

"WHEREAS balanced budgets create an economic climate conducive to enhanced consumer confidence and private investment; and

"WHEREAS balanced budgets lead to flexibility and security for future generations.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba encourage the Provincial Government to continue its commitment to fiscal responsibility and sound economic stewardship."

Motion presented.

Mr. Sveinson: Madam Speaker, this important resolution seeks the support of members to continue the government's commitment in respect of fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets. The focus of this resolution is mainly on preserving Manitoba's hard won gains in fiscal stability and responsibility. Five consecutive budgets, continued paydown of Manitoba debt with the ultimate objective of paying down the government's debt in 26 to 27 years, continued tax freezes with possible further reductions to let individuals and businesses keep more hard earned money in their pockets.

In 1995-96 Manitobans enjoyed their first budgetary surplus in 22 years. Finally balance was achieved in Manitoba's public finances.

But let us talk a little bit about the balanced budget legislation that was brought in and what our members opposite thought of that balanced budget legislation. It is really interesting. I would like everybody to really listen closely, because it is quite incredible.

You see, for the last two and a half weeks or so, or roughly two and a half weeks, we have heard about things like integrity and honesty and things of that nature of which the opposition, I say, does not really know that much, but are trying to impress upon people that they do. So I do not want them to feel too badly. Maybe I could help them a little bit by stating some of the things that I have heard said in this Assembly.

I will just give you a few, well, quite a few comments that were made by some of the members opposite, like, for example, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). His comment about balanced budget legislation: "This government only takes a short-term view of the future of this province."

Maybe the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen): "We cannot allow ourselves to be

stampeded into making simplistic decisions now that will hurt this province later on." It goes against the very notion of investing in the future.

We are talking about balanced budget legislation. What has that balanced budget legislation done here in this province? Moody's and many others have actually looked at our credit rating and actually brought it up simply because of that and what it has done and what this government has done.

How about the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk)? She said: "This government is looking at a short-term balance sheet, not the long-term, good investment for Manitobans."

Well, I am not sure exactly where she was going with that. Manitobans probably are not either. Let us look at a couple more. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers): "This balanced budget legislation, Bill 2, is very much a short-term, knee-jerk reaction."

Then there is the one, Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). She said the legislation "will endanger the economy;" ". . . will not maintain Manitoba as a wealthy place where our young people can continue to live and prosper."

Can you imagine all this? I mean, the people of Manitoba, this is the government-in-waiting over here. The government-in-waiting. We are going to convince the people in Manitoba, this is the government-in-waiting?

* (1710)

Let us go on. Let us read a few more. How about the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen)? She said: "Its real purpose, of course, is an abdication of responsibility."

Wow. Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans): "What is so magical about balancing the budget every year anyway?" "Do you really think we are going to get the Manitoba debt down to zero? I do not."

Let us just read that one once more. The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) said: "What is so magical about balancing the budget every year anyway?" "Do you really think that

we are going to get the Manitoba debt down to zero? I do not."

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Sveinson: The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) made that comment. And there is more. There is more. I just want you, Madam Speaker, and the people of Manitoba to know that these comments are coming from the so-called, the so-called government-in-waiting, the NDP, the members opposite.

Then we have the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans). He said: "unnecessary legislation," an "election gimmick," an "election ploy."

And then there was the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). His grand comment was: "this silly bill and this silly public relations stunt."

The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), this is their Leader. The member for Concordia said: "Well, you have not paid off the debt yet. Just do not give me the rhetoric. You know, walk the walk, do not talk the talk, my friend."

Anybody keep up with that? That is the Leader of the Opposition. My, my. Elmwood said—and this is all about balanced budget legislation. The honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway): "what this government is doing very cynically is responding to the current flavour of the month."

Wow. And the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli): "I have come to view it as one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation we have to deal with."

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Sveinson: The member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli): "I have come to view it as one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation we have had to deal with."

Madam Speaker, there is more. I will continue. I just want to point out that these are the people who would like to be government. What would happen in the future? For goodness sake, we do not have to go back very far.

Anything prior to 1988 for roughly six or seven years, they put this province in debt in the neighbourhood of \$4.5 billion, in a very short period of time.

I would like to go on reading what their comments on balanced budget legislation for a minute. For Osborne, and here she comes, the member for Osborne, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford): "Bill 2 is an ideological crusade masking a sound economics."

My, my, my. For Crescentwood, Mr. Sale, he said: "a bill that is destined to make Manitoba the laughingstock of the financial management world." Oh, boy, are they laughing, are they not, as they increase our ratings to AA or AAA? I believe it is AA.

Then there was the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). He says: "We warn the government, we do not think it is going to work." They warned the government. And here they are. Here they are, climbing on the wagon. They are into the back of the truck, let us go. Yes, get onto that wagon.

Then there was the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). The member for Wellington said: "an unrealistic piece of legislation this government is going to have an enormously difficult time living with this."

And then there was the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). The member for Point Douglas—and I like the gentleman—he says: "How about it, in 1995-1996? Do you think it will be balanced? Well, this is to be seen." I guess he saw and I guess that is why they are climbing on the wagon now. They voted for our budget.

We go on here. The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) he said: "I know it is a cynical pre-election ploy." It was cynical all right and it is paying down the debt. Five payments on the debt and it is saving the people of Manitoba some \$120 million in Manitoba. Is that not incredible?

Let us go on. Let us have another little listen here. The member for Elmwood (Mr.

Maloway): "This is very much a public relations exercise on the part of this government." Wow.

Radisson (Ms. Cerilli): "I think it is really a political gimmick."

Osborne again, the member for Osborne, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), she said: "balanced budget legislation is trendy." Trendy, yes. Trendy, but it must be mighty good because they are climbing on the wagon.

Is it not interesting? You hear a few comments made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and he has not said that he believes in balanced budget legislation. He said that they would believe in a balanced budget. Right. What would they do to the balanced budget legislation? The first chance they get, out it goes. The first chance. So, to the people of Manitoba, I say, plain and simply: Do not even give them a look. Again, if we did, I think all of you would be crying pretty quick.

The honourable member for Crescentwood, Mr. Sale, the Honourable Mr. Sale: "Balancing a budget every year cannot be defended on any economic grounds." On any economic grounds. [interjection] No, these are comments made by you. What is the problem? The members opposite cannot take their own comments? Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. [interjection] No, he has not made any comments. He does not want to get on the record, the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Then we have—oh, yes, here it is, the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale): "Balancing a budget every year cannot be defended on any economic grounds." Wow.

The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton): this bill will not work.

The honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett): this legislation does not correspond—get this one, get this one now. Madam Speaker, get this one. The honourable member for Wellington said: "this legislation does not correspond with any economic theory known to personkind, either historical theory or current economic theory." That is the

government in waiting? I do not think so. I do not think so.

The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) said: one of the most odious parts of this bill—get this one. The member for Burrows said: "One of the most odious parts of this bill is that it hamstring future governments."

Yeah, right. They see there is some money there now. What would they like to do? They would like to get in there and spend it.

An Honourable Member: Tax and spend.

Mr. Sveinson: Exactly. Tax and spend.

Then there is the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), well, he just says: "it was an election gimmick."

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) said: "It was created for election purposes." "This bill . . . is not based on common sense."

* (1720)

This is beautiful reading. This is beautiful reading.

The member for Flin Flon said: "It was created for election purposes." "This bill . . . is not based on common sense."

Then there is the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). The member for St. James said: "election gimmick to bind themselves into an irresponsible fiscal straitjacket." The member for St. James.

Then there was the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). He said: "It is good window dressing, but when you look right into the bill . . . it becomes a sham." This bill is nothing but a gimmick. That is the member for Thompson.

The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). Now, Madam Speaker, this part, this one really shows where the members opposite are coming from. They really show where the opposition is coming from. The member for Swan River said: "No government needs balanced budget legislation."

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) said: "It is one of the more unthinking pieces of legislation."

There is more. There is more here. How much time do I have, Madam Speaker? I am sure you would like to hear more. They will give me more time, I am sure. The members opposite want to hear all of their comments, right?

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) said: "I am not convinced the government is even serious about Bill 2."

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sveinsson: Madam Speaker, thank you for that.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments on this balanced budget resolution that the member for La Verendrye has brought forward. I have listened to his entire 15 minutes of comments here, but I never once during all of his comment time here this afternoon heard any comments by him indicating what his personal position is with respect to balanced budgets.

Madam Speaker, he quoted—

An Honourable Member: He voted against our amendment to stop the sale of MTS here.

Mr. Reid: That is right. He voted against that amendment to stop the sale of MTS, Madam Speaker, and yet the member for La Verendrye would not even put his own comments on the record. He spent all his 15 minutes talking about other people and the comments they have made over the years. So perhaps he is out of ideas. He has nothing new to add to the debate. One even has to wonder why he would bring forward this resolution if he has nothing new to add to the comments here today.

I am not so sure—[interjection] It is interesting to note when the member for La

Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson) was making his comments during—was it the budget or the throne speech debate?—he spent enough time talking about baby killers, but this time here when he is talking about balanced budgets he would not give his comments about that. So it is interesting here. He does things, I guess, for political reasons when he is talking about these different areas.

It is interesting to note too, that if you want to talk with Mr. Archie Butts, whose family asked me to raise the question today in Question Period relating to hallway medicine, we will talk about the effect that it has had on the Labossiere family and Mr. Butt himself where, as a 78-year-old veteran, he has had to lie in a hospital hallway in the Grace Hospital in the City of Winnipeg for 11 days, Madam Speaker, 11 days in the hallway of that hospital waiting for care because there was not a hospital room available because this government, in their wisdom, cut back 1,000 nursing positions and 1,400 acute care beds in this province, making sure that there were no beds available for people like Mr. Butt and his family members.

Madam Speaker, I think that is deplorable. You took \$75 million extra last year and put it against debt reduction but you would not put that \$75 million into a recruitment and retention fund for nurses that you have fired.

In fact, I was just talking to a constituent a few moments ago before I came back into the Chamber who had called me about his property tax bill that he had just got, and he had been talking to nurses that were up here in the city of Winnipeg visiting their family members here on vacation. He tells me that, in talking to the nurses, they left Manitoba when you fired them, went down to Texas to work, and now this government thinks they are going to be able to recruit those nurses back. When they are making \$50,000 a year U.S., do you think you are going to be able to bring those nurses back to the province of Manitoba? Well, what he tells me is, good luck to you, because he does not see that happening. Those nurses are not going to come back here for what you are offering compared to the \$50,000 American they are making in Texas.

Madam Speaker, that person is telling me, as so many others have in my canvassing on the doorstep, that property taxes are their issue. That is what is bothering them. Now that they are getting their tax bills, I can expect, as members opposite all through this Chamber will be finding out—you will be getting calls on the property tax bills and the level of taxation that is occurring in this province. Now, you do not have to take my word for it. You can come out to my community and talk to the people living in Transcona. You can talk, I am sure, to any other person living in this province and ask them about their property tax bills and ask them if they are happy with it. You do not have to take my word for it. Property taxes are the issue.

An Honourable Member: What are you going to do?

Mr. Reid: We have told you what you are going to do. We told you when you reduced that property tax credit from \$325 down to \$250 that that was a wrong move. We told you that we were going to finance education at a level comparable to the economy of the province of Manitoba. You did not move on that either, and we are telling you that that is where you needed to go. We have been telling you that for years.

Those are some of the solutions we will be proposing. If you have the courage of your convictions to call an election, perhaps next Tuesday because you were too chicken to call it today, then you will see what is in the platform, and we will tell you what we are going to do to assist the property tax payers of this province, Madam Speaker.

So have the courage of your convictions. Do not play chicken. Call the election next Tuesday and we will take our platform to the people. We will let them decide whether or not the initiatives of this government are enough to sustain them for another term or, indeed, they believe that there is a new vision and a new NDP that they will have for their government in the future.

Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note when the balanced budget law was brought in in this province, and I listened to the comments of the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson)

when he says that we have not had a balanced budget in this province for 22 years, I believe he said. I can only think back to 1988. The Auditor of this province has said that we had a balanced budget in this province, a \$58.7-million surplus. [interjection] Not a hope.

An Honourable Member: Were you there in '84 when Zipper could not even sign the audit on your government? Remember that?

Mr. Reid: Who was that?

An Honourable Member: The Auditor would not even sign your books.

Mr. Reid: Well, I do know that in 1987, I believe it was, the Auditor gave us his unconditional support for our budget. That is a first in the history of the Province of Manitoba, I believe, and it was during the Howard Pawley government. So you can be assured that we had the appropriate accounting practices in our government, and the Auditor did not have to come back and forth and say that there were some suspicious activities and something is untoward in your budgeting practices. As the Auditor of this province has said with respect to the way you handled the civil servants' and teachers' pensions in this province where you were not accounting for it for quite a number of years. I am wondering if you had taken that into consideration in the budget that you have brought forward this time and whether or not you really do have a surplus or a deficit.

It is interesting to note that the government can find a hundred million dollars to expand the casinos in this province, but you cannot find a hundred million dollars to put it into reducing the waiting lists for people waiting for surgery or to opening up the hospital beds or hiring new nurses in this province. When I go by Club Regent on the way to this building every day, I see Manitoba licence plates in the parking lot. I can remember when the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was the minister responsible, saying at that time that we are going to have all this influx of tourists. We are going to bring in all these dollars, and we are going to have not Manitobans recycling their money through the Lotteries, we are going to have tourists coming in here. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, going

by that building every day I see Manitoba licence plates in the parking lot. I do not see the Minnesotas. I do not see the North Dakotas. I do not see any of the U.S. states, and I do not see other provinces in there like the minister said was doing to occur. It is mostly Manitobans recycling their money through Manitoba Lotteries.

An Honourable Member: What are you going to do? Are you going to close them down? Are you going to close them down? Tell us what you are going to do. Are you going to shut them down? Tell us.

Mr. Reid: Well, what we are asking: where is your commitment? Where is your commitment to all those tourists who were supposed to come to Manitoba? You are going to have a peak when the Pan Am Games start, but after that it is going to fall back to the same old, same old routine: Manitoba licence plates in the parking lot. That is what is going to occur, and it is Manitobans' money that is being recycled through the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. You had a hundred million dollars to expand the casinos, but you would not take that hundred million dollars into hiring more nurses to reduce the waiting lists and opening up hospital beds, Madam Speaker. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reid: This government talks about balanced budgets, but let us talk about balancing some priorities here. I take a look, when this constituent of mine called me this afternoon talking about his school tax bill, and his school tax bill is \$1,300 on his home. He just moved back to be closer to his family, moved back from B.C. where his tax bill was under a thousand dollars for his school tax. That is what he was telling me. This government has reduced its support for public education in this province from \$732 million down to \$709 million in this province. And you talk about balancing your priorities? Your priority is to put money to your debt reduction and you really do not give a darn what happens to other people in the education system, and you do not give a darn what happens to the people in the health care system in this province. This is witnessed by the cases we bring to this Chamber day after day after day,

the hardship cases that you have created by the actions of your government.

It is your deficit. Your deficit is the people lying in the hospital hallways. That is where you should be concentrating your efforts, and you would not be having the difficulties you are and you would not be looking to postpone this election to the fall of this year, or perhaps the spring of 2000 to escape the actions of the people of Manitoba when they are going to pass judgment on the way you have treated them over the last four years.

* (1730)

We think, Madam Speaker, that this balanced budget resolution is purely for political opportunism. There was no real intention of this government to balance the priorities in this province. They are more interested—

Point of Order

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I would just like some clarification from my honourable friend, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), on whether it was political opportunism or not when they voted for our budget yesterday.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is quite concerned now about the way the NDP has decided to vote for the budget.

Madam Speaker, we have been telling this government for 10 years nearly—well, I guess it is nine years that I have been here—that you should be focusing your priorities on the people of Manitoba and their needs in the health care system, in addition to the public education system. This budget put back, at least in part, a small part, some money into health care.

Now, the big question is—we are going to call your bluff on this—are you ever going to live up to your word, because I know last year you did not spend all the money in the health care department. You had money left over at the end of the year. So I guess the question here is are you really interested in spending that money, or after the election time are you going to plan out the same activities as you did in 1995, where you froze the capital spending?

I have the report downstairs from the Manitoba Cancer Treatment Centre, where you had promised prior to the election of '95 that you were going to expand that facility and then froze that funding for that facility contrary to the recommendations of the people working there. You froze that funding harder than the earth on a cold January day in this province, never even considering for a moment the impact you were having on the cancer patients in this province.

An Honourable Member: And let us not forget epileptologists.

Mr. Reid: My colleague reminds me of the funding cutbacks, the funding situation we have with respect to epileptologists in this province, where Dr. Pillay had to leave the province of Manitoba and go to Calgary because he could not get a commitment from this government to fund health care research in this province.

You took \$75 million additional dollars last year and put it into debt reduction above and beyond what you are required to do in your balanced budget legislation, but you would not take a few thousand dollars to keep Dr. Pillay in this province to assist patients suffering from epilepsy in this province. Where are your priorities in this province? You will hire 60 new managers for your Winnipeg Hospital Authority system at, what, \$80,000, \$90,000, \$100,000 a year?

An Honourable Member: A hundred thousand.

Mr. Reid: A hundred thousand dollars a year for those 60 new managers to run your Winnipeg Hospital Authority, but you will not look at the people who are in the system who are suffering, who are having to wait in the hospitals, the cases

that we continue to bring to this Legislature Chamber every single day.

I think your priorities are all wrong and the people of Manitoba will tell you so in the coming provincial general election, if you ever find the courage to stand up and call that provincial general election, Madam Speaker, and we would welcome the day. Hopefully, it will be next Tuesday that you will screw up your courage to call that election. We will take our message to the people of Manitoba and tell them what our priorities are, and we will compare it to your record any day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, I am a little bit curious. Well, first off, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise on the motion brought forward by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson). Indeed, I truly support the balanced budget legislation which was passed in 1995 and continues to be practised by this government. It is, in fact, supported by the members opposite as displayed yesterday by their support of the 1999-2000 budget.

That is why I stand today to encourage all members present to support this private member's resolution because it is indeed fact that this provides the foundation for prosperity, that whether being in government or in private practice, in business or, in fact, our own private affairs, balancing our books is essential to continued sustainability on whatever project one might be undertaking and what facet.

I have listened for just the last number of minutes to some of the commentary made by one member opposite, and it disturbed me because at times I was wondering whether, in fact, we were debating the resolution on balanced budgets when some of the comments were extrapolated and extolled on many different topics.

For one, I would like to stick to the topic and that is why I encourage members opposite to support this resolution. It states that balanced budgets allow public resources to be directed to socially relevant areas such as health care and

education. Indeed, this government has and does stand for directly that, because within our percentage of our entire budgetary spending, you can see where the priorities are: 35.5 percent of the budget passed in this Chamber yesterday is going to be spent on health care. That is the No.1 priority. With that percentage, you can tell that that is our No. 1 priority. When members opposite governed this province, they spent less than 25 percent. Can you tell which party in this Chamber, in fact, has that particular priority in mind? I think that, if you were to examine the track record, you will find that the party in government at present has indeed that priority.

As well, balanced budgets allow for the expenditures on education when it is, in fact, an investment in our young people who will be heirs to this province. They will be the future of this province, and they will be responsible for caring for us in our old age. That is why this government has raised the percentage of provincial spending on education, and truly we are investing in the young people of Manitoba for the future of Manitoba.

Not only will you take my words on record today as in support of this balanced budget legislation and the resolution before us today, but take some of the comments that have been made by recognized bond-rating agencies, most specifically Moody's Investors Service, which recognizes this government's efforts of improving its fiscal and economic situation by upgrading from A1 to AA3. This higher rating applies to both domestic and foreign currency debt issued by this province. This is the first time Moody's has upgraded Manitoba's credit rating since 1981. This, ladies and gentlemen, is truly an accomplishment—honourable members, I should say.

As well, last year, in June, Standard and Poor's upgraded and issued the credit and long-term debt rating for Manitoba from an A- to a AA-. Honourable members, again, another independent body recognizing what balanced budgets can do for a province.

I can relate to Portage la Prairie and how, in fact, the booming economy that has resulted from fiscal management shown by this government. In Portage la Prairie last year alone, more

than \$17 million was invested in the rural and city areas in Portage la Prairie, bringing more business, more accommodations, and more investment. More investment brings more jobs, and with the jobs, allows our young people to stay at home and be able to provide for their families, as we provide for our families in Portage la Prairie.

I get dismayed when comments are made that, in fact, are erroneous or lead people to believe in untruths. You know, there are comments made by the—

An Honourable Member: You are such a nice guy. . . Do not read your speech. Say what you—

Mr. Faurschou: These are my own words and my own feelings, and I have just got to express that I was dismayed by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) when he made commentary as to when this government, in fact, passed budgets that had a deficit. If one were to examine within that deficit component of the budgets passed by the Filmon government, it was made up by the interest costs of that accumulated debt that was there prior to this government taking office, and so one can play with the figures and perhaps make a story look true by playing with figures.

* (1740)

But, Madam Speaker, I would like to extend the opportunity to all members present to support this resolution on balanced budgets because the fiscal management that we show today will benefit this province long into the future. In fact, the extra monies that were dedicated to the debt of this province, the \$75 million that was expended over and above our scheduled repayments last year, over the 27 years of scheduled repayments that \$75 million that was paid last year will save this province over \$300 million in payments over the course of the 26 to 27 years. I would say that that is an investment in the future of this province, where the young people of this province who will have to bear some of the debt will benefit from what we do today within our balanced budget.

With a balanced budget and debt reduction, it will allow the flexibility that future

governments in Manitoba will have to reinvest in this province, whether it be in our social services or whether it be in our infrastructure or whether it be in the next generation through education. I would like at this time, again, to ask members opposite to support this resolution, because they have shown that they are inclined to support this resolution by their support of the budget passed yesterday in this House.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this particular resolution. Hopefully, all members here will support it.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I am pleased to rise and put a few comments on the record on our position on balanced budget. Once again we would like to indicate that we are in favour of balanced budgets, as over and over again we have indicated at the time of the introduction of the bill, and like many other governments across Canada, New Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative, it is time to look at fiscal restraint.

Many, many times I have been on record talking about the importance of having a balanced budget. This is a positive step. However, the specific legislation that the Filmon government brought in has got some serious flaws. It was very curious when the member who introduced the resolution spent his whole time quoting New Democrats. That does seem to be a trend.

It is this side of the House that is speaking out, providing options to Manitobans, providing ideas for people to adopt and come forward. Today's NDP has a balanced approach, a vision for the future. Madam Speaker, that is proven. I think the member for La Verendrye indicated that by spending his whole time quoting New Democrats. I think that is a compliment.

What was the problem with the balanced budget? You know, I hate to criticize the opposition, but it is time to be fair. Selective quotes are not going to cut it. I know that they are in a desperate situation. They have to use quips and quotes, perhaps out of place. Now, balanced budgets are a very important sector. Balanced budgets is how we live our own lives.

I come from a working family that did not have an opportunity to dip into a family trust or a rainy day fund or some gift given to you. I never had a silver spoon in my mouth. In fact, we never had silver spoons in our home at all. It was stainless steel all the way. We always balanced the budget, and it is about high time that this government took in this vision.

What the problem is with the balanced budget legislation specifically is they used capital assets to balance the budget. That is a serious flaw. Selling off MTS we know was a very stupid idea, a bad mistake, and it has cost every Manitoban. There is a serious flaw when you sell off capital assets to balance the budget, because now that we have sold off MTS, what is next? Madam Speaker, what is next? Obviously the next gem, even bigger than MTS, is Manitoba Hydro. So to sustain this type of budgeting is foolhardy and shortsighted. In fact, I think we have another even more specific example of this government's rhetoric.

Let us look at the lottery situation. The casino expansion was a decision that this government made to close down under the pretense that they are going to close down the Crystal Casino and expand the other two casinos in the city. We argued. We tried to talk to them that a downtown casino was a good idea, would invest in the heart of the city. They claimed \$50 million would expand the casinos and provide state-of-the-art, world-class facilities. Was there any concern about balancing the budget? Apparently not. Just the new additions alone are 32 percent over budget. Was there any limit to that expenditure? Madam Speaker, 32 percent over budget, and they stand up today talking about balancing budgets. This is a government whose own record is shameful.

That does not even include the costs of the renovations of the existing facilities. Madam Speaker, we have heard that the renovation costs are horrendous, enormous, perhaps exceeding \$20 million. I have asked over and over again for the government to lay out the picture as to how much the new, renovated casinos, the total cost would be, and they have refused to come forward with that. Well, obviously, now, was that a balanced budget? There does not seem to be any budget when it comes to building casinos.

Madam Speaker, this is also a government that had the opportunity to have a surplus when they took government from the NDP. They took a surplus of \$58.7 million, transformed that magically, I would suggest, into a deficit, a little bit of doctoring of some numbers there, perhaps, moved an NDP surplus into a deficit for convenience, some would say. The Filmon watch promptly produced a series of staggering deficits. To what extent? We have never seen such big deficits in Manitoba's history, record deficits of \$766 million in 1992-93. Yes, indeed, the NDP voted against that budget.

Now, what happened with the budget this year? There was a sudden change of heart from the Conservatives on the other side. Suddenly they decided, oh, we need personal care homes; we need to get rid of hallway medicine; geez, there is a crisis in health care, and on and on. There is a big crisis in the election perhaps. You know, this was clearly, they saw the light and provided a budget that provides funding for health care.

* (1750)

Point of Order

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have been listening very attentively to the honourable member for St. James, and I have not yet heard her say whether she supports the resolution or whether she does not support the resolution.

She is rambling on about all other things, but she is not addressing the issues with regard to the resolution that we are debating here. Now, if she has got any intentions of indicating to this House whether she supports the resolution or does not, I would ask that you bring her to order to speak in favour or against the resolution, Madam Speaker.

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

* * *

Ms. Mihychuk: Just to remind the member for Sturgeon Creek that this member, the member for St. James, is in favour of balanced budgets,

has been in the past, has in the present, and will be in the future. Madam Speaker, we have looked at the books, and I think the sensitivity is when we pointed out that it was the Conservative Filmon government that ran deficits that exceeded any in the history of Manitoba. That seems to have raised some sensitivity on behalf of members opposite.

Now, the debt that the government, the Conservative government, has given Manitobans is something that they like to talk about—the debt, and how much there is. In fact, they do not mention that \$1.5 billion of the debt that we all carry was incurred during the Lyon years, and that would be a Conservative government. Now, those costs were incurred and carried, and we are all paying the cost of that. So let us not cast stones if you live in a glass house.

Madam Speaker, the government, this government has incurred huge deficits, large debts, and has had its own record of enormous deficits. In fact, I would like to point out that Manitoba was not alone in incurring large debts in the 1980s. Same is true for all Canadian governments, including the governments headed by PCs and Liberals—they were some of the biggest spenders—and the Social Credit—Don Getty, Grant Devine, John Buchanan—all Tories, that is Conservatives in more polite terms. Bill Van der Zalm incurred huge debts—Social Credit.

The Tories over and over have chronically misrepresented budgetary figures to the public, and unfortunately it took an election to bring forward an election budget, something that did provide sensitivity to those people that need it in the health care system, and to end hallway medicine, and to address some of the long-waiting lists for diagnostic tests. So we must say hear, hear to the government who brought forward a budget that we have been calling for year after year, a budget that is balanced, a budget that is sensitive for health care. So, for the final time, and I believe the seventh or eighth time in this short speech, I would like to indicate again how much I am pleased that this government has finally adopted the vision of balanced budgets.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is interesting, and the government is

saying, calling for a vote, and I do not blame the government for calling for a vote because I, too, am very much interested in how the New Democrats would actually in fact vote on this resolution. So, in keeping with that spirit, I will sit down in hopes that—or very shortly I will sit down—in hopes that in fact we might be able to have another vote on this particular resolution.

Madam Speaker, how far we have gone in listening to the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). You see the New Democrats reaching further and further to the right. I guess I should move further and further to the right as I am saying that, and then you see the Conservatives moving more and more towards the left. One would think they all want to become Liberals. You know, there is a more honourable way, I would suggest, to get together, and we could all be one happy family if you so choose. Mind you, we all have to abide by Jon Gerrard. He is the Leader of the Liberal Party. Then you will be able to talk about maybe some of those wonderful Liberal initiatives, and some of those are going to come out whenever the election is, in fact, called. But, you know, it is interesting, the member for St. James was saying: I am in favour of balanced budgets today, I was in favour of them yesterday, and I will be in favour of them in the future.

Well, the record will show you voted against the balanced budget legislation. But you were not alone. The Liberals voted with you against the balanced budget legislation. I think the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) is having some second thoughts, that maybe she wishes she would have voted in favour of the balanced budget legislation if, in fact, you listened in terms of what it is that she is saying. I think in fairness to the New Democratic Party inside this Chamber, we should allow the member for St. James to really formalize her position on balanced budget legislation and allow for some sort of a vote on this resolution. I, for one, would be more than happy to see this resolution come to a vote. I trust that in fact, because as I say, they are very much—[interjection]

Now, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is talking about sharing campaign offices with the Tories. Nothing ceases to amaze

me. I believe that that could possibly happen. I remember the days in which there was a love-in between the Tories and the New Democrats. They were voting together on everything, Madam Speaker. This yesterday could have been a start of things to come. Maybe that is one of the incentives that the Premier (Mr. Filmon), one of the reasons why he chickened out of calling the election today is because he is starting to see the New Democrats coming over to the Conservative way of thinking.

New Democrats, just hold back a little bit. Hold back a little bit anyway, Madam Speaker, and see and reflect on what Manitobans are in fact saying. They have not changed—the undecided and the Manitobans that are in opposition to the government have not really changed their mind. They are not going over to the Tories. They are looking for an alternative, a real alternative. Thank goodness there is the Liberal Party because we will ensure that Manitobans are aware of that real alternative.

Maybe I should be advocating the election be put off because the longer the election, maybe the closer the New Democrats will get with the Tories. That is the reason why hopefully we will see a vote on this resolution because I am indeed very much intrigued how would the New Democrats vote on this. Their option of course is one of two things: either allow for a vote or to talk the resolution out. What will they do? I do not know how Hansard—I do not know, Madam Speaker, but maybe they have been spooked a little bit. Maybe they will stand up and speak it out. I do not blame them if they wanted to speak it out. It would show a little bit the NDP that we are familiar with, the NDP that oppose what the government of the day is actually doing. But I know we are talking about today's NDP.

Did you see the newscast? I want to conclude on this one note. In one of the newscasts they were showing some signs. I could have sworn that I saw a sign that was for Linda Asper. I look to the NDP today, and I believe the sign had blue and orange. The blue was prominently featured. I think they are really going for that. If you want to be a Tory, call yourself a Tory, walk the floor. Let us be the opposition. We will be more than happy.

The opposition in Alberta at one time used to be very small. I am somewhat small in stature but I like to believe, ensure that we can provide that real alternative to the government. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) will be there to back me up. Realizing the clock is ticking, I think we have less than a minute, let us find out. Will the NDP speak it out or will they allow it for a vote? The jury is out; we will let them answer the question.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, on a personal financial system, on the basis of individual personal management system,

there is no doubt that your expenses should always be within your income, otherwise you can generate no savings. But economists have been telling us all along that a private virtue may easily be turned into a public vice. How is that?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) will have 14 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

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