



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

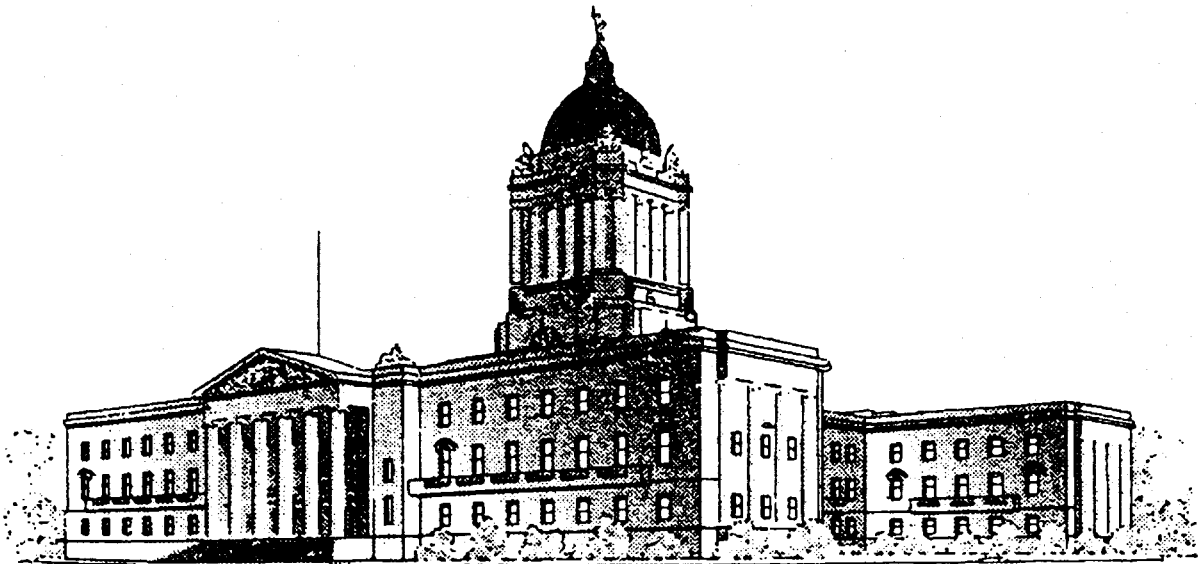
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 13, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Geri Gosselin, Trish Sherrer, Floyd Cameron and others requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS medical authorities have stated that breast cancer in Manitoba has reached almost epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS yearly mammograms are recommended for women over 50, and perhaps younger if a woman feels she is at risk; and

WHEREAS while improved surgical procedures and better post-operative care do improve a woman's chances if she is diagnosed, early detection plays a vital role; and

WHEREAS Manitoba currently has only three centres where mammograms can be performed, those being Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson; and

WHEREAS a trip to and from these centres for a mammogram can cost a woman upwards of \$500 which is a prohibitive cost for some women; and

WHEREAS a number of other provinces have dealt with this problem by establishing mobile screening units; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has promised to take action on this serious issue.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Superannuation Act): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Actuarial Report for the Public Service Group Insurance Fund.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I would be honoured to table the Annual Report, 1995-96, of the Seizure and Impoundment Registry.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the visitors' gallery where we have this afternoon twelve Grade 12 students from the Oxford House School under the direction of Ms. Shauna McKay. This

school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson); and twenty-four Grades 4 and 5 students from Ralph Brown School under the direction of Mrs. Sandy Barr. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Video Lottery Terminals Computer Programming

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). Over the last three budgets, lottery revenues have grown in the Province of Manitoba to exceed the corporate income tax revenue in the budget lines. Last night on ABC News, a show called Primetime Live, it was reported that computer gambling machines had been programmed to have deceptive features to entice gamblers to continue gambling, to keep playing.

I would like to ask the Premier, are deceptive features a program in the computer gambling machines of Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, no, but I will certainly take that question primarily as notice and get back with detailed information for the member opposite.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, as the minister of gambling knows, VLT revenue has grown from \$8 million before he became Minister of Finance to some \$123 million for VLT computer machines alone.

Mr. Gordon Hickman, a former employee of the Nevada Gaming Commission, along with others, has documented the practice of having one-third of the computer runs have near misses and included in those near misses allegedly is the company IGT, a company that was brought to Manitoba and produced the VLT machines here in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) have they investigated the allegations dealing with IGT and the deceptive gambling practices of the computer machines?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, I will take that question as notice and get back with some detailed information for the member opposite.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, Mr. Baker, a person who was in press releases with the Premier, from IGT, a person obviously well known to members opposite, did not deny the practice and said this was not contrary to the regulations in the state of Nevada. Now, I find this practice of deceptive programming of machines insidious.

I would like to ask the government have they discussed this matter with Mr. Baker, a person who was obviously an acquaintance of the Premier when he was bragging about bringing IGT to Manitoba, a company I believe that has now left the province?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I have indicated to the Leader of the Opposition, on his specific questions I will get the details and provide him with the information. I want to assure him that we take the whole issue of gaming very seriously. I think the challenge for governments right across Canada is to strike the right balance in terms of having gaming accessible for the residents of their provinces but also being sure that it does not become a problem within all of our provinces. We now have VLTs in virtually every province in Canada. We have casinos in most provinces in Canada, irrespective of what the political stripe is of the government in those provinces.

The company that he refers to, IGT, provides machines in other provinces within Canada, but I do want to indicate here today that when it comes to dealing with this issue, we are the only province in Canada that has had two studies done on the whole issue of problem gambling by Dr. Rachel Volberg, one of the foremost specialists in that area. We provide a million dollars today to the Addictions Foundation to deal with the very important issue of education and dealing with any people who do have problems.

* (1340)

Gaming Commission Membership

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, clearly, we have a serious issue when the gambling machines which are already horribly addictive may be stacked and be even more addictive.

My question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs, who is to overlook the gaming activities in Manitoba, is can the minister assure Manitobans, which he must do at this time, and this House, that the Gaming Commission which he recently appointed and which is personally tied to himself and the Premier (Mr. Filmon), how can he assure Manitobans that this commission will be fair and independent when reviewing such a critically important issue?

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for the opportunity to advise my colleagues today as to the nature and quality of the individuals in the Gaming Commission that we have appointed, because she makes an allusion as to the background of these members. I would like to point out to the honourable member that we have one individual who is a single mother of aboriginal background who is a police constable. We have a member of the clergy who has worked on the commission that investigated the lotteries issue. We have people from the urban section of Winnipeg and from rural Manitoba, from all cross-sections of life, and these are people— [interjection] I am sorry, I am receiving a little abuse from the front benches, the opposite side. I would try to tell my colleagues that in fact we have individuals on this commission of the highest academic quality, the highest professional and administrative quality who will be setting policy on this issue. I would like to assure the member that I have nothing but the highest confidence in these individuals, and I look forward to the operation of this commission.

Ms. Mihychuk: This is a very serious issue, and I feel like the minister is making light of the whole issue.

Will the minister please come forward and assure Manitobans that it will be a fair review? In fact, how can he do so when one of the contributors, or many of

them on the commission are actually tied in through Tory contributions and are personal friends of the minister?

Mr. Radcliffe: I do not accept any of the preamble that the honourable member for St. James has had the temerity to present, because what she is implying by innuendo is that, No. 1, our friends are automatically suspect or that they may be bereft of any ability.

I want to assure the honourable member that in fact the people on this commission, and I say this in all sincerity, are of the highest quality and that we are working very assiduously at this point to get this commission up and running.

We have advertised for an executive director. We have had over 60 applications, and we are working at this point, compiling all the necessary attributes to get this commission up and running. It would be presumptive of me at this point now to tell the honourable member or the colleagues in this Chamber what we are going to do until the commission is up and running. I am sure that there will be, pursuant to the act of which I am sure the honourable member is aware, many regulatory and licensing affairs, but I would hesitate to say because I think it would be out of order and perhaps political interference, which maybe the member for St. James wishes to indulge but I would refrain from doing so.

Ms. Mihychuk: How can this minister assure Manitobans that the Gaming Commission will be independent and be perceived as independent on this very serious issue, especially when the government has the fortune of receiving millions of dollars of revenues?

I am asking the minister, given that the Gaming Commission is stacked with Tory appointments, how can Manitobans be assured independence?

Mr. Radcliffe: Again, I do not accept the innuendo or the salacious attempts by the honourable member opposite to inveigh against the quality and expertise which is on this commission. I want to assure the honourable member that we have an act of the Legislature which sets out the parameters of responsibility, the mandate for this job.

There will be an independent budget established for this commission, and I can assure this honourable member that I will step back, and I will not politically interfere. If that is what our honourable member is suggesting opposite, then I must advise with regret that I will refrain from interfering politically, because this commission has its job of setting policy, determining licensing, ascertaining registration and doing appeals from complaints in this environment, and I want to assure the honourable member that this commission, the staff that will be mandated to this commission will be of the highest quality. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

The Contaminated Sites Remediation Act Regulations/Proclamation

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Last fall this House passed The Contaminated Sites Remediation and Consequential Amendments Act. My questions are to the Minister of Environment.

When will the minister be releasing the regulations of this act, and when will this act be proclaimed?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Work is underway to make preparations for the regulation and for the proclamation of this legislation, and that will be forthcoming very soon.

Contaminated Sites Information Release

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, since the minister hopes to reduce the current 1,120 contaminated sites down to just 20, will the minister release to the House today information regarding these 20 contaminated sites that fall into his new definition of contaminated sites, and what action is he taking to remediate these sites?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Our contaminated sites legislation has been hailed by many not only for the process used to achieve it but also for what is in the legislation itself. From some of the things that have been learned in that process, Madam Speaker, the remediation will go forward. This contamination did not happen overnight. Some of it

has been around for many years and is a very troublesome problem, but I think we have all of the right minds at work on the issues and we will deal with that contamination in an appropriate and sustainable way.

Responsibility

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, in my previous question I asked the minister to release information regarding those 20 sites; he failed to answer that question.

There are 1,100 sites that do not fit into his category. Who will be responsible for those 1,100 sites that do not fit into the minister's new category?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): I did not mean to be unresponsive, Madam Speaker. I will review the information the honourable member is requesting.

Eaton's—Downtown Location Closure

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, it is not the first time that there has been a critical juncture in the future of downtown Winnipeg. In 1983, there was just a rumour that The Bay and Eaton's might be closing. The provincial government immediately took a leadership role in working with the other levels of government and the private sector that has led in the last years to a revitalization of downtown. Immediate action was taken by the provincial government.

I would like to ask the Minister of Urban Affairs if the Urban Affairs Committee of Cabinet has met to discuss how to address the current serious situation regarding the review of the downtown Eaton's store.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I share the same concerns, to a degree, with the member for Wellington as to the state of the downtown and the enhancement of the city of Winnipeg, and anything that would be to a detriment we are all concerned about. It is very unfortunate that the Eaton's store—or the Eaton's company, I should say—is in a position where they are considering closing some of the major department stores here in Winnipeg.

We have not had any type of discussions or confirmation that this is going to happen. From all indications, these are some of the parameters that Eaton's is going through in their evaluation of their store, but as to a plan or a discussion, we have not implemented any type of talks with Eaton's at this time.

Ms. Barrett: That is very interesting. I wonder if the government then, since they have not had any discussions about this, the potential problem with the closing of a major department store in downtown Winnipeg, has not even met to discuss this issue, has not talked with other players in this, what are you waiting for? Are you waiting for the store to close before you decide that there is a problem?

* (1350)

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I want to make sure that the opposition is fully aware that that question would probably be properly directed to myself as Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Our department has been in discussion with the people at Eaton's, and we have relayed to them our concerns. I also want to indicate clearly, Madam Speaker, that Eaton's has indicated to them that they will be getting back to us. I am also in the process of preparing a communication to make sure that all those people who are involved in Eaton's, that we as a government can do what we can short of putting in any financial resources, but we truly do want to make sure that that retail business survives.

Madam Speaker, retail sales in the province of Manitoba are at a very extreme high, and I do not believe it is the economy or what is happening within the government. It is other problems that have caused the things to go the way they have with Eaton's.

Ms. Barrett: Has the government looked at the impact on the economy, not only of Winnipeg but of Manitoba, of 800,000 square feet of office and retail space going on an already glutted market and the loss of up to a million dollars in business and property taxes on the people of Manitoba and Winnipeg if the government does not work right now to keep Eaton's here?

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, the member's questions are highly speculative at this particular time. We understand that there is a considerable amount of work that is being done to try and save the stores, to save the business as it relates to Eaton's. I think we have to also acknowledge that there are other new retail stores opening.

In fact, in the manufacturing sector today, if one were to read the Free Press, you would see 400 new jobs at Palliser Furniture, so it is not that the provincial economy is not performing well. It is not that retail sales are not up. There are other difficulties which Eaton's is going through. We will continue to work to the best of our ability to make sure that the stores in whatever capacity are providing services to the people of Manitoba.

Gaming Community Plebiscites

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries. The NDP and the government will talk about the value of the commission; we recognize the commission as nothing more than a political farce. In fact, the government is using the commission in order to be able to hide behind so that they cannot be held accountable for their actions of getting addiction at an all-time high in the province.

My question to the minister responsible is will the minister do what their counterparts in Alberta have done and recognize that if communities want to get rid of the VLTs, that they will acknowledge that through referenda?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I am sure the member for Inkster has had an opportunity to read the Lottery Policy Review report chaired by Mr. Larry Desjardins with some 14 individuals from across Manitoba from a broad cross-section of our community, municipalities, law enforcement and so on.

One of the recommendations in that report, I am sure he will recall, was that communities be able to have plebiscites within their jurisdictions and that those

plebiscites in fact be honoured. That committee also recommended that if a community voted not to have VLT machines that they also not share in the revenue.

What we have done with that recommendation— [interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) seems awfully interested in this topic; he cannot keep quiet.

* (1355)

Madam Speaker, the issue has been referred to the new independent Gaming Commission, because to do justice to that issue there should be discussion with the municipalities, with municipal organizations like the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, like the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, like the City of Winnipeg and to do additional work and research in that area. That would be one of the first orders of business of the new independent Gaming Commission.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the Minister of Finance is that we are asking the minister not to hide behind the commission, to make a strong statement to Manitobans in the communities that if the communities want to get rid of the VLTs, that this government will honour it. Stop hiding behind the commission is what we are suggesting.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, it is not a matter of hiding behind the commission; it is a matter of doing the things that are necessary to come to the proper decision. I am sure the member for Inkster does not oppose having consultation with municipalities, with municipal governing bodies. I am sure he does not oppose doing any research that is available on those kinds of issues and looking at other jurisdictions. I would think that would be the prudent way to deal with the issue before a final decision is made.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess what we are trying to do is get the Minister of Finance to acknowledge the negative social consequences of his gambling policy which is based on revenue generation. I would ask the minister

to respect the will of what the people want who live in the communities, that this government does not have the right to hide behind a commission which is politically appointed, which should not even be there in the first place.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster seems to forget that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has done two studies of the issue of the potential problems of gaming. We provide \$1 million to the Addictions Foundation to provide counselling, to provide education.

On the heels of the Desjardins committee report, we announced and removed 650 VLT machines from throughout Manitoba, 15 percent of the number of machines in Manitoba. It is an issue we take very seriously. We have taken a series of steps to deal with it.

The challenge for all governments, whether they are Liberal, NDP or Conservative, is to strike the right balance, because many people do want to participate in gaming. The majority do it in a very responsible way, and I think the last situation any province would want is to have all of our residents who want to participate going to Ontario, going to Saskatchewan, going down to the United States, taking that money out of our economy but still being left to deal with any problems that might arise here within Manitoba.

Pharmacare Health Care Facility Drug Programs

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, last year at this time without consultation the government destroyed the Pharmacare program, cut off two-thirds of Manitobans and cost the province millions of dollars by botching it in the first place.

Will the minister confirm that the government is again changing the Pharmacare program so that drug programs provided by centres like the Health Sciences Centre, cancer treatment centre, cystic fibrosis groups and other organizations are now to have their programs subsumed into the Pharmacare program with the result that sick patients will now have to pay the higher Pharmacare deductible?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am not going to accept that question or supposition from the member for Kildonan.

* (1400)

Mr. Chomiak: Just to be clear, will the minister whose government has destroyed the Life Saving Drug Program indicate to this House—will the government who grandfathered the Life Saving Drug Program and is downsizing the Life Saving Drug Program so that it no longer affects Manitobans—will he confirm that the government is contemplating the subsuming of all of the drug programs including those offered by the Health Sciences Centre, cancer treatment institute, cystic fibrosis and other groups and will have those subsumed into the overall Pharmacare program with the patients having to pay the higher deductible?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, no, I will not confirm that.

Province of Manitoba Revenue Forecast

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, on April 16, 1996, I rose to challenge the low and misleading revenue estimates of the 1996-97 budget. These figures were deliberately understated so that the Filmon government could pursue its agenda of mean-spirited cuts to education, children's food allowances, Pharmacare and other services.

Does the Minister of Finance still actually believe that with all the known prior-year adjustments that he talked about in his third quarter statement, 1996-97 tax revenues are actually going to fall \$35 million over last year's revenues? Do you still believe that?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as I explained to the member yesterday, if he looks at our Third Quarter Report, while we are pleased with the significant growth in our revenue of some \$118 million, approximately \$90 million of it was attributable to prior-year adjustments on our personal and corporate income tax pertaining to our 1995 tax year. That is all good news for Manitobans. It is all a

part of our economy performing amongst the best in the country in terms of job creation, export growth, retail sales growth and so on.

I am certainly prepared to spend more time with him at any opportunity to explain to him how a budget is prepared and how we arrive at all of our estimates. I think he knows when you are dealing with the current budget when it comes to personal and corporate income tax, those are numbers provided by the federal government that we review and analyze in terms of their accuracy from our perspective. When we look at our own revenue sources, Madam Speaker, we work from the previous year and look at what is reasonable growth against those revenue sources.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the minister knows I took the prior-year adjustments into account in my first question.

Madam Speaker, how does the minister defend these phoney numbers when the federal fiscal monitor published in February of this year shows that federal tax revenues are up some 7 percent, personal income tax, 12.5 percent, corporate income tax, overall up over 8 percent year over year, yet he is trying to tell Manitobans his bottom line is they are going to fall? He brags about our economy, brags about our jobs, and yet he is trying to get us to believe so that tomorrow he can get up and mislead us again about the revenue estimates for Manitoba.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we have gone through this before with the member for Crescentwood, and when we take the time to spend with whomever wants to find out accurate information relative to our revenue projections, relative to our expenditures, each and every time the member for Crescentwood is wrong. He never gets his facts right on his numbers. I think he hallucinates when it comes to many of the adjustments that are taking place in our economy. We know what his real game is. He wants to go back to the old days of the early '80s: tax, spend and run up the debt. Those are the days that Manitobans do not want anymore. They want balanced budgets. They want us to start paying down the debt. They want a responsible government, unlike they saw in the early 1980s under the NDP.

Mr. Sale: Last year his surplus was \$157 million and he projected only \$48 million. He was wrong last year; we were right last year, and we are going to be right again this year, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister commit today to using properly revised 1996-97 revenue estimates in his Budget Address tomorrow, so that Manitobans can judge for themselves whether or not the budget truthfully reflects Manitoba's real financial situation?

Mr. Stefanson: I assure all members of this House that the budget presented tomorrow will truthfully reflect Manitoba's financial and economic situation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Stefanson: What members opposite seem to forget—they now are pleased to stand up and talk about our strong economy and the job growth and the manufacturing investments and so on. One of the main contributing factors to all of that is we stopped the massive deficits being run under the NDP. We stopped the quadrupling of the debt that happened under the NDP. Our debt servicing costs for the first time in many years are actually going down, Madam Speaker. Those are all part and parcel of the reasons that interest rates are as low as they are today and our economy is performing as well as it is today.

Personal Care Homes Public Inquiry

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, if they ever do a sequel to the “On the Take” book on the Mulroney government, it will be the Filmon administration in Manitoba where political favouritism and cronyism runs to the core of this government.

Nothing could be more obscene than what we see in the personal care homes where we are being deluged with calls by people who are disgusted that while their personal care home private operators have given \$50,000 to the Conservative Party, they had to scrape

for the most basic supplies. They are saying what we are saying, and I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), because he has to be accountable to those patients, why will he not do the right thing, ignore his political friends and call a public inquiry into the terrible situation in many of those private nursing care homes?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Over the last number of days in which this has been discussed, what we have seen is one exaggeration upon another exaggeration upon another. Today, where we hear about hundreds or many, many phone calls coming to the opposition, I can tell you the number of complaints or calls that we have had in my office certainly nowhere mirror that that is happening. Madam Speaker, as I have said, one exaggeration after another.

An inquest has been called by the Chief Medical Officer with respect to the incident that occurred some time ago. Part of that mandate is to look into a number of these issues, and we will await—I await with great interest—the results of that inquiry.

Mr. Ashton: As a final supplementary, Madam Speaker, what does it take for this government to understand the problem? They have received literally dozens of letters; we have raised this issue in Question Period. When will this Premier (Mr. Filmon) say no to his political friends and do the right thing, call a public inquiry that will look at everything including the increasing role of privatization to benefit the friends of this Conservative government?

Mr. Praznik: Now we are getting down to some facts. We are getting dozens of letters. Well, I can tell the member we get dozens of letters in the course of a year about complaints about nonproprietary care homes, public care homes, care homes run by nonprofit organizations. And, no, I am not denying there are problems. There are problems that happen from time to time in the system; they are investigated. If there are problems with management in a facility or the delivery of service, the department works hard to correct those to ensure that people are safe and secure. But if you use the logic of the member for Thompson, it should mean we should take over all the nonproprietary, all the ones that are run by organizations for which there are dozens of letters too, Madam Speaker. Silly.

Grade 12 Mathematics Examination Contingency Plans

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): In January this year there was a blizzard in parts of Manitoba, just as there was last year. Students on both occasions were faced with the unfairness of having some students write an exam in Grade 12 and others who were marked on a completely different basis because they were not able to take the exam.

I wonder if the minister could tell us why it is that she learned nothing from last year's experience. Why was there no contingency plan for weather conditions in Manitoba, and could she tell us what contingency plan she has for next year's blizzard?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): We have in the course of bringing in examinations written eight examinations in January over the course of the year since 1992. We had last year, with the English language arts exams, a small number that could not write it. We put in place a contingency plan which was the backup plan in consultations with superintendents and the field which was acceptable to the field and is modelled on other places in Canada, that being that if students did not get to write the provincial exam because of weather, their provincial mark would apply on the report card. That is the same model used in Alberta, for example, where if less than 25 percent did not write the exam, the provincial mark applies.

We have never had that large a number. This year we had 19.5 percent of students not able to write the math exam, and the procedure that was in place last year was the procedure to be used again this year. Unfortunately, some students did not do well on that exam, causing concern in divisions, so we are preparing an alternate method of how to display those marks for this year only and that will be provided to the field very shortly.

Fairness

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the same minister explain why she has institutionalized unfairness in the Grade 12 exams by providing for some students to be marked on a different basis and as

well as having institutionalized the unfairness in having summer school students not write the exam at all, ever?

* (1410)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I indicate to the member that we are not instituting unfairness as she implies or as she states. She does not imply it, she states it. We are following a format that is available in other provinces. We have already indicated that next year we will be preparing backup exams so that, in the event that a student cannot write an exam, the first day of clear weather an alternate exam can be written.

The exam results here in Manitoba have provided us with invaluable information. The test results we had last year indicated to us that problem solving was an area that needed to be worked upon; ergo, we were able to do that this year. Those kinds of pieces of information will help ensure the raising of standards.

I know the member is philosophically opposed to standards. These problems that she is identifying are not insurmountable problems. They are easily resolved, and we will continue to work to ensure that standards and assessments in Manitoba become the norm rather than the exception she would like them to be.

Dental Services—The Pas Income Assistance Recipients

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my questions are directed at the Minister of Health. Just before the last election, Dr. Postl completed and released a report, The Health of Manitoba's Children. This government immediately shelved that report even though it contained several important recommendations.

The dentists in The Pas right now are refusing to see clients who are on social assistance. The majority of those clients are from Easterville, Moose Lake, Cormorant and Grand Rapids, and they are Metis people, aboriginal people.

My question to the minister is what is the minister prepared to do in order that social assistance clients

from those communities can continue to receive dental services just like everybody else does?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for The Pas because it is one of great concern to him and his constituents, as it is to us on this side of the House. From what I understand in information provided to me by my colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) and from what I know of this particular issue, there is currently a fee dispute going on between those dentists or in their association and the department who supplies or pays for that—I believe that is the Department of Family Services—and so alternative provision of care has been arranged through Flin Flon. Regrettably, I appreciate the distance involved but what we are really talking about here is a fee dispute, and I hope it can be resolved in short order.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if he is aware that those social assistance clients who are not able to see the dentist in The Pas are being transported to Flin Flon where they are able to see the dentist, and the transportation costs are being covered by Family Services. In a majority of the cases, the costs that are being borne by social services to transport these patients to Flin Flon and back are in fact more than what it would have cost to see the dentist in The Pas. It does not make sense to us.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the comments of the member for The Pas, and, needless to say, it is something that does not particularly make sense on the surface of it. I understand from the Minister of Labour as well that the dispute is a province-wide dispute, but it was only these particular dentists in The Pas who refused to continue to provide service. So although it has caused great inconvenience for his constituents there, it is a provincial matter. Those are the three doctors, I understand, who have refused to provide the service.

The settlement of the issue, needless to say, and I am sure the member appreciates this, cannot be done on an individual community or dentist basis but has to be resolved between the department, the government and the association for the province as a whole.

Mr. Lathlin: My last question to the Minister of Health is why has he not done anything, because I understand this arrangement stopped quite awhile ago? Could he advise the Assembly as to whether those discussions are going on right now, and when might we expect an agreement to be reached between the Manitoba Dental Association and his government?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as the member may appreciate, this is a particular matter between the Department of Family Services and the Dental Association for the provision of care to social allowance recipients for dental services. It is not one that the Department of Health is directly involved in. I would hope that this arrangement or a suitable agreement can be reached as soon as possible, but it is a provincial-wide issue and the only three dentists who have refused to provide service are, regrettably, in The Pas. I understand, as the member has pointed out, that alternative arrangements have been made, I appreciate at great inconvenience to those citizens, while this dispute remains unresolved.

Contaminated Sites Classifications

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are astounded to learn that of over 1,100 contaminated sites, only 20 are going to be listed as contaminated in the government's new registry for contaminated sites. Also concerning is the fact that there are merely guidelines to delineate these contaminated sites.

I want to ask the Minister of Environment, why is it that there are no regulations being brought forward to include these, and why, even further, were these categories not stipulated in the legislation that was passed in the former session?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, we would be extremely concerned about any contaminated site which posed a hazard to our health, our safety or our environment. I think it must be noted that after many, many years of the regime that did not adequately deal with this issue, we have brought to the public of Manitoba contaminated sites remediation legislation which is a result of a process that has involved stakeholders and those

responsible for the contamination, those who can assist in remediating that contamination. We have a much better scenario today than we have ever had, and for that Manitoba has been singled out perhaps internationally but certainly across this country for recognition.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, given that staff in the department claim that this new form of having only 20 contaminated sites highlighted as contaminated sites will allow a focus of staff resources in the department, and I know from personal experience in Transcona that the Domtar site has had as many as 15 staff on a technical advisory committee, how many staff in his department are going to be responsible for following these 20 sites that are in the top 20 of those more than 1,100 contaminated sites?

Mr. McCrae: I will make that information available to the honourable member. I have passed on to officials working on discussions related to the Domtar matter my wish that the matter be brought to a satisfactory resolution very soon. This matter has been going on for a long, long time.

The honourable member failed in her question to give credit to the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) for having brought to us the contaminated sites legislation that we have which is a model for everyone in this country to emulate.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on the motion proposed by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), standing in the name of the honourable member for Dauphin, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to just quickly conclude the statements that I started yesterday. Yesterday I was annoyed as I read through the Speech from the Throne at the way

that the government hypocritically spoke in glowing terms of partnerships with our aboriginal people in this province, and then especially when you consider the absolute awful record that this government has with native people in the province of Manitoba. I just want to point out that on page 7 in the Speech from the Throne, the government talks about working within a spirit of partnership. They talk about a new co-operative approach, a new co-operative partnership with aboriginal Manitobans which is, in my opinion, absolutely hypocritical given their record from the past.

As an example, I want to point out that in 1991 the programs at Keewatin Community College, a college which exists in The Pas and serves our native communities in the North and people who want to go for training in different trades from the North at Keewatin, at KCC, that almost \$11 million was cut from that community college, an important part of helping aboriginal Manitobans become trained, educated and then return back to their communities to be good, positive role models for the people on their reserves. This government cannot talk about a spirit of partnership on the one hand and then talk about cutting and do the cutting of Keewatin Community College at the same time.

The other form of hypocrisy that I note with this government is when it talks about spirit of co-operation and partnership, the absolutely disastrous response that this government has given to the recommendations from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. This is an Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that I followed very closely in the late 1980s, because I did have the opportunity to speak with Justine Osborne when I taught school at Norway House, and I know the devastating effects that policies endorsed by this government have had on the Osborne family, but in a more general sense, on aboriginal families across Manitoba.

I think that it is absolutely awful that this government is ignoring even recommendation No.1 in the AJI report, and it is absolutely pitiful, the small number of recommendations that this government has actually taken seriously from that report. This government is not being upfront with the aboriginal people of Manitoba. This government is simply toying with people's lives by simply putting nice, fancy words in a throne speech, when you compare it to the record that

this government has had over the years dealing with aboriginal Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I do not hold a lot of hope that this government will actually live up to its rhetoric in this Speech from the Throne in the area of aboriginal people. I hold that possibility out that maybe somehow over there they will develop a sense of a spirit of partnership and co-operation, but, given their record from the past, I cannot see that happening.

I am therefore going to vote against acceptance of this throne speech, and I thank you for allowing me the time to speak briefly on the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of the throne speech.

First of all, though, I would like to welcome back all members of the Legislature, as well as the pages who are a great support and assistance to the members in the Chamber, and also to the Legislative staff and also to welcome the new staff member that we have sitting at the table.

Madam Speaker, I am also very pleased to have the opportunity to confirm again for you my support to you in role of Speaker of this House.

I would like to take a few minutes to speak about Fort Garry constituency and some of the very important activities which are occurring there which I believe are a great credit to the community which has elected me to sit as their member.

I was very pleased to participate in I Love to Read Month in the schools in Fort Garry, particularly as Minister of Culture, because now part of my responsibility is to look very carefully at the support of, at the work of authors, particularly Manitoba authors and Canadian authors. I recently read at Oakenwald School and Crane School, Chancellor and Whyte Ridge for I Love to Read Month. I will be attending Bonnycastle School very shortly. I have really enjoyed being in the classroom with children from kindergarten through Grade 3 and to share with them some of the

wonderful books that are currently out and to be able to leave those behind for their libraries.

I would also like to mention Victoria General Hospital which is the hospital serving the south end of the city of Winnipeg. I recently attended an event for their oncology development fund. This is a fund that was established to help meet the needs of oncology patients and their families. I was very pleased to attend the event. I think that cancer is an illness which affects many individuals and their families and the community at large. It was wonderful to see how people retained such concrete support with the hospital where they had felt that their needs were met in really such an important and personal way.

* (1420)

I gather at that event there was approximately over \$30,000 raised. so I would like to also take a moment to congratulate the organizers of that event. It was very productive for the foundation, and it was also just wonderful fun for people in the community.

I also would like to mention I hosted a meeting in the late fall with members and leaders in our community. I invited teachers, community club presidents, business owners, health care professionals, parent advisory councils and principals. At that meeting, my cabinet and caucus colleagues attended, and it let my community have the opportunity to express their interests and their concerns to my colleagues. They really very, very much enjoyed it, the people of Fort Garry very much enjoyed it. I would like to note also that my colleagues said that they too had felt it was a very helpful opportunity just to be in the community, to have people in the places where they live talk about where government is going, talk about their interests in terms of government direction.

I would also like to say I have had the opportunity to visit personal care homes in my constituency. I visit them regularly at Christmastime, have contact with them at other times of the year, the Fort Garry Care Centre and the Golden Door. I appreciate the opportunity to visit with the residents and also the staff of the personal care homes, because it gives me an opportunity very first-hand to look at, first of all, any of

the issues and have those shared with me but also just to have a sociable time with the residents. I know in some cases many have a lot of visitors, and I know in some cases they do not have very many. So I am usually accompanied by a number of residents of Fort Garry. We visit with the residents, and it is a very important time for us in the year.

In my constituency, there are also a number of community clubs, and I want to acknowledge them and all of the work that they do in the community. I am now minister responsible for recreation, and I have really learned a lot about recreation and wellness and the importance in people's lives. So it now makes it even more important for me to mention the work of the volunteers at our community clubs in the places where we live. They are all run by volunteers and also their programs are run by volunteers. I know they are all preparing now for their spring activities such as soccer and baseball, T-ball, mini-soccer. Over the winter, I have had the opportunity to support many of their community club functions and activities as well, and I wish them continued success. I look forward to being with them.

I have also had the opportunity to visit with a number of exchange students. I am minister now for multiculturalism and my community has twinned or paired with a number of schools in places around the world. When those students come to Manitoba, come to Fort Garry and stay with Fort Garry families, I always have the opportunity to visit with the students and visit with the host students as well. This year I had the opportunity to meet students who were visiting from Japan and students who were visiting from Germany. It has really been a wonderful opportunity to share with them what a great province we live in and also to hear about their homes. I really am very pleased that our schools in Fort Garry take the opportunity to really open the world to our students.

Throughout the year, the churches and community groups in my constituency have hosted teas and craft sales for the benefit of not only our community but a number of Manitobans. I have had the opportunity to attend most of them and felt that, again, I see the community volunteers working very hard in support of initiatives. I think in Manitoba we have always been a

province that has had a wonderful volunteer spirit, and I would like to commend those volunteers whom I have met in my community.

I also attend parent council meetings. I recently attended a parent council meeting at Oakenwald School, was given the opportunity to say a few words, to sit and listen and be a part of that parent council as they were doing their work on behalf of the school. I must say that it was really a great opportunity to see the parent councils in action within the school, to see the wide variety of initiatives that they cover, and to see in action again an initiative put in place by this government. I would also like to mention Ralph Maybank School in my constituency, because they will be celebrating their 40th anniversary this June. It is a great school in a part of my constituency and many people attended Ralph Brown—attended Ralph Maybank; Ralph Brown was visiting here this afternoon—and now their children are attending Ralph Maybank, so great support of the community.

Then the collegiate in my particular area is very, very active in a number of ways, and as Minister of Culture I am really interested again and very specifically in a number of their activities, a great drama club at Vincent Massey. Just to mention, they are presenting “Carousel” this spring.

I also attended the opening of the new agricultural building at the University of Manitoba. The University of Manitoba is in the constituency of Fort Garry, and I was very happy to be there and to see the work that was done, because that building certainly did need that support and it is a great boon to the university.

So my community of Fort Garry has a great deal to offer, not only within its own community but also to the people of Manitoba. We have a number of well-established neighbourhoods and we also have some neighbourhoods that are just beginning. As I mentioned for Ralph Maybank School, I have really noticed in Fort Garry that it is a very, very stable community. A lot of people grew up there. They are back there now raising their families. So I would just like to pay tribute to those people who elected me to this Legislature and to the vibrant community that I represent.

Our throne speech speaks directly to Manitobans. I found it to be a very personable throne speech. It speaks about Manitobans and their economic security and their goals for the future. I also believe that it speaks to women in a number of very significant ways. I am also the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and I would like to acknowledge that we recently held a very successful conference called "Shaking the Tree." Almost 750 women in Manitoba attended that conference.

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

I co-hosted the conference with the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I would like to acknowledge that because I think across this country I do not know of another Premier who has come forward and taken such a genuine and direct interest in the issues that are relating to the women of this province, so I was very pleased to co-host that conference with our Premier.

As I said, over 700 women attended. We covered a wide variety of topics: education and training, Internet seminars, seminars about entrepreneurship, seminars dealing with the very important issue for women of balancing work and family, and we also had an aboriginal women's healing circle. I would just like to say that the feedback from that conference was one in that there were just so many good workshops to go to, people just could not decide, and it seemed to be very, very positive, addressing issues of great importance to women, including their health and economic security.

I would like to mention the directorate briefly now, because the directorate, which is responsible for relating to all parts of government on behalf of the interests of women, has really taken a very, very active part on behalf of women. One initiative that I would like to mention today because it deals with personal safety is one in which this government, through the directorate, partnered with the CIBC, police services—RCMP and Winnipeg police—the Workers Compensation Board, 7-Eleven, and Workplace Safety and Health in the development of a program called Keeping Safe at Work. This initiative is targeted to employees who are working alone as well as to individuals as they travel to and from work. It is a very common-sense approach for employers and employees

to assess their workplace and to maximize their safety to minimize crime, and it is a true partnership program in which the training is done by members of CIBC's workforce all across this province, which has made it a truly provincial program. The feedback from it has been very, very strong in that within a booklet produced for this program it has allowed individuals to do a safety audit of their workplace and to look at any changes that they might have to make both personally in terms of how they work at their workplace and things in which their employers may also be able to help them, a program of partnership that will really, I believe, keep both men and women safe.

I would also like to mention the Training for Tomorrow Scholarship, which was instituted by this government approximately two years ago—I am sorry, maybe three now—and this program is administered through the Women's Directorate. This is aimed at young women who we want to encourage to enter into the workforce in high-demand occupations and occupations which have in the past been considered nontraditional for women. It is aimed at the sciences and the technologies and it offers a \$1,000 scholarship at each of our three community colleges across the province. The occupations, the high-demand occupations, are selected in consultation.

* (1430)

I would like to tell the House that to date 141 scholarships have been awarded of \$1,000 each to young women who are in these two-year programs. This has been a tremendous benefit. I do not think that there has ever been anything that I have done where I have actually had personally handwritten letters directed to me as minister to share with our government about what this has meant to the young women or older women who are returning to the workforce who have received them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also I would like to mention some of the consultation that I have had the opportunity to do as Minister for the Status of Women and that I will be meeting very shortly with what was previously referred to as the Beijing network or UNPAC, which is the group of women, many of whom attended Beijing and who are having taken as their task to look at the issues which were raised at Beijing and to look at how

in fact we are making progress, not only in our city, our province but across this country. Our government is very committed to enhancing the quality of women's lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also, in conclusion like to say that I am very, very pleased to have the opportunity now to be the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and, in that portfolio, I also have responsibility for recreation and wellness. I feel that it is a portfolio in which I am very, very close to the people of Manitoba in a position of responsibility which really defines our identity in Manitoba, and I will certainly be making a commitment to all of the people who worked so hard in that area. It is a privilege to be here as minister, and I really look forward to working very hard with them in the next while.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): In rising to respond to this vacuous throne speech, my attention was caught by the third paragraph. The third paragraph reads: "Canadians everywhere have reason for pride and renewed confidence. After years of difficult but essential adjustment, our economic foundations are being secured . . ." et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what Canadians? Which Canadians? Well, capital has done very, very well. Bondholders, corporate bondholders, holders of even Manitoba bonds have done very, very well. Their holdings have increased by multiples of percentage points, far above the yield on the bond. Holders of capital have done extremely well.

Corporate profits have reached record levels again after falling through the floor in the recession of '91-92. Corporate profits have done very, very well. Bank profits, as everyone knows, are up over \$6 billion. The Bell Canada enterprise holding corporation profits exceeded a billion dollars. In overall terms, the Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson), who, unfortunately, I guess, has to be elsewhere, is not able to be here to understand that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we should not be referring to whether a member is absent or present

within the Chamber at this time. The honourable member for Crescentwood, to continue.

Mr. Sale: Thank you for that reminder, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, the Finance minister persists in putting forward the notion that his revenues are rising but very slightly, or perhaps even falling. Yet to date this year his corporate income tax revenue is up 22 percent over last year, 22 percent over the same period last year.

So capital has done very well, bondholders obviously as holders of capital, rentier, have done very well, corporate profits have done very well, but Canadians? What Canadians? Aboriginal people?

My colleague the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) has spent a great deal of time in the last little while with the people of Shamattawa. The people of Shamattawa live in shockingly bad Third World conditions, while this government plays political football with their human rights and human needs, saying, oh, they are a federal government responsibility. They are citizens of this country. They are not a football to be traded between levels of government.

If the government does not care about their human needs, if this government is so meanspirited that it does not care about the real needs of the aboriginal people of Shamattawa, at least let it be selfish, as it so often is as a government, and acknowledge that not meeting their needs costs us all dearly in dollar terms because it costs us in lost productivity, it costs us in health care, it costs us in social costs of all kinds.

But that is an inadequate basis for making a judgment about the needs of human beings. Let us hear no more from members opposite that some group or other is somebody else's responsibility. They are not chattels. They are not serfs. They are citizens; citizens of Manitoba, citizens of Canada. They ought not to have to live, 850 of them, in 150 houses. They ought not to have to live without toilets, or with homes that breed all sorts of manner of illness, particularly respiratory illness, because of desperate overcrowding. They ought not to have to live with children who see no hope in their future and harm themselves more often than any other group of children in Canada.

Aboriginal people are not even counted when it comes to unemployment in our country. It may not make any difference in Ontario if you do not count aboriginal people, because in Ontario they are only a fraction of the employment workforce of that province, less than 1 percent, but in Manitoba Status native people comprise some 6 percent to 7 percent of the workforce, and they comprise 25 percent of the labour market entrance in the next decade—25 percent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the unemployment rate among aboriginal people, Status aboriginal people, is over 50 percent, 80 percent on many reserves. If it was only 50 percent, which in itself is a shocking and tragic legacy of a century of oppression, if it was only 50 percent, then Manitoba's real unemployment rate is not 6.7 percent; it is well over 11 percent.

So it is no wonder that out there in our community people do not feel the buoyancy that this government keeps talking about as part of our economy, because we are carrying even if you just count the truly unemployed—and you do not add those who are underemployed, and you do not add the 3 percent of our workforce who has not rejoined the labour market since the 1980s because they have given up, what are euphemistically called discouraged workers—even if you do not add the part-time workers, some 70 percent of whom are men, want full-time work but cannot get it; even if you do not count the part-time women, some 40 percent of whom want full-time work and cannot get it; even if you do not count the number of young people who in previous recessions came back to the workforce when things got better, even if you do not count them—we are still looking at 11 percent to 12 percent unemployment in this province, not 6.7 percent. If you do count those groups, the real unemployment and underemployment rate in this province is over 20 percent.

So are aboriginal people some of those Canadians who have reason for pride and renewed confidence? It saddens me to say that I do not think so. I do not think so.

* (1440)

What about children, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Do children have reason for pride and renewed confidence

in the work of our federal and provincial governments, in particular, the provincial government? In the three years that the current Liberal federal government has been in power, a government that is committed by United Nations protocol to abolishing child poverty by the millennium, got it backwards and has added 40 percent more children to the ranks of poor children in poor families, and this government has followed suit.

With the kinds of cuts that it pursued in last year's budget to food allowances for infants under one year of age, with cuts it pursued in other budgets to child care, effectively preventing many single parents from joining the workforce, because they could not afford \$2.40 a day to pay their daycare fees, this government has systemically, deliberately and knowingly increased poverty in this province over the last few years to the point where many of those poor are increasingly unable to meet their most basic needs for food. So we see food banks continuing to have to try and scratch enough food together to feed some 16,000 families in Winnipeg every month.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I just wanted to stop the member before he got into the next area. I hate to interrupt you.

Could I have the honourable members who are carrying on their conversation at the back of the Chamber at this time to do so in the loge or out in the hall. It is a little bit interrupting. Thank you.

The honourable member for Crescentwood, to continue.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the recent federal budget we saw a commitment, a very misleading commitment, attempting to reduce poverty among families who have children and are now working but are falling below the poverty line. I have been around public policy now for almost 30 years, and I have never seen a more hypocritical or misleading set of statements than the federal Minister of Finance made in announcing his so-called child poverty initiative which was applauded by members opposite as though there were something new here.

In last year's federal budget—one year ago—the Minister of Finance promised that the working income supplement would rise by \$250 this year starting July 1, 1997, and a further \$250 next year, July 1, 1998. This year, when he rose on his speech, he did not have the forthright honesty to tell Canadians that he was scrapping that proposal. He did not get up and say I am taking that \$250 a year away from all those poor families and I am adding back something for poor children. No, he tried to present it as though every one of those dollars for the poor children were new dollars, but they were not. They were not.

The result of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that poor families with one child are actually going to be \$145 a year worse off because Mr. Martin stood up two weeks ago than they would have been if he had not stood up. Next year that same family, a poor family with one child, will be \$395 a year worse off than they would have been if Mr. Martin had simply left last year's budget in place. Poor families with two children by next July will have the grand sum of \$10 a year more than they would have had if he did not stand up in February and address the issue of child poverty. We need Mr. Martin not to stand up and address the issue of child poverty, because every time he stands up he makes it worse. We need him to let people get work, to let Canadians get back to contributing to building this country, to let them have a fair tax system. Yet this government stood and applauded Mr. Martin's hypocritical, dishonest initiative. So did children do better in this budget? No, I do not think so. In this throne speech? I do not think so.

I want to look at what has happened with education over the time that this government has been in power. In 1988, the special levy paid by families on their homes and businesses, on their properties, was at \$221 million, not a lot of change over the previous few years but \$221 million. By this year, nine years later, it is at \$343 million, a 55 percent increase from a government that has not raised taxes. [interjection] No, you did not raise taxes, you just exported the tax cost to school divisions who were forced to cut their spending by your \$43 million cut, by your minus two, minus two, minus two, zero, zero. As your Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has said, your total funding to education has grown. That is true. It has grown 9 percent over that same period of time 1988 to 1996-97; it has grown 9

percent. Unfortunately, during that same period of time, inflation has been 30 percent, so you have fallen behind inflation by 21 percent in your grants.

School divisions have been put in a position of either penalizing children and falling in line with your meanspirited and draconian cuts or raising property taxes, property taxes which you further exacerbated by cutting the property tax credit by \$75. So, in other words, you have increased the special levy by \$120 million, \$122 million, and you have cut your property tax relief program by \$75 a household. But you have not increased taxes.

An Honourable Member: No, we have not.

Mr. Sale: No, you have just misled Manitobans into thinking that you have not increased taxes, but they know better because they are paying those property taxes. Every time they write a cheque out, they know what you have done.

We also, this past week, saw the real colour of the commitment of the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) to children when she stood up and called food for hungry children and nursery programs for disadvantaged children costly enhancements. Costly enhancements. Yet this caucus opposite listened to the Perry High/Scope presentation—at least those who are interested in children did—and what did Mr. Schweinhart tell you? He told you that targeted nursery programs had an enormous cost benefit. The American figures are about \$7 to \$1. Every dollar spent results in \$7 fewer being spent down the line.

Now this is not a fly-by-night evaluation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not some cockamamy group that does not know what they are talking about. This is one of the longest longitudinal studies in history, 27 years funded by the Ford Foundation to follow these children and find out what happened to them in their adult years.

And what did they find out? They found out that felony offences were cut in half. They found out that more people owned their own homes. They found out—and this should appeal to the right-wingers on the other side—that family values were enhanced, marriages were more stable, jobs were held at higher wages and for longer times. They found out that virtually every

indicator of human well-being was improved for those children.

* (1450)

Were those children easy kids to deal with? No, they were not. These were, first of all, mostly black children in a mostly white community who were very much at risk because they were single-parent kids, they were kids in deep poverty. And yet this program had a seven to one cost-benefit analysis.

That Education minister (Mrs. McIntosh) stood up, a former teacher, and indicated that early childhood education and feeding starving kids was a costly enhancement. What does she want? Does she want them to sleep through class? Because hungry kids do not learn very well.

Those of you who are parents—and I guess most of you are—know that if you have got kids at 5:30 in the afternoon who are really hungry, it is pretty hard to deal with problems. They need a little snack; they need a little food. Those are well-fed ordinary kids. What would it be like for you to have your children go to school every day and have to say to them, I am sorry, I hope they have food at school because we do not have any in the house because our food allowance ran out two weeks ago? And you begrudge those children food. You begrudge the three-year-olds the opportunity to attain a reasonable level of child development. We have teachers here, former principals of high schools in Minnedosa, people who know better, and yet their Education minister calls these costly enhancements. What a sad, sad state of affairs. So were children among those Canadians everywhere who had pride and renewed confidence? Not a lot of children, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What about ordinary families? What about ordinary families in Manitoba? Well, The Globe and Mail reports what Statistics Canada reports and what we all know, that in the past eight years since 1989 the disposable income of ordinary Canadians has fallen 8.4 percent. The disposable income—that is their income after taxes, after all the fees and charges—the money that puts food on the table, the money that goes out and purchases real goods and services in the economy has

fallen by 8.4 percent. So where are those good times, those happy times that are just around the corner for Canadian families?

Manitoba families lost 8.4 percent real income over the last eight years, so are they some of these Canadians who have reason for pride and renewed confidence? What kind of confidence would you have if corporate profits tripled from their low and your income went down 8.4 percent? What kind of confidence would you have in the fairness of your government in their commitment to human need if the money that you used to put food on your children's table was worth 8.4 percent less after all these cuts and all these promises than it was eight years before? So for ordinary Manitobans, the throne speech does not reflect reality.

Let me expand on the kind of costs that families have been faced with over this last period of time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1988-89 Manitobans paid \$1.03 billion in income taxes. This is according to Public Accounts. In 1996-97 they will pay about \$1.38 billion in taxes, \$350 million more than they did in 1988-89, put another way, 38 percent more than they did in 1988-89, inflation, 30 percent; tax growth, 38 percent; after-tax income, a fall of 8.4 percent. This government is taking 8 percent more out of the pockets of all taxpaying Manitobans in real terms than it was in 1989-90. In real terms, it is taking 8 percent more out of Harry's pocket and Jim's pocket and my pocket, George's pocket and the Deputy Speaker's pocket than it was in 1989-90. Stats Canada and your own Public Accounts make the case. So when you say you have not raised taxes, you are misleading Manitobans. [interjection]

The honourable member for Lakeside, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), who is a businessman and knows very well what is going on here, knows what is going on is that his federal cousins, the Mulroney tribe, managed to cut the ability of taxes to deal with inflation, right? You deindex personal exemptions by 3 percent. So what is going on over the last eight years? Bracket creep, that is what is going on. This is bracket creep with a vengeance, 8.4 percent real purchasing power lost, 8.4 percent real dollars more in your treasury over that last eight years, mostly bracket creep, some growth.

You basically have taken Manitoba's income taxpayers to the cleaners while telling them that you have not raised taxes; \$350 million more in income tax will be paid this year than it was in 1988-89, and 8 percent of the income taxes paid are new real dollars being paid by Manitobans into your treasury while you sit and deny that you have raised taxes.

You did not need to raise taxes because Mr. Wilson, Mr. Mazankowski deindexed exemptions, so taxes do not have to be raised. They just go up by themselves automatically, and you reap the benefit while telling people you have not raised taxes. What a sham. Ordinary wage earners have not done well under this government's stewardship or, rather, I should say the lack of stewardship.

I want to talk about the growth of real families' poverty levels under this government. In 1988 families headed by somebody 24 years of age or under were in poverty a lot of the time, in fact 34 percent of the time. Now, that is shocking, that is not acceptable, not a record that I would be proud of. But by 1995, the most recent data available from Stats Canada, this already shocking level had grown to 43 percent. More than four out of ten families headed by someone under 24 live under the poverty line. It is interesting, this pattern continues as you move up the age groupings, so that family heads 25 to 34, poverty levels have grown from 14 percent to 18 percent; family heads 35 to 44, grown from 10 to 15 percent. The only ones who have done better are seniors. Their poverty levels have fallen from 12.8 percent to 7.8 percent.

An even more striking statistic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and one that stands behind a great deal of the social unrest and the crime, the breakdown, the mental illness, the suicide rate is the fact that in 1988 single individuals were poor half the time. That is, 50 percent of all unattached individuals under the age of 24 live below the poverty line, half of all unattached individuals, a shockingly bad state of affairs, because what it means essentially is that they were not joining the workforce then either.

* (1500)

How have they fared some seven years later? Well, tragically, 66 percent of all single individuals under 24

are now below the poverty line. That is a 32 percent gain in poverty under your government's tutelage for single individuals, 32 percent gain. I would not call it a gain, I would call it a loss, but that is what you have produced. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 32 percent more young Manitobans live in poverty than when you took office, and you tell us that Canadians should be proud and have renewed confidence.

We have created in this country two societies. Young families, young, unattached individuals are poor, and those who are baby boomers, just before the baby boomers, have done very well. You have created a chasm in our society and the chasm is marked by hopelessness, it is marked by increased violent crime, it is marked by family breakdown, it is marked by people who have no real sense that this economy offers them anything.

Let me look at what happened to ordinary Manitobans and their employment during this period of time. These numbers go from 1989 to 1996 and they are Statistics Canada Catalogue 71001, if the Minister of Agriculture, who does not like numbers and often seems to suggest that I do not use them very well, I will just give him that catalogue reference, so he can look them up.

Agriculture, which is his portfolio, has dropped from 40,000 to 39,000, not much of a change, but not the kind of growth that they boast about, in fact, no growth at all. Other primary industries, heavy industries in effect, smelters, et cetera, dropped too from 9,000 to 8,000.

Manufacturing, now this government is so proud of its manufacturing record, and indeed manufacturing values have gone up tremendously, a very large increase in the value of shipments and a large increase in the export of manufactured goods.

But employment? I do not think so. Employment has fallen from 64,000 in 1989 to 62,000 today. Not a big drop, but hardly the kind of increase that you would believe would be the case if you listened to members opposite bragging about the manufacturing sector. What they brag about is what I spoke about in the beginning, that is, that capital has done very well. The owners have done very well. The machine makers have

done very well. The computer manufacturers have done very well. But their employees have not done very well at all. They employ fewer people; they make more goods. That is great. Productivity has risen. Is that not a good thing? Yes, of course, it is a good thing.

The question for governments is, what do we do with that increased productivity? Do we use it to marginalize people? Do we use it to punish people's wages and drive them down? What do we use that tremendous gain in productivity that the manufacturing sector has seen, that the agribusiness sector has seen? What do we do with that productivity? That is the question that governments have had to answer over and over again.

Tory governments always answer by saying, give it to capital; give it to capital and capital will do well with it. They will do well with it for themselves.

What about construction? Well, construction is up a thousand in that seven-year period, from 22,000 to 23,000. What about transportation? Communication? The government stands up and brags about their call centres, tells us about the Manitoba Telephone System and its wonderful way of doing business. They have only laid off 1,300 people so far. I guess there are more to come. But that particular sector of which the government loves to brag, 51,000 employed in 1989; 48,000 in 1996, a fall again, 6 percent.

Trade? Trade, this burgeoning industry, the source of all these wonderful figures, 90,000 employed in 1989; 87,000 today, no gain, a 4 percent loss.

What about finance, industry, real estate? Great growth in the financial services sector, big growth in Investors, big growth in Great-West Life. No? That is not true. The financial insurance and real estate sector is exactly the same as it was in 1989, or 28,000 in both cases, no change.

Public Administration? Well, this government delights in laying people off, and that shows up a bit. In 1989, there were 39,000 in the public sector, that is, the direct public sector, not the indirect. It does not count all of the indirect public sector, but the direct ones. It does not count Hydro and Telephone, for

example, 39,000 in 1989. By 1995 there were 35,000, or 4,000 fewer jobs. Well, is that not something to be proud of, 4,000 fewer taxpayers, 4,000 fewer customers, 4,000 fewer citizens with stable, solid incomes, 4,000 fewer citizens to contribute to the stability and future of communities? And they brag about that.

So where is the good news? Well, the good news is in the service sector. That is not particularly surprising, that is where it is, a gain from 169,000 to 192,000, or 27,000 more jobs, all in the service sector, a very large proportion of them part time and a very large proportion of those minimum wage.

I would challenge members opposite to go and work in a telemarketing centre. Just take a few days of your holidays and apply to work there and see how long you think you would survive selling widgets to people who do not want them, interrupting their dinner hour, interrupting their family time and saying, do you have a couple of minutes. I want to pitch you with something. See how long you would pick up that phone from your computer screen again and make yet another call to someone who has been interrupted three times already that night.

That is why in one telemarketing centre in this city they have a smoking room and a crying room. The crying room is for people who get stressed out because they get abused on their phones by people who are just fed up with being bothered for solicitations they do not want and do not need.

Five thousand of those jobs are here, and some of them are good jobs. The CN centre, for example, because it is doing outbound calling and performing a real service for customers, I think is a very good telemarketing centre. It is really doing a different kind of work than the schlock telemarketers who are selling widgets. But many of the jobs are terrible jobs. The turnover rate is over 20 percent a month. People do not stay at these jobs for very long.

Now there is nothing wrong in an economy with having job entry level jobs, nothing wrong at all, but if that is all you have, then you have a job entry economy, and that indeed is shown by the fact that the average family wage, the weekly wage package, has fallen by 8

percent in purchasing power since this government took office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the question of language. This government has a fixation with management gurus. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) was so impressed with the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People that he got copies for everybody. I am sure everybody has been told to read Gaebler's book, *Reinventing Government*, and the language of those soothsayers that the government loves is all the language of the consumer, all the language of the corporate culture—you are my client; I am your customer.

They want to recast all government departments into having business plans. In fact, all government departments have been told to have business plans for this current fiscal year, one of their new initiatives, and all government departments are going to identify their customers, their clients.

An Honourable Member: Indeed, we will.

Mr. Sale: Indeed, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says he will, but I ask the Minister of Agriculture, when he has to deal with people who cannot afford his services, what are they then? What are they then? Are they still consumers but they are failed consumers? Is that what they are?

* (1510)

Governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not about consumer, corporate, client relationships. Governments, I was taught in school, are about citizenship. They are about rights. They are about responsibilities. They are not about corporate relationships, individual consumer relationships. I am not a customer of the Department of Highways when I go to get my driver's licence, damn it, I am a citizen. I have rights; I have responsibilities. I am not a customer.

Now the government may think that is just a quibble, just a play on words, but it is not, because when a child that is disabled has no resources, he cannot be a customer because he has nothing to buy with. When a family that has run out of savings, run out of

opportunity, needs help, they cannot be customers. They cannot consume anymore. All they can fall back on is their role as citizen.

When Mr. Penner's son was injured in a terrible accident and thankfully will recover, we understand, he did not have to prove at the hospital he was taken to that he could pay for care. He was a citizen, not a customer, not a client, and when you construct reality as though all relationships in society can be consumed under the rubric of customer, you debase the very thing you represent in this Chamber, that is, the notion of citizens who have rights and responsibilities in whose service you were elected. You were not elected to preside over consumption. You were not elected to preside over client relationships. You were elected to serve Manitobans as servants of the people, not as their employers, not as their contractor.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saddened to respond to a throne speech as negatively as I have, but there is nothing in it in which I could respond positively. Thank you.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): It is a privilege to once again participate in a throne speech debate. I certainly want to, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, extend to our Speaker our and my continued confidence in her stewardship of the House, and to wish her well as she presides over our deliberations in this Chamber. I also welcome the association of several new colleagues on Executive Council, and I am certainly looking forward to working with them in the efforts and the ongoing dedication to trying to provide the kind of direction, leadership that people in Manitoba expect and are deserving of expecting from their governments.

As my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) did yesterday, I would certainly also want to acknowledge the privilege of having worked with two of my continuing colleagues in the Chamber who have left the Treasury benches. I refer, of course, to the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger).

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few traditional and expected opening comments—you know, actually I was not really preparing myself to respond to any

particular speech that I have listened to during the course of this debate, but it so happens that my few comments that I will make will tie into the last speaker, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). He read us a bunch of numbers, and recognized that the world is changing, and the numbers portray that change nowhere more so dramatically than in the field of agriculture that I have the great privilege of presiding over as minister. I take every opportunity I have to address any audience and particularly an audience that is heavily biased towards our urban side of it, by reminding all of us, and it has to be done, that only 3 percent of our population are engaged in food production, engaged in active farming. So, if I were to follow in the lines of the former speaker, my colleague the member for Crescentwood, I would stand up and read a statistic that would show prior to the Second World War, the turn of the century, there were X number of farmers engaged in farming production, whereas today there are so few.

Twenty years ago we have 5,000 individual farmers producing hogs. Today we have 1,600. They are producing five times as many hogs. At the turn of the century my grandfather farmed and planted 1,600 acres of wheat in the fertile soils of the south Ukraine and southern Russia north of the Black Sea by employing 45 teams of horses, goodness knows how many drovers. It took him a month to plant it and a month to harvest it with, I am sure, 30 or 40 people. Now that same amount of land is planted and harvested in a matter of two or three days. So this is the changing world around us. It is the challenge that we have, the challenge that we have to accept in government to do our very best to try to figure out ways of providing and finding acceptable employment, acceptable activity, if you like, for our citizens. That is a challenge, but that is not something that you can point to a particular government or you can point to a particular party or platform on. It is something that is occurring everywhere in the developed western world. The phenomenon of a recovery does not necessarily mean a recovery in jobs, although Manitoba does exceedingly well by any measure of calculation when viewed against our sister jurisdictions in our other provinces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always enjoy participating in these debates. I will look forward to having another occasion to expound more specifically on the views and changes that are taking place in agriculture and how

this now a very identifiable and visible minority group of people that are responsible for our food production needs the attention of all of us in this Chamber and in our society for an understanding about the important role that food production continues to be, not just for ourselves, but for our economy, and if you want to put it on more humanitarian grounds, as well, for those all too many who cannot provide sufficient food for themselves and rely on countries like Canada and others to provide badly needed assistance in time of extreme stress and duress. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ten more minutes? Oh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought you said—it shames me to tell you, but even a long-time member like myself, we become so programmed. You know, I get little notes that say how long I can speak and I have not got my glasses on, so I miscalculated and was about to leave this House bereft of a few more moments of thought.

* (1520)

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I want to expound that one theory because food production is the most important activity known to man. It is not just a question of food production; it is the ability to produce surplus food. I mean for 2 million years that mankind has roamed around the world, it was only when we were able to start producing surpluses that civilization started to appear. We spent most of our background, most of our time, depending upon one's point of view, Darwinian or not, that we were fully occupied in providing food for our immediate selves and family, or clans, as they were then known very often. It was a labour from morning to dusk to hunt berries, to dig for roots, and even as we got a little more sophisticated and used a few crude tools, took on the hunting of some animals for higher protein value foods, but nothing developed for the first 2,990,000 years of our existence until somewhere in the year 6,000 or 7,000 B.C. we taught ourselves the ability to create surplus foods, so for the first time some members of our society could do different things other than hunting and gathering for their food. From that came governments, from that came philosophers, from that came teachers, and we lose sight of that, Mr. Acting Speaker. There would be no debate about

health care. There would be no debates about education. There would be no lawyers in our society, and some may approve of that, if we farmers did not produce a surplus of food. If each and every one of us had to be out there providing the food that our families and we ourselves needed, we would not be doing anything else, and we would not be debating anything in this Chamber.

So it is this capacity of agriculture to produce surplus foods that enables societies to develop as we have. Mr. Acting Speaker, what a tremendous joy quite frankly and a privilege it is that we live in a country and a province like Manitoba that produces that surplus food in such an abundant fashion. Yes, there are high risks to it. Prairie agriculture in this zone of the world has its risks, frost, floods, but year after year we produce in our diversified form all manner of foods that satisfy all our needs, and then provides us with the kind of income dollars that we all want and need for the maintenance of our schools, for the maintenance of our hospitals, for the maintenance of all those things that cities expect us to do as government. Not in its totality of course, but in view of our size—remember we are only 3 percent of the population—we make an inordinate contribution to the well-being of our province alongside the manufacturing sector, alongside the resource sector, like forestry, or oil and gas.

Those 3 percent of our population that till the fields, that plow and plant the crops, and hopefully they will be doing that, and I still am optimistic, Mr. Acting Speaker, that despite the advancing time in March, despite the amount of snows that are still out in the fields, that perhaps our farmers will have a more normal year, even in the Red River Valley. It would be my hope for them, because I know that if given half a chance, they will once again produce in great abundance the food stuffs that we require, the food stuffs that help make my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) bring in the kind of document that I am sure he is going to bring in tomorrow. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to begin my speech by thanking the most senior member of this House for his two-part speech. I have seen him give many a speech before, and I know he has been on the receiving end of those notes which ask us

to wrap up a little bit earlier than we might anticipate. I think that is probably the first time in his career in this Legislature he has actually had the luxury of being told to speak longer. So I really appreciate it and he is someone I have a great deal of respect for. I always listen very attentively to his comments.

I want to make a few brief remarks before the main part of my speech, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I want to reflect on the fact that this is really the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in debate since the developments of last year at the end of November. I hope members opposite will respect the fact that there was much that I would have liked to have said November 27 and November 28 in this Legislature. While I had the opportunity to speak on a number of incomplete matters of privilege, I want to say on the record that, even though today I am able to stand in my place and speak on behalf of my constituents, the people of Thompson, I want to say that I will never accept what happened on November 27 and November 28. Until we establish in this House that we are not a part-time democracy, that we had the right as members of the Legislature to speak on behalf of our constituents, and every time, the fight to preserve democracy in this Legislature will continue.

I want to say that I have been amazed at what has happened since November 27, November 28. I have been elected five times. I certainly do not have the same level of seniority as the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), but I have been a member of this House for 15 years. I have been in government. I have been in opposition. I say to members opposite who like to talk smugly from the position of the government benches, particularly those who have not been in opposition, it is a luxury because you get a perspective.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I say that because I have never had more people comment on the functioning of this Legislature than I have since November of last year. I go into a corner store and someone says, how about that Speaker, eh? I have people saying, I cannot believe what happened. I have people say, what is going on in the Legislature? I mean, let us face it, there are times when people do not even know we are sitting. I have had people ask me throughout my political career, when are you off to Ottawa, Steve? People get somewhat confused. They have their own lives. They do not

follow the Legislature, but I have never had more people comment on what happened in those final days at the Legislature, and they say the same thing.

I want to say on the record that the people that have raised this with me are not only New Democrats, but I have had people who never support the New Democratic Party, who make that very clear. I have had people come to me, and I know every member of our caucus has had the same thing, people have said, you know, we identify with what you went through, what the government did was wrong, and it should never happen again.

I want to say that, Mr. Acting Speaker, because what I am astounded with is the mentality of members opposite. I must admit I find some irony when I hear people such as the Leader of the Opposition—or the former Leader of the Opposition, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), pardon me, get in his place and say, well, we are only negative. I remember actually one time I was in government, I spoke on the throne speech. You know what I did, I analyzed what the Premier, at the time the Leader of the Opposition, had to say in his throne speech.

I believe there were 136 paragraphs. Mr. Acting Speaker, how many of those paragraphs do you think said anything positive? How many?—135? 134? Well, I am not going to do that, I will be here all day counting down. Six paragraphs said something positive. Two of them were giving greetings to the Speaker of the day; 130 negative paragraphs—six positive, and I say that because when I see that Premier now get up and accuse us of being negative, boy oh boy, he should just reread some of his own speeches.

* (1530)

I mentioned that to the government House leader (Mr. McCrae) a while ago. I must admit he acknowledged that maybe on occasion—[interjection] Oh, the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach). Oh, yes, definitely, I remember some of his speeches. But members on the government side, particularly those who have never been in opposition—I would say you should consider yourself lucky if you have the luxury of going from government to opposition. Many go from government outside of this House. It is a real luxury to

be on both sides. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) knows that, too. He knows full well how the vagaries of elections can result in people being retired early, and I am not talking about Liberal leadership conventions either. I am talking about overall.

But you know, members opposite who have never been in opposition should understand one thing, that this Legislature has 57 members. Regardless of whether we are elected in the governing party or in an opposition party, we have a role to play and part of that role is keeping the government on its toes and providing constructive criticism and making sure they are accountable to the people of Manitoba.

I want to go further because I can live with some of the occasional barbs that go back and forth across this House about being negative. I must admit at times, I wonder if they are going to revive Spiro Agnew's comments. Remember the nattering nabobs of negativism. They have heard that before. I just remind them of one thing. Spiro Agnew, shortly after he used that expression, where did he end up? He ended up in jail. Good role model for the Conservatives, certainly in Saskatchewan probably.

It is amazing, because I watched on the debate on our matter of privilege involving the Speaker—what I found amazing was, government member after government member got up and said, well, we have full confidence in the Speaker. Well, why should they not? Do they have any complaints about what happened last session? They brought in the point of order. The Speaker ruled in their favour. Then our rights on the opposition were denied for two days. That was no difficulty for the government. Of course.

But I say to members opposite, and I give full credit to Albert Driedger, I give full credit to him because he has been on both sides. Do you know what? He first came in in government, he was then in opposition, then he was in government. He has come full circle. And when he said that he could identify with the frustration of opposition members, he spoke a truth that cannot be denied by anyone. I know there are members opposite—[interjection] The member for Roblin-Russell now is saying it is a fabrication. Read the quotes of your colleague.

I say to members opposite, because I know in their heart of hearts there are other members who know that what they did was not right. What is interesting about the member I referenced, he balanced it. He was not exactly complimentary towards what happened in the House from our side as well. That is fair, and I accept his criticism. But for a member of this House who has been in here, been in this for 20 years, I say to members opposite, listen to the words of wisdom.

Respect the fact that, yes, you are happy with what happened. You have no problem with the Speaker. But I say to you, the day that any Speaker of this Legislature cuts your ability to represent your constituents off repeatedly, 18 times in two days on the biggest bill financially in Manitoba history, I want to hear what you have to say. [interjection] The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs wants to talk about who can be trusted here. This is the same minister, and I realize he is new, and he is learning, but he is learning well from his Tory colleagues. He appoints a gaming commission. Who is the chair of the gaming commission? [interjection] Who is the chair, chairman, chairperson, chair, whatever you want to call? Who is it? Well, I want to ask the minister.

Do you know what? On CJOB radio, I was driving back from Gimli at the time. We had a caucus meeting out there. Do you know what I found interesting? He was asked, do you know the politics of these people? Are they card-carrying Tories? Guess what the minister said? Oh, I have no idea. No idea. Actually I cannot get quite that low. I did not mean in the gutter. I was not referencing that. I was talking about the depth of your voice.

Do you know what was interesting? The person he appointed to the gaming commission donated to his campaign, and he expects anyone in this House to believe he did not know he was a Tory. Give me a break.

I remember the days when Tories would appoint Tories, and they would say, yep, they are Tories.

An Honourable Member: And I admitted that.

Mr. Ashton: Oh, you did not. I have the transcript from OB radio. He said, I have no idea if they are card-

carrying Tories. You know, they just happened to be randomly selected Manitobans. We went out on the street, and we said, hey, what about you?

For the gaming commission you had still to use it for patronage appointments. But you had no idea, Mr. Minister, that he gave to your campaign. Well, now we are getting into some rather interesting discussion.

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

Did you get any? [interjection] I ask the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), were you given any campaign contributions? I say to the member for Inkster, do you think it is a coincidence he gave a contribution to the minister's campaign, and the minister then turns around and says, I do not know this person. Oh, I have no idea who he is. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, that the minister knew, and I wish he would have been honest with the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member for coming back through the Chair, but that was exactly what I wanted to remind him. He was starting to lead into debate with individual members. I would appreciate it if he came through the Chair to keep the decorum to a certain level.

The honourable member for Thompson, to continue.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Through you to the minister, the minister knew full well what he was talking about.

But I want to talk about the role of government, and I want to talk about the role of opposition, and I want to talk about the position of the people of Manitoba, because I found the events of last year to be disturbing for a number of reasons. The first one—and I want to put some perspective on what happened with MTS, because this government, the leaps of logic they follow through are just absolutely amazing, a lack of logic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the election campaign in 1995, they said, we have no plans to sell off MTS. Well, it is interesting because I have talked to people at MTS and a number of things have been happening. Basically, I believe that the origins of the decision to sell MTS go back to 1992, and it is interesting because a number of developments confirm this. The reorganization took place and, you know what, they denied it had anything to do with that. Very few people realize too that Bell Canada, Bell Mobility, made an offer for MTS Mobility. They made another offer, about \$180 million, something that the government never ever released, and I think I know why they did not even get in discussion of that offer. They had already made up their mind that they were not interested in an offer for part of MTS but all of it.

Well, it is interesting. April 1995, we all know the government comes in—well, they were going to save the Jets. They were going to do a number of things. They also were not going to sell off MTS. Well, when did the first meeting take place? When did the first meeting take place? It is very interesting because basically in the summer, in June of 1995, the process started. In July—and this, by the way, was put on the record in a very interesting article titled Gundy the main operator on Manitoba Tel, Financial Post, January 25. It is amazing we have to read the Financial Post to actually find out what happened with the sale of our phone company. Well, on July 6, Mr. Fraser, the MTS chairman—Tom Stefanson was there as well—met, and they had another meeting July 18 with Mr. Findlay, the Minister responsible for MTS, July 6. In September, the province chose three advisors—Wood Gundy, RBC Dominion Securities, and Richardson Greenshields—to review the operations and look into the privatization issue.

* (1540)

Well, you know what is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister responsible for MTS on September 25 said that the only people talking about privatizing MTS were me as the member for Thompson and the NDP, three months after he had met with MTS and started the process. I cannot say on the record what I believe that minister did in September, but let us put it this way: he was distinctly a stranger to the truth

because he had been meeting privately almost the day after the election dealing with the clear decision to sell off MTS.

Well, I want to go one step further, because I said earlier in the House that if they do a sequel to the book, *On the Take*, on the Mulroney Conservative government, it is going to be *On the Take: The Filmon Tories*, because this government is completely lacking in any sense of ethics. I want to demonstrate that with a decision-making process that followed. Well, they did not tell the truth to the people of Manitoba in September, that they appointed these brokers. You know how it was put on the record? When we found out from our contacts in the financial community that they were already meeting, we put it on in December. We put it on the record in December, and they said, well, there is no predetermined decision to sell off MTS. I remember at the time that I asked a specific question. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what did I say? I said, how can you have brokers assessing whether you sell off a company or not? If I were to invite three real estate brokers—and not all my friends are real estate brokers—over to my house, saying, you know I am kind of thinking of selling my house and I am going to pay you 500 bucks and I want you to recommend to me, should I sell my house? Does anybody believe they would recommend anything different?

Well, surprise, surprise, by mid-April after we started our campaign in January of 1996 to save MTS, I remember people saying, well, we do not know what is going to happen yet. I said, I do not trust Tories, I do not trust Tories. I do not trust Tories. You know what, the more we acted to go out to the people of Manitoba, the more the letters came out, the more the statements came out that were not true. You know, we had the minister saying, there will be full consultation with the people of Manitoba before any decision is made. Not one meeting, to the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), took place in January or February or March or April and then in May of that year the government announced, surprise, surprise, they were selling off MTS. I had a pensioner at one of the meetings in Westman who came up and said, I got a letter from the minister. He said the minister said there will be public meetings. He said, I do not appreciate as a senior citizen being lied to by my government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could not answer anything to that individual other than say, it was despicable what the government did.

You know, it is funny, because we said at the time in May, what did we say? You do not have the support from the people of Manitoba. We said, you have no right to sell it off. What is interesting is the continued trail of deception that took place. [interjection] Well, it is interesting, I mean, the member for River Heights sums up his sense of the people of Manitoba. Those that bought stocks somehow supported their action. It is interesting, you know, I was quite offended by—I find some of the jargon that goes with the brokerage community, I think they should check it. It is more suitable to the Mafia than it is I think to the business community. The book runners, the syndicates, well, I will say, when I heard the individual, the one broker talking about Manitobans being virgins who are now introduced into the art of buying stocks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found that offensive.

You know there are a lot of people who believed the rhetoric of the government, but what is interesting is 88 percent of Manitobans, at a minimum, did not buy shares in MTS—88percent—and I tell you what, thanks to the incompetence of this government, close to half the people that bought the shares sold them within the first week, sold them to institutional investors on Bay Street. [interjection]

It is interesting, the member for River Heights says Manitobans are such rich people. Well, sitting in the comfort of River Heights it may appear that. Perhaps from the top of the Richardson Building, when you look down all those floors, perhaps in his previous life as a lawyer everything must have looked rosy, but to the member for River Heights, not everyone is as fortunately off as you are. I know even in your own constituency, if you care to check, there are many people who are not rich, who live on very modest means, and I say to you, be careful with what you say when you say Manitobans are such rich people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us go ahead again. Everywhere we went in Manitoba on MTS, the opposition grew. We had meetings throughout rural Manitoba, and people asked the same question. We

had people come to our meetings who were Conservatives, and people would get up and they would say, why is the government not holding any meetings? You know, prior to the sale of MTS they did not hold one public meeting outside of the city of Winnipeg or in the city. The only meetings that took place were in the committee rooms of this Legislature after the decision was made. What I also found offensive was the day after it was sold they took their Toronto-produced road show to rural Manitoba after never once giving rural Manitobans the say over the sale of their phone company. They went around and said hey, your phone company is sold, but if you are nice to us, we will let you buy back a chunk of it. People were offended. How offended were they? Well, 78 percent of rural Manitobans in November said do not sell our phone company—78 percent.

Now this may come as a surprise to most people in this House. We have seats in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba, but I tell you what, we do not represent Pembina or Turtle Mountain or Gimli—well, not yet anyway. We do not represent people in that area of the province—Ste. Rose. It is interesting because opposition to the sale of MTS was the same anywhere you went. Pembina constituency, we had meetings. I must admit I do not think anybody had seen an NDPer before, but you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they came up and they said thank God somebody is speaking out on our behalf.

An Honourable Member: Steve, this is the way you consulted when you went through Neepawa?

Mr. Ashton: Well, it is interesting because the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) says about how we consulted in Neepawa. We had a meeting in Neepawa. We had a meeting, by the way, in Minnedosa. I want to ask the minister how many meetings he held in Neepawa to discuss this issue. It is interesting. He talks from his seat. Not one single meeting. Oh, no, pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he told the House that he went around at a hockey game one time consulting with people about the sale of MTS. I mean hockey is part of our culture in Canada but, you know, the hockey poll—what are you going to do? Run around at intermissions, and people are worrying about the game, and say, hey, let us talk politics here.

But what was most offensive was more than 50 resolutions came in from Manitoba municipalities, UMM and MAUM both opposed the sale. But who can forget the dying days of the debate, the last day of the debate? UMM was in convention, and I remember the talk from members of this House, you better watch that vote, you better see which way it is going to go. They had the full court press on it. They were lobbying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like you would not believe. Oh, yes, they lobbied real hard, and they twisted arms and they pulled in all their markers, and I saw them there at the convention. Do you know what the UMM did?

By the way, I do not think there is anybody in this House who would suggest that the majority of UMM members, councillors and reeves and municipal politicians throughout this province—I do not think most people would suggest the majority of them are New Democrats. [interjection] Well, maybe they are moving over. I do not know. It is interesting. I think you would be lucky to find one in four who are New Democrats, and that is being optimistic. What was the vote after they went and put all the pressure on the UMM? What was the vote? It was close to two to one against the sale of MTS. The municipal politicians spoke for the people, and the government ignored them.

* (1550)

An Honourable Member: Steve, now you have hurt my feelings.

Mr. Ashton: Well, what I find amazing is the lack of respect shown by people such as the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) saying now, well, you have hurt my feelings. I do not care about your feelings, quite frankly. I care about your conscience when you stand in this House to represent your constituents, and on the sale of MTS you did not represent them. You did not even ask them for their opinion.

I want to follow through on this because it is interesting. Every time we raised the concern we were accused of, what was it?—fearmongers. It is interesting—

An Honourable Member: What about the nursing homes.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, just like on the nursing homes, personal care homes—it is interesting. I was called a fearmonger, as were we as a party in September when we said, hey, you are looking at privatizing MTS. Heaven forbid, the minister said, no, we have no plans, oh, no, no. Then when we raised it in December, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) got up and said, oh, they are going to review it. Do not assume it is going to be sold off. Then we dissected what would happen, and it is interesting because, you know, they could not even be straight with the people of Manitoba. They could not even tell the truth about the impact of the sale. We talked about Manitoba ownership. Read the press releases. Oh, they were talking about Manitoba ownership. Well, you know, it will not be publicly owned anymore, but the majority of the shareholders will be Manitobans.

Well, it is interesting, because the level of incompetence in this government was shown when they received subscription issues from the 10, 12 percent of Manitobans that did put in applications for shares, and I do not know if that represents all of Manitobans. You know, you have got to net out the doctor who used his patients' social insurance numbers to buy shares. We do not know how many of those type of bogus purchases took place, but let us accept that those are real Manitobans purchasing shares.

The first thing the government did, they said, well, for liquidity purposes we have to net out 25 percent. They have got to go to those institutional investors. It is interesting. There was a lot of interest from institutional investors, and you know why? Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill Fraser, the head of MTS, once again in one of these kind of confession pieces in the Financial Post, I believe it was, said, well, they are interested. American institutional investors were interested because of the takeover potential. Let us not forget, as of December, the year 2000, the entire share basis of MTS is up for grabs, and if AT&T or Bell or anybody wants to walk in, they can acquire the company through a takeover.

Well, they netted out the 25 percent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and then what did they do? They structured the share issue to do what? To assure long-term Manitoba ownership? They offered people an

installment plan. Right? You put money down, you pay the rest off later. No commitment to hang onto the shares. So what happened? Within the first week 40 percent of the shares were flipped and sold to institutional investors, the vast majority of them from outside of the province.

Remember when I said earlier that we were accused of being fearmongers when we said we would lose Manitoba ownership of our phone company? It has happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it has happened even before the potential of a takeover.

Well, what else did they say? On May 2, I was at the press conference. They were asked, does this mean layoffs? Oh, no layoffs. No, I do not see any more restructuring—Tom Stefanson. Now, was that the truth or was that a lie, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because within weeks after the sale they announced a layoff, and to show you just how meanspirited this government is, you know what they did to the people who were being laid off or took early retirement? They said to them, you know, remember those shares that you just purchased out of faith to the company?

An Honourable Member: Did you buy shares?

Mr. Ashton: I did not buy shares, and 60 percent of the employees did. They said to the employees, you have got to give those shares back. What was interesting, I talked to a lot of MTS employees who said, is this the way MTS now operates? I thought I was a shareholder. I thought I had a say over that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a despicable way to treat anyone.

Oh, but one June Kirby, public relations officer said, well, we do not pay their pensions. She actually said, CBC Radio, that is paid out of the Superannuation Fund. I am sorry, but many people at MTS have worked their entire life for that company. To turn around and con them like this government did and say, hey, buy shares, you are going to be an equal partner in this and within a matter of a month to lay them off and then to add insult to injury by asking for those shares back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not care where you stand on the sale of MTS, that is not the way you treat any human being.

Well, let us talk about more fearmongering. You know, I found it interesting. If you were listening during the debate over MTS, you know, it is a bit like the Minister of Finance before his budget—hey, we do not have any money, so we have got to cut health and education. After the budget—oh, look at this surplus. I heard people saying, and especially from the Premier, I thought this was the most despicable part of the entire thing—oh, we are not really state of the art. We are really not that good. You know, let us put this in perspective here. So much for being positive in promoting the product. They did not want to admit that because it did not fit in with their argument. You have a private company that comes along after a public company; it has to do better, right? Well, is it not amazing, they put the prospectus out, and, God, what a change, what a glowing change. All of a sudden, MTS was state of the art.

Hey, we already knew that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when they went to the investors, it was state of the art. When they went to Manitobans, they said, well, not really, when they tried to justify what they did. Again, we were fearmongers, right? Well, let us go a little bit further because we talked about rates. I thought the lowest point of the entire debate last year was when the Premier (Mr. Filmon), after saying, well, Ross Nugent is a good friend of mine, went and cut him off, just went after his credibility. He said he was not talking for the company. Well, guess what? They issued a retraction afterwards or a correction. You know, it sort of reminded of these prisoners of war who give their confessions after being held in solitary confinement and tortured for six months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pressure must have come down on one of the most respected lawyers in this community. Boy, some friends. If that is the way they treat their friends, I would not want to be their enemy. Actually, you know what? I think I would rather be their enemy, to tell you the truth. [interjection] Well, we probably are their enemy. That is the way the Premier thinks of this.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rates. We know the application is in. Now, we will be watching the CRTC, and I have said before that rates will go up, and they will go up higher under a private company than under a public company. Those are the facts. The fact is they

have already been increasing the rates to reach their goals.

Well, the other thing we said—remember we said during the debate that MTS is in good financial shape. Oh, no, it is in really bad shape, they said. No, it is not good. What are profits like for MTS in the final year of operation as a public company? More than doubled. More than doubled, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again, some fearmongering.

I will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not give me much consolation to stand here today and say we told you so, but on virtually every single one of the issues we raised, we told them so: employment, Manitoba ownership, rates, profitability, even the takeover. Indeed, as the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) points out, they have not even had the decency to honour their signed commitment to the pensioners. They still have not done it. They still have not honoured the pensioners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you wonder why I revisit this. Well, I revisit it because let us look at another thing that has happened since. Surrounding the sale of MTS, there was something I described as an orgy of greed. Greed. You know how much the brokers made? Thirty-seven million dollars, and that did not include the first week. They probably made, flipping the shares, at least 50 percent, 60 percent of that again; in fact, more. They probably made about \$60 million. There was an article in the Sun that summed up the result of that. People were trading in their Jaguars for bigger Jaguars. Maybe this was the rich that the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) was talking about before.

* (1600)

Well, it is interesting because what I found most obscene and a complete lack of ethics on the side of this government, the lead brokers, the ones who were paid to recommend the sale of MTS, pocketed \$4.8 million apiece. You wonder why I talk about on the take and political cronyism over there. [interjection] Well, I say to the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), explain to your constituents why the people who recommended the sale pocketed \$4.8 million. That is dishonest. It is unethical in any walk of business if you

try and do the same thing, you act as a trustee and sell the assets and make money off the assets as these companies did.

But, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that they do not understand. They think this is fine, but I say to the members opposite, these are not the values of Main Street, Manitoba. These may be the ethics of the backrooms of Bay Street. You remember the MTS financial advisory group. What do they call these brokers? They call them the MTS financial advisory group, 161 Bay Street.

I say to the Premier, who the other day was talking about being bought and paid for, and I say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as directly as I can, he has forgotten one thing. Despite all our political differences, it is Main Street, Manitoba, that puts him here, not Bay Street, not the brokers.

An Honourable Member: Bay Street will pay him when he leaves.

Mr. Ashton: Well, we will see who pays the Premier when he leaves, but I say to the Premier, I hear today when I go and visit people something I have not heard for quite some time. You know, I must admit, for the longest period of time I would hear people criticize Conservative policies but not the Premier directly.

I will tell you one thing with MTS, the Teflon was scratched; boy, was it scratched. They saw the Premier for what he truly is, someone who was willing to ignore the vast majority of Manitobans to sell off our phone company. I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to anyone on that side, how can anyone trust this government again? When they say, oh, we have no plans to sell Hydro, that is not true. First they are going to deregulate it like the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) pointed out. Then they are going to turn around and say, oh, gee, you know, we have no choice now. Damn, we have got to go and sell it off, just like they did before.

I want to finish, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This may be the obituary for MTS that I never got to give November 27 and 28, at least for now. I want to read the full text of what I referenced in question period before. The menu at Thursday's closing dinner in Winnipeg for the

Manitoba Telecom Services Inc. privatization was decidedly regional: smoked Winnipeg goldeye, Manitoba wild rice, Manitoba beef tenderloin. The memento given to the 80 guests however perpetuated a more global tradition, a four- by five-inch Lucite block displaying the tombstone announcing the \$910-million deal. It is what the attendees want, says Darrell Burt, director of government finance, CIBC Wood Gundy Securities. It means they have joined the club.

Indeed, a small club does own MTS now, and I want to say to this Premier, before he prepares any more tombstones, whether they be for Hydro or MPIC or our health care system, I want to assure Manitobans who stood with us in our fight to save MTS that the only tombstone that we are going to ensure happens is the tombstone that marks the defeat of this government in the next election. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): It is a pleasure for me to address the Speech from the Throne to be able to add my comments to those that have already been put forth by members on both sides of the House and, as I have said many times in the past, I always enjoy the opportunity to participate in these debates. This is now my 18th year in this Legislature and it—[interjection] Well, members opposite say it is time to go, and they are entitled to their views and I respect their point of view, but I continue to enjoy the challenges and the opportunities that being here provides me, challenges to meet the test of change and the tremendous forces that are out there that are causing difficulties for some provinces that are proving to produce opportunities for our province. It seems to me that those are the kinds of things that all of us want to accomplish to be able to create better opportunities for the future for our people; and, as long as I believe that is possible and that we are indeed working towards that goal, I will continue to be here to serve the people who have elected me and my colleagues, the people of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker

I want to begin by welcoming back all members of the Legislature, particularly the Speaker who has served this Legislature, I think, very, very well, with great dignity, with a great deal of patience, with some considerable understanding and has conducted herself in a very reasonable fashion, given some terrible, terrible attacks and some atrocious behaviour by

members opposite, particularly in the New Democratic Party—

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Point of Order

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

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I think the Premier is talking about terrible behaviour. I am wondering if that includes his comments to one of our members to step outside and have his lights kicked out. This Premier of all people should not talk about the behaviour of members in this Legislature, given his despicable behaviour in the last session of the Legislature.

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

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I admire your patience in dealing with members opposite who continue to flout the rules, who continue to have ill-mannered behaviour in this House day after day after day, and who continue to try and shout down members opposite on this side of the House as we try and make our points in this House. We, of course, have not done that to them. I sat here and listened patiently to all of the patent nonsense that was put forward by the member for Thompson, but in his ill-mannered way of behaving here in this House, along with the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), they continue to demonstrate their ill-mannered behaviour day after day, and I can tell you it continues to bring them lower and lower and lower in public esteem.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask you to call the Premier to order on this. I find it absolutely despicable that this Premier

who has brought this House to the lowest level it has ever been in its history November 27 and 28, who has made threats on members of this House, who has on repeated occasions had to withdraw comments that are unparliamentary, he should not lecture anyone about behaviour. I want to point out on the record that we did not deny him the right to speak today like he did to members of the opposition November 27 and 28, and we will let him speak, but he should not ever suggest to anyone that anyone other than himself has brought this Chamber to its lowest level. He was the Premier who destroyed our rights for two days in the last session. I want you to remind him of that because you know full well.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order.

* * *

* (1610)

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, we have just heard the height of arrogance from the member for Thompson who says they let me speak here today, and that is exactly the attitude of the members opposite, those people who tried to hijack this Legislature, those people who want to engage in legislative terrorism day after day after day, who want to engage in legislative terrorism and want to try and shout down members on this side of the House when we attempt to speak. That is the kind of antidemocratic attitude that has resulted in their being exactly where they are and with their public esteem continuing to drop day by day by day. They continue to shout in an attempt to prevent me from speaking, but I will not be prevented from speaking because I know that in this Legislature we have a right to be heard and that that right to be heard will indeed be honoured in this Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, these are the same people who attacked you on many, many occasions well before November of 1996. On at least a couple of occasions, they did unprecedented things and tried to move motions of censure against you.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Point of order, Madam Speaker. I would like you to call the Premier to order yet again and remind him that we on this side of the House did not challenge the Speaker. We challenged the rulings of the Speaker. There is a very big distinction.

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

* * *

Mr. Filmon: The opposition members are making my point as long as I speak here. This is the third phony point of order that they have attempted to raise just in an effort to disrupt the workings of this House or to disrupt my ability to speak, Madam Speaker.

That is the kind of rude and unparliamentary behaviour that we see from the members opposite day after day after day. I admire your courage. I admire your patience in dealing with this because this is exactly the kind of thing that we have had to put up with. They have attacked you. They have harassed you as they have harassed a number of the women members of our caucus, because that is their tactic. They believe that the only way that they can damage the government is to personally attack and attempt to harm and damage the members of our government, and they are the people who are bearing the consequences of it as they go down and down and down in public opinion every day, every day that they serve.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to welcome back the pages to the Legislature. I know that they serve us with great dignity and very conscientiously, and I know that this is an experience that they probably never will forget, and I also know that we are very delighted that they are here and that they are able to participate in the democratic process this way.

My gratitude also extends to the table officers, particularly our newest Clerk Assistant, who join us in

this House each day, who participate in ensuring that the rules of the House are followed and who help us in the organizing of the business of this House, and we thank them as well for the service that they give to this Legislature.

The throne speech, Madam Speaker, is always an opportunity for us to be able to engage in an exchange of views about visions of the future of the province, and I think what we have here, of course, this year is a distinct difference in view and vision as to what this province is and can be, and I think that that is really, really important.

I believe that this throne speech sets out a very balanced view of the interests of the province and the priorities of the province. It sets out the kind of balanced view that I think a government can be proud of, because it indicates that our government is a government for all the people of this province. It indicates that our province is concerned about all people in this province and that we are prepared to ensure that we make the decisions that are right for the long-term interests of the people of this province.

We are not interested as the members of the New Democratic Party are in short-term quick hits that give them a cheap political high each day with an eight-second clip on television, Madam Speaker. We are interested in opportunities for the future for the people of this province. We are interested in creation of jobs, ensuring that we get more investment and more economic activity because we believe of course that ultimately the best medicine for most of the challenges and most of the concerns that people in society have is a well-paying job and an opportunity to use their creativity and to use their energy to be able to support themselves and their families, and to be able to ensure that they create a future with growth and opportunity for them and their families.

All of those things flow from ensuring that your priorities are right and that you have created a foundation for that kind of activity to take place. Madam Speaker, I believe that the foundation as it is presented in this throne speech is very, very important. The foundation is that we as a government are committed to making the wisest possible use of Manitoba's tax dollars in order to ensure a solid

foundation for the future of our province and its people. Indeed, that resonates through all aspects of the throne speech.

It is a demonstration of the commitment that we made just over a year and a half ago with the balanced budget legislation. That balanced budget legislation has proven to be essential to our ability as a province to have growth, job creation, and security for our people. It ensures that in the future no government can, as it did in the past, just continue to borrow money and create an ever-increasing deficit, and in other words to mortgage our future with overspending—

An Honourable Member: \$740 million.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), who is not known for financial acumen, raises some issues that I would like to address because they are issues that have been raised at other times by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and latterly by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). He talks about whether or not this government has had a major deficit during its period of office, and there is no question, no question that, as we went through the recession in 1991-92, we had very unusual circumstances, in fact the most difficult circumstances that any government had to face since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In that period of time we made a very, very conscious decision to do our level best to protect services for people while we were going through a very, very trying time. We had not quite got ourselves out of the incredible drag that had been put on our province by the New Democrats during the 1980s. I want to show the member opposite what the impact of that incredible drag was, and so I have pulled out a number of budgets that might be of interest during the period of time. But I just want to take a look—

* (1620)

An Honourable Member: Do you want to know what we started with? Two hundred and fifty million dollars from Sterling Lyon. That is what we inherited.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, they talk about inheriting a \$251-million deficit from Sterling Lyon. Guess what? That was the lowest it ever was in the six and a half years

that they were in government. That was the best performance ever and they inherited it from Sterling Lyon. After that, as the saying is, it was all downhill, and here is exactly what happened during that period of time. In six and a half short but very, very memorable years, this is what the Pawley-Doer government with, of course, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) as one of their senior public servants giving them financial advice—this is exactly what they managed to accomplish in our province. They took over a total, total net accumulated provincial debt, tax-supported debt, of \$1.06 billion, and by the time they took office—and I have got the budget on which they were defeated that was brought in by the then Minister of Finance Mr. Kostyra—by that time, just six and a half years later, it was \$5.16 billion.

So it went up from \$1.06 billion to \$5.16 billion in six and a half good years, and I might tell you that they had some of the most buoyant years that we have had in two decades in that period of time in terms of the inflationary impact on their revenues. They raised taxes budget after budget after budget. There was something in the range of 70 increases in taxation that took place during that period of time. Time after time after time, every tax—the NDP never met a tax that it did not like or did not hike, I will tell you, never, never. So here they went from \$1.06 billion total accumulated debt to \$5.16 billion in six and a half short, very sad years, let me tell you, sad years for the people of this province.

In the following nine years that we have been in office, that same debt has gone from \$5.16 billion to \$6.83 billion during the period of time in which we experienced the worst recession since the Depression of the '30s, and we still managed to come through with just increasing it by \$1.7 billion when they increased it by over \$4 billion in about two-thirds of the time. Here is again from the year that they took office, our interest was \$114 million annually and in the Kostyra budget, their last budget, it was \$575 million. Is that unbelievable? It is over a fivefold increase in interest on the debt. Now that is fiscal management NDP style. That is the intellectual capacity of the member for Crescentwood hard at work on behalf of government funding and financing, Madam Speaker, all the while increasing taxes year after year after year. That is what they believe in, tax and spend, as our Minister of

Finance (Mr. Stefanson) said today, and that is what the people got from them. That is why they are sitting on that side, discredited and not to be put in office for a long, long, long time because the people continue to remember it. because every single time that they go to pay their taxes, they know that we are still spending somewhere in the range of \$550 million to \$600 million a year in interest on the debt, their debt. That is what they are doing. [interjection] Yes, no thanks to you, absolutely no thanks to you.

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is saying it is the second lowest in Canada, but when he left office, it was the second highest in Canada, Madam Speaker. That is the whole difference, and that is what we are trying to get across to them, and they still do not get it. So we have brought in as the foundation to all of this, of course, balanced budgets, and I do not know the details of tomorrow's budget that the Minister of Finance is going to bring in, but I know that this administration is committed to balancing the budget each and every year that we are in office, and that is exactly what you are going to find. So what does it do? What does it do for the people of Manitoba? It creates, firstly, a degree of certainty, a degree of consistency. That is what people have been looking for, yearning for, longing for. certainty that their major tax rates are not going to go up. It is right in the balanced budget legislation, certainty that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) makes a good point. He points to the fact that since we have been in office, our revenues have been increasing. but we have not raised the tax rates. In fact, we lowered the income tax rates by 2 percent and we removed some surtaxes when we took office, and despite that lowering of taxes, our revenues continue to grow. Why? Because more people are working than ever before in our history and more people are obviously then contributing to the taxes. It is called increasing the pie. It is called a healthy economy.

Now, of course, New Democrats do not know about that because they have never experienced it, and they did everything possible to destroy jobs, to destroy economic activity, to destroy investment in this province. That is the difference between us and them, and that is exactly what is represented by this throne speech, a very different perspective, a perspective of

balance, a perspective of priorities and a perspective of commitment to the long term, not looking for the short-term, quick fix by just simply running up the deficit and debt and leaving it for the next generation to pay for.

That is what New Democrats represent, and that is of course what strikes terror in the hearts of the vast majority of Manitobans as they think that they might ever someday get a chance to do that again. It will not happen because they know too well the members opposite and they do not trust them. They have absolutely no confidence in their ability to understand finances, let alone to manage anything in a fiscal or financial sense.

But we do have some evidence, some growing evidence of why things are important to do in this way, why it is important to balance your budgets, why it is important to keep taxes down, why it is important to ensure that you are doing things that attract investment rather than repel it the way the New Democrats did. Some of that evidence, of course, takes in the objective review of many other people, people who are looking at us, people who are deciding upon us as a place to invest, people who buy our bonds. That is a very important thing, Madam Speaker. We still have to continue to refinance all of that debt that was put in place by the Pawley-Doer administration back in the '80s, so we must be able to ensure that we are doing the right things so that we can secure the future for the people of this province.

* (1630)

Interestingly enough, these are times that all of us should feel positive about, because the things that are happening here are exactly what we want to see happening for the people of our province. Firstly, our gross domestic product, for instance, 1996 was a very good year according to the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics and their analysis of all of the various economic tracking agencies. The Conference Board, for instance, is suggesting that our real growth estimate for 1996 is 2.8 percent—pretty amazing. That would put us probably double the Canadian rate. Our own Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, I might say, and members opposite will say that they are biased, is saying that that somewhat underestimates the effect of our economic growth, they are saying it was even stronger—

Point of Order

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

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the Director of the Manitoba Bureau, Wilf Falk, is a civil servant who has had an impeccable reputation among his peers. As a person of probity, he has always put out accurate statistics. I do not think you will find ever any member of this side of the House doubting the accuracy of the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, and the Premier ought not to put on record such falsehoods.

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

* * *

Mr. Filmon: I will absolutely confirm that I have the utmost confidence in Mr. Will Falk and the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics. I want that quote to be considered when we use the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics for our continuing information that we bring forward, because they are our chief source of information, and in no way do I want to damage their reputation. I would hope that members opposite would take the same point of view, because I know that Mr. Falk served well the previous administration and continues to serve well this administration.

At least we now are agreed on the source of our information being accurate. So, when I say, Madam Speaker, that the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics is suggesting that our real GDP growth is more likely to be even higher than 2.8 percent in 1996, I know the member opposite will not disagree with that.

The exports that we have had, the export growth, has been absolutely nothing short of phenomenal. This province in a period of six years has outperformed every other province in Canada when it comes to exports, and the exports have increased to the world by something in the range of 120 percent. To the United States, our largest consumer market, they have gone up 152 percent in six years, nothing short of phenomenal, six straight years of double-digit growth in exports.

Why is it important? Well, for every increase in exports of \$1 billion from our province, 11,000 jobs are created. That is what Stats Canada say. We are now at a stage where we have had over that period of six years export growth of almost \$3 billion on an annual basis. That is 33,000 jobs. So when people look at that and see what is happening in our economy and say that we are at an all-time record high in employment in this province, a lot of it has to do with that export growth. There are many other things.

That is an interesting point to be made though. The balanced budget legislation and the fiscal policies and plans of this government have resulted in us having an all-time record level of employment in this province, Madam Speaker. That is good for everybody. That is good for every single family in every town, village, hamlet and community in this province, on every farm. In every area of the province that is good news, because every one of those jobs is an opportunity for future career growth, for ensuring that people can support their families, for ensuring that people can live a very productive life, and that is absolutely the best way in which we can see our province change and change for the better.

That has all been happening, Madam Speaker, as a result of the changes that we made and that we have been able to ensure are enshrined as part of our future policy in things like the taxpayer protection and balanced budget act.

The good thing that I see is that the benefits of so much of this are being shared in every area of the province. We know that many, many of our communities are growing, our towns, villages and so on. We know from population figures that the growth is taking place outside of Winnipeg almost on an equal basis to inside of Winnipeg now. We have arrested to some degree the dwindling and the deterioration of some of our smaller communities throughout our province.

If you take a look at some of the fastest growing areas in Manitoba today, there are towns like Winkler, Morden, Steinbach, Altona, Rosenort, and so many of these areas that are just absolutely booming with economic opportunity. You look at places like Portage la Prairie that went through a tremendously difficult

time when it lost the base there, the air force base, when it lost Campbell Soup, all in a period of two years; they continue to have new opportunities, more investment and growth in long-term jobs—all very positive.

You look at Brandon today, and Brandon is in the midst of some capital investment of about \$200 million in four major projects that are going on there. You cannot get a tradesperson. You cannot get plumbers and carpenters and electricians because of the tremendous investment that is being made in and around that community, and it is economic opportunity that is being spread everywhere.

You look at the North, and it is in the throne speech about what is happening in mineral exploration. Madam Speaker, 25 companies that five years ago were not in this province doing mineral exploration are doing it now. I know that is important to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) because his party had just about driven out exploration. The only exploration that had been taking place under New Democrats was government-financed exploration through the Manitoba Mineral Resources Corporation. Now this is all being done by private sector investors. This is all being done by people who are risking their capital, and they are putting it into exploration that is resulting in mines. The member for Flin Flon was with me at the opening of Photo Lake Mine, the New Britannia Mine at Snow Lake and on and on and on. Things happening in Lynn Lake, and new finds that are being made that will help keep Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting healthy in Flin Flon. All of those things are happening because the private sector now knows, as the result of successive consistent government policies, that they have a future in this province, and then if they make those investments, they have an opportunity to get a return on their investments. They are doing it. They are doing it, and it is important to every person in this province, and it is spread in every community of this province. [interjection]

Madam Speaker, you know the duke of despair over there from Crescentwood is now saying something negative again. Behind every silver lining he can find a black cloud. He is absolutely the most negative person that sits on that side of the House. He is in good keeping with his Leader. He reinforces and supports

what his Leader, the prince of darkness, stands for, and all of these things are reasons why they continue to be in opposition, because the public is fed up with that negativity. The public does not want to hear all that negativity. [interjection] Well, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says that is why they are in second place, and it may well be one of the contributing factors because the public is tired of the negativity and the destructive tactics of the member for Crescentwood. It is just very, very unfortunate.

* (1640)

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh, here is the duke of despair.

Mr. Filmon: No, that is the prince of darkness; that is not the duke of despair. The duke of despair is from Crescentwood, and the prince of darkness is from Concordia.

Madam Speaker, the interesting thing about all of this is, where would we have been if we had listened to the advice on the balanced budget from the members opposite? That is the question: Where would we have been? I will just share with you some of the bits of wit and wisdom that came from members opposite those days back in September and October of 1995 when we were debating the balanced budget legislation in this House. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) said, and I quote: "Balancing a budget every year cannot be defended on any economic grounds." The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said, this bill will not work. Well, work it has and work it will continue, because it is exactly what the people of this province want, and it is exactly why we have a stable, strong and growing economy with jobs being created, with investment taking place, because people believe that it is the right way to go. [interjection]

Madam Speaker, I already answered the question of the member for Crescentwood when I showed him the growth in debt under the NDP administration, the Pawley-Doer administration, that went from \$1.06 billion to \$5.16 billion in six and a half years. Again, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) regrettably did not hear my answer when I gave it to the member for Crescentwood about the Lyon government leaving them a deficit of \$251 million. That was the lowest deficit

that was experienced in the entire six and a half years of the Pawley administration. So they were given a favour. They were given a favour by the Lyon administration by leaving them a lower deficit than anyone in the years in which they brought in the budget.

So I do not know how they can take any credit or comfort out of that, Madam Speaker. It is perverse, the logic that they want to bring to this House. But there they are, that in six and a half years they increased the net tax-supported debt by over \$4 billion, and we, in the period of nine years, have increased it by \$1.67 billion, and they still want to argue that somehow their policies were better for the province, and I point out again that over 70 times they raised taxes in this province during those seven budgets that they brought in. Every single tax and charge and increase they brought in was unbelievable. So while they were raising all these taxes they were continuing to bloat the deficit over and over and accumulate the debt, and that is why today we spend almost \$600 million annually on interest on their debt.

Let us look at some of the other interesting contributions that were made by members opposite with respect to the balanced budget legislation. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) said, it is one of the more unthinking pieces of legislation. Now, she is an English major. I believe she was a professor at university, and I think that unthinking, I do not think legislation thinks, so I do not think you could have an unthinking piece of legislation. But she might have meant thoughtless pieces of legislation or ill-thought-out pieces of legislation. But she said unthinking. Well, again, this is not an unthinking piece of legislation. This is a piece of legislation that has not only survived the test of a couple of years but has proven to be one of the most important things that we have in place to assure investors and to assure the public that this is a good place to invest, to live, to work, to raise a family and to create job opportunities first and foremost.

The member for Wolseley also said, "It is a sheer sham." That is alliteration, I think, but she said that about it. You know, there was a quote that I had here from the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). Ah,

here it is here. You will appreciate this. He said, this legislation "is simply a chimera." It is spelled c-h-i-m-e-r-a. I think that is Upper Canada College talk. The member for Crescentwood wanted to show off the vocabulary that he learned in the private school in Ontario, Upper Canada College. So anyway I looked it up in the dictionary, and chimera is an illusion or fabrication of the mind, an unrealizable dream. You know, it is tempting to say that the member for Crescentwood always lives in illusion and always tries to create the illusion of competence when he asks his question or offers advice, Madam Speaker, but the fact of the matter is that he is the only one here who has illusions. Actually, he has delusions of grandeur, as we know that he is a very strong candidate for leadership on that side of the House, and we know, of course, that he is greasing the skids for the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer). My advice, of course, to the member for Concordia is that he should stick around, that he is one of the few examples of near moderation in a caucus of radicals who continue to go from bad to worse. The member for Crescentwood, of course, reminds me of some of those hockey owners. He continues to give a vote of strong confidence to his Leader and you know what that is.

Now here is the really interesting one, and this is for the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who was chirping from her seat at great length earlier on. She said it will not mean that the province will be more economically viable; it will have a deadening impact. It will not be helpful in trying to keep the engine of the economy and the people of the province on an even keel. Well, Madam Speaker, we are experiencing the most buoyant economic times in 25 years in this province. We are in the midst of the greatest period of growth and job creation that we have seen in 25 years in this province, and we are seeing—

An Honourable Member: If you had not transferred your Lottery revenue, you would not have had a balanced budget last year either.

Mr. Filmon: Well, again, the member for Crescentwood is wrong. The surplus exceeded the amount of that special transfer from the Lotteries, so again he is wrong. But that is okay, Madam Speaker, he just wants to keep consistent. We have got a record

on him of how many times he is wrong, and he has just added to it, so we will let him continue to offer his advice.

I want to relate just what it means—

An Honourable Member: Where are Albert and Jim?

Mr. Filmon: The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has asked about the presence of members. Of course, he is sitting here with only five of his members in the House, and he does not have much to talk about.

* (1650)

Madam Speaker, we are now at a stage where we have over 541,000 Manitobans employed. As I say, that is the highest level in our history, but the most exciting part about this is what it has done for youth employment in our province. Youth employment, of course, is a statistic that from time to time has been referred to by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). Manitoba's youth unemployment rate is now at 13.6 percent, which is almost five percentage points below Canada's youth unemployment rate, so the young people of this province have a far higher probability of employment.

Compare that, if you will, to what happened under the New Democrats. When the New Democrats left office, they had one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Canada. They were three full percentage points above the national average. Now that is what you consider to be despair, when you have youth unable to find jobs because of the policies of the New Democrats in government. They sit there and they laugh. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is laughing at it. He thinks it is funny for youth to have unemployment in the province. We do not. We think that the youth deserve jobs and opportunities. That is exactly what is happening in this province under our leadership. They will remain in their communities. They will find jobs and careers that will be productive and give them great opportunity, and, Madam Speaker, it goes on. I mean, just today there is an article in the paper about Palliser Furniture making a \$14-million investment, creating up to 400 additional jobs.

There are some interesting things here because members opposite in their speeches, even on this throne speech, continue to rail away against the Free Trade Agreement, and what does Mr. DeFehr, the CEO of Palliser Furniture, have to say? He says that this was an industry that was being written off in the '80s because of free trade. This is proof that this type of industry can prosper and Winnipeg can prosper, and indeed he points out that over half their entire production now goes to the United States, and at the time that the Free Trade Agreement began, it was only 10 percent. It has gone from 10 percent to over half, and it is one of these continued, exciting opportunities that is taking place with jobs that are well paying, with manufacturing jobs; and, indeed, of the increase in exports that has taken place between 1990 and 1996 under the Free Trade Agreement, 83 percent of it has been in value-added or processed goods. So the opportunities that are being created by free trade are creating many of these jobs, much of this investment and much of this economic growth.

That is exactly what we said would happen, Madam Speaker, and it is exactly the opposite to what the members said would happen when they argued against, first, free trade and, second, balanced budget legislation. Of course, members opposite are mired in the past, and, you know, we just had an example of that. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) gave us a dissertation just in the last few minutes that I thought was absolutely unbelievable. He gave us a tirade here of negativity, and that tirade of negativity was all mired in the past. He talked about MTS and he wants to revisit the past and recreate MTS. He said something to the effect that we said that there would not be any more jobs lost under a privatized MTS than there would be under a publicly owned MTS, and he felt that was a terrible, terrible misrepresentation.

Well, I have news for the member for Thompson, Madam Speaker. Here is an article from the Regina Leader Post, Friday, January 10, 1997. It says: as SaskTel moves into the competitive arena, it is preparing to do so with up to 500 fewer workers. The Crown corporation offered about 500 of its 3,700 full-time employees voluntary retirement packages Wednesday, although the offers are staggered over three years. Their executive goes on to say: this is not a process of downsizing, it is a process of rightsizing,

and according to their union information, SaskTel has already reduced its staff levels by about 1,100 since 1988, and now it is going to do it another 400.

This is a publicly owned Crown corporation, and it is doing precisely what the members opposite are accusing the Manitoba Telecom Services of doing, and they are saying it is all because they are in private ownership. That is patent nonsense, Madam Speaker, but it is the kind of nonsense that is repeated over and over and over again by members opposite.

The member opposite for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made the comment about the so-called tombstone ad, or at least the tombstone, that he said was being presented as a result of the privatization of Manitoba Telecom Services. What he does not know is that that is the name that people in the brokerage industry give to the ad that is placed every time they put out an initial public offering of any sort in the financial pages, and it advertises the brokerage firms and the number of shares that are being issued. It is usually in a rectangular shape, and they call it a tombstone. He has read in all sorts of dire meanings into this ad that he says is somehow a slight against the people of Manitoba or Manitoba Telecom Services.

The other interesting thing is that he is lamenting the fact that the brokerage houses received commissions of \$37 million for selling over \$910-million worth of shares of Manitoba Telecom Services. Now, what they did, of course, was to sell shares and to bring equity into the Province of Manitoba that allowed us to pay off debt of this province and of Manitoba Telecom Services, debt that was accumulated over decades. They paid much more than that when they were in office to the brokerage to sell bonds—because the rates are consistent, you pay the commissions for the money you raise—and they raised billions of dollars to do what? To add to our debt. They are upset that we are paying commissions for people to reduce our debt. Madam Speaker, I do not understand where they are coming from. I do not understand their logic or their rationale, but it seems as though they do not understand what is happening when they make all of these comments. It is absolutely foolish.

I said before, Madam Speaker, that one of the features that I think is most important about this throne

speech is that it has a sense of balance. As I said on the day the throne speech was introduced, we are recognizing that there is growth taking place in our economy, that in fact we are the only province in Canada that can say we had five straight years of private capital investment growth. Indeed, according to Stats Canada it will happen again in 1997; so that will be six straight years of private capital investment growth.

An Honourable Member: Better than anywhere else in Canada.

Mr. Filmon: That is a record. As my colleague the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) said it cannot be matched by any province in Canada. That is a positive thing, obviously, and what we want to do is ensure that the benefits of a growing economy are shared as equitably as we possibly can. [interjection] The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) wants to put on the record that Manitoba has just defeated Alberta in the Brier, and we all support that. It is good to hear something positive from the member for Concordia.

Madam Speaker, the increase in capital investment has gone along, of course, with the tremendous job-creation record that has been achieved in this province as we have gone ahead in recent years, job creation that will take place even more so. So we are saying that the public, of course, will benefit immensely by virtue of more job opportunities, by virtue of more people being off welfare, off dependency and onto self-sufficiency. All of those are positive impacts and things that all of us should want.

We are saying as well that the growing economy brings growing revenue, and the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) rightly pointed out that that means that we will get more money in our province to be able to ensure that we protect the vital services that people depend upon. So as the economy grows, as more people are working, we get more personal income tax, more corporate income tax. We get more sales tax revenues—not because we increased rates like the NDP used to do—because we have a growing economy that now can benefit more people.

* (1700)

So, Madam Speaker, what we have is more programs that we can offer. There are areas, for instance, with respect to our aboriginal population. Members opposite have been taking shots at the fact that the throne speech refers to us taking an initiative to try and do some things for our aboriginal population. Why are we doing it? Well, I think that we have an interest in ensuring as much as possible that we prepare those in our province who are going to be entering the workforce for employment. That means training dollars. That also means ensuring that those who invest their time and energy in training can find a job, and that is what the Partners for Careers is intended to do. It is to ensure that those who will make the commitment to training will be there to find the jobs.

So we have talked with members in the aboriginal community. We have talked about the challenges that they face. Many of them are as a result of a lack of responsibility by the federal government. Members opposite I know support us on this issue. The fact is that the federal government—it was a Mulroney government and we criticized them at the time—unilaterally decided not to be responsible for Status aboriginals living off reserve. As a result of that, it has cost Manitoba, since that decision, \$100 million. It is almost \$30 million annually now that we are getting to provide those services. It is in everybody's interest. Madam Speaker, to not put the money into social services but instead to put it into employment development and opportunities for the future. That is what is happening.

We as well of course are putting the money into health care. I mean, health care, you would never know it of course listening to members opposite, but health care continues to be one of the big challenges that faces us and every other government in Canada. But what has this government done despite all of the criticism of members opposite? This government continues to put a higher proportion of its budget into health care funding than any other province in Canada, Madam Speaker. We are at over a third of our budget. It is at \$1.85 billion dollars, and that represents an increase of about 50 percent from the time that we took office. Well, it has gone from \$1.3 billion to \$1.85 billion.

What have we done in the throne speech? What have we announced? Well, initiatives such as providing

services closer to home, post-surgical cardiac rehabilitation, dialysis, chemical dependency programs, mental health programs, an expanded home intravenous program, a mobile child health clinic, a children's asthma education program, a midwifery and other women's health initiatives that are in the throne speech. These are all important things as we help steer the health care system from a model that was based on illness to a model that is based on wellness, to ensuring that more money is invested.

In fact in home care we are investing almost three times what we did when we took office in home care. That is so we can keep our elderly healthy, living in their homes, in their communities, where they will live longer and have better outcomes and better quality of life, Madam Speaker. We are doing that. We have got nurse-managed resource centres bringing health care closer to home. We have got support services to seniors so that our seniors can live in their communities healthy, longer.

All of these things are very important investments. They are the investments of the future, not the investments of the past that members opposite want to talk about. But we will talk about the investments of the past as well, because this was, I thought, a very, very telling article that was shared with me and that I referred to in the House a few days ago that was written on February 20, 1988, in the Winnipeg Free Press. It is entitled, Social costs take smaller cut of budget.

It says, and I will quote: Education and some other social services are getting a dwindling share of provincial resources under Howard Pawley's regime. That was the Howard Pawley regime that included, of course, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) as a star cabinet minister, I might say, Madam Speaker. It goes on to say: The government has cited health, education and other social costs to explain increases in the provincial deficit over the past six years, but a Free Press analysis of government spending patterns shows spending on most social programs is increasing no more rapidly than spending on other government departments. The major social programs as a group account for a slightly smaller share of total government spending than they did when the Pawley government first took office. Meanwhile, the government has beefed up spending on administrative areas, including

Legislature and cabinet operation, civil servants' fringe benefits, the Finance department.

Of course, the Finance department is that key element that I talked about, going from spending \$114 million on interest on the debt all the way up to \$545 million on interest on the debt in just six and a half years, so the only real beneficiaries of the Pawley-Doer policies in the 1980s were the bankers in Zurich, the bondholders in Tokyo and in New York and in London and in all of those areas of the world who they were paying money by the bucket out to. They were shovelling out hundreds of millions of dollars of interest to those bondholders rather than providing it for services to people. That is the kind of duplicity that you get from New Democrats who say one thing and do entirely the opposite. They destroy the opportunity for us to have quality services because instead they spend it all on interest, and worse still, they mortgage the future of our youth.

So take the contrast. The contrast here is an administration that continues to lower the deficit and, in fact, has balanced the budget. It is not sending along more responsibility to the future generations. It is reducing the responsibility for future generations by paying down the debt and also creating more jobs for youth than ever before in the history of this province, lowering the youth unemployment rate by several percentage points, almost five percentage points, since the Pawley administration left office, and they instead were mortgaging the future of our youth.

Well, the interesting final little bit from this article though is that we know that interest costs, too high as they are today, because they are still in the range of \$575 million, are the fourth largest department of government, as has often been referred to by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister), but in this article in February 1988, they are saying if current growth rates continue, Finance will replace Education next year as the department with the second biggest budget after Health. Is that not a shock? Is that not a shock that they could have such poor priorities that they would rather spend the money on interest on the debt than spend it on education or social services or health care? It is absolutely shocking, Madam Speaker, that this could be their priority, and that tells the difference between them and us.

Madam Speaker, education is a topic that is often discussed in this House, and members opposite, of course, should know that education represents a bigger portion of the spending of government today than it did in 1988 when the New Democrats were in government and that we have continued, of course, to make investments in education as we went along. Members opposite, of course, always say when they have to find a way of criticizing us, and they do every day, that all you have to do is spend more money and you will solve the problem.

* (1710)

Well, we believe, Madam Speaker, that it is not how much money you spend, it is how much our kids are learning, and that is why it is so vitally important for us to make a commitment to standards, to high quality standards that are the result of a co-operative effort for the first time in our history where we are setting curriculum amongst all the western provinces together, collaboratively, setting the best curriculum to the highest standards that we can for our children and then testing to ensure that we meet those standards that we agree are the kind of quality levels that we want to have.

Members opposite, their simple answer to education is simply put more money in. Well, among their support network are people who include a former Deputy Minister of Education in the Schreyer years, Lionel Orlikow. I found this in looking through my notes, Madam Speaker. In the Winnipeg Free Press, November 18, 1991, and it is an op ed article that was written by Lionel Orlikow. It is entitled: More money won't make better schools.

He goes on to provide, I think, a very, very reasoned analysis, a much more reasoned analysis than we ever get from members opposite. In fact, I do not think members opposite know what reasoned analysis is. But he goes on to quote many, many sources, many, many experts about what happens when you simply rely on more money as opposed to looking at outcomes. He talks about all sorts of reports, particularly one that is called Effective Schools. A 1990 report by Chubb and Moe [phonetic] found that effective, that is, academic excellence schools, are not generally rich in teachers'

salaries and pupil-teacher ratio. A shade more than half of effective school studies have below average levels of economic resources.

He goes on to talk about large classroom size. Good teachers can produce dramatic results with smaller classes, but a teacher who uses the same methods for a small class as a large one will not. So it is a matter of methodology. It is a matter of knowing what you do with your resources. He goes on and on and on, and that is a reasoned approach. That is a reasoned analysis, Madam Speaker.

As we have said time and time and time again, it is not how much money you put into education, it is how much your children are learning that is what you should be examining. It is the outcomes that we should be looking at, and for heaven's sake let us get on to an agenda that ensures that our children are getting the very best for the dollars that we spend on education because it is indeed an investment, an investment in their future, an investment in our future, an investment in the future of this province. That is what is so important about the work of the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), and I support completely the efforts that she is making to ensure that we start talking regularly and implementing regularly better curriculum, high-quality standards and testing to ensure that we are meeting those standards.

I find it difficult when members opposite argue against standards. What is happening, of course, is that the members opposite who have close to a third of their caucus who are educators of various sorts are afraid to be examined. They are afraid to have the outcomes of their work examined. All they want to do is protect the union interest which is to ensure that ultimately mediocrity is the only standard that they set. Members opposite are dwelling in mediocrity every single day, and they are afraid of anybody who wants to set high standards and evaluate to ensure that we meet those standards. I think there is a fundamental principle in every area of life that if you want to see whether or not you are making progress, you have got to be able to measure it, and you cannot measure in education without examining outcomes. That is exactly what we are doing in education. That is exactly what New Democrats are fighting against, and that, of course,

ultimately is the tragedy as they sit there stuck in reverse and wanting to talk about the past and not even remembering what the past really stands for.

I recall the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) during the debate on the opening day of this session talking about how he was Elijah Harper's chief adviser during the final days of the Meech Lake debate in this Legislature. He said Elijah Harper got up on a point of order and he was recognized by the Speaker. Elijah Harper did not get up on a point of order. There was no point of order. It was the rule of the House that you required notice to be given on the Order Paper for any motion to be introduced on the Constitutional amendment. Of course, because there was no notice on the Order Paper, the only thing the Speaker of the day did at that time was ask: Do we have leave, does the government House leader have leave to introduce the motion? All Elijah ever said was no. Of course, the member for St. Johns—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), who was his chief advisor, did not even know what Elijah Harper had said or done in the House, Madam Speaker, but he was his chief advisor, and he goes on to take credit for everything that happened at that time.

The fact is that the rules of the House were the rules of the House and they were there for all members to obey and for all members to abide by, and that is exactly the same as the circumstances that we had in November, only the difference in November was that the members opposite rejected the rules and disobeyed the rules that they had entered into willingly, that they had negotiated, that they had been a part of developing. They completely abandoned them, completely cut out the legs from under their Leader, who had been very much involved and who had given his word.

He used to be, of course, a person of integrity, a person who always said to me that when he was in a union negotiation, his word was his bond, and we saw of course how much his word meant when he wanted to hang on to control of his caucus. He completely

abandoned his integrity. He completely abandoned his word and his commitment to the rules of this House.

Now, Madam Speaker, that is what we see as members opposite then try and revise history and try and somehow say that what they were doing was in keeping with the rules, and we know better than that because we have it in writing, and I read it to them chapter and verse on the opening day of this session. We do not need to have any advice from people who do not keep their word and who do not believe that integrity is important in sitting in this House.

Madam Speaker, another issue that is being dealt with by members on this side and is part of this balanced approach is ensuring that our streets are safe and that offenders will be dealt with quickly and fairly and in a way that holds them accountable. I know that the previous Minister of Justice and the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) have been involved in reducing crime at its earliest stages through some of the toughest legislation for young offenders in Canada and, where we have not been able to increase the sanctions under that legislation, it is because it is under the Young Offenders Act and, regrettably, the federal minister, Mr. Rock, has been unwilling to look at ensuring that we treat serious crimes as serious crimes regardless of the age of the perpetrators of that crime.

* (1720)

We have probably the most well-developed youth justice committees in the country, 700 volunteers in over 70 communities working together with the justice system so that the victim and the offender are brought together to decide what form of justice fits the crime and, in many cases, healing circles for our aboriginal citizens and opportunities to apply many of the recommendations of the aboriginal justice committee.

We have new legislation that I believe again is in keeping with the desires of the vast majority of the people of this province, things like parental responsibility legislation, a first in Canada, but the right direction and being taken by other provinces now, I might say, Madam Speaker. We have alternatives for youth to try and convert them from unhealthy pastimes to better alternatives, urban sports camps, a very positive initiative that is there.

We are involving our community members in Canada's first community notification advisory committees so that communities now are made aware of sex offenders in their areas, chronic sex offenders, and provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan are following our lead. That is positive leadership, positive intervention.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) points out to me our drinking and driving laws, which paved the way for bringing in the toughest drinking and driving legislation in Canada. We were the first, and other provinces right across Canada are following our lead.

We pioneered changes. The member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), when she was the Justice minister, pioneered changes in how our nation deals with stalking and sexual harassment, absolutely. Stalkers face tougher penalties. Many activities that previously were carried out are now forbidden by law, and we have the ability to prosecute those people and to deal with them as strongly as possible. Again, some of the strongest maintenance enforcement legislation in Canada resulting, just since its passage about a year ago, in over \$250,000 in support being paid out to benefit children in our province. That is again an initiative of the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) when she was Minister of Justice.

We are protecting the victims of crime through support groups, through consultations, through counselling. We directed \$14 million over a seven-year period to the City of Winnipeg to beef up its ability for law enforcement by putting 40 additional police officers on the beat fighting crime as they ought to be. I know that the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) supports that initiative. He still has many friends, and I know he is respected by his fellow police officers. He knows that they value that very substantially and very strongly. These are things that we do on a balanced basis to ensure that we deal with all the priority needs of the people of this province.

Manitoba's children. I talked about the youth and about the employment opportunities that they have today that they have never before had in recent history because of all of the things that are taking place. Manitoba's children are important, as well, Madam Speaker, and the throne speech speaks to that when it

says that we believe that the birthright of Manitoba's children should include a fair and equal chance to flourish in everything that they do in our society and in their future here in our province. For those children who begin their lives in poverty, we are committed to giving them an opportunity to grow up with real prospects for a better life, with a ChildrenFirst strategy that partners private and public sector strategies from around the world.

Some of Canada's most generous tax reductions for lower-income families—we passed in the 1989 budget, at the time, the most generous child tax credits in Canada, because we recognized that the working poor were very important in our mix of costs and burdens that governments place on them. We, of course, are bringing in effective measures to address child poverty among our citizens in Manitoba. We will be a willing, active partner with the federal government in the national child tax benefit, because we believe that it is really important to address the needs of those children living in poverty in our province.

Madam Speaker, Taking Charge! is a program that was developed in co-operation with the federal government, that our Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has worked diligently on. Both she and I have met people who have been involved in providing these opportunities for people to get off welfare and into the workforce, and they are doing a marvellous job. We have placed through the Taking Charge! program alone 600 single parents into the workforce with long-term career prospects and job opportunities.

I might tell you another area that has enabled women to go off welfare and into the workforce has been our call centres. The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) and the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) have referred to them as McJobs. Well, I tell you this, that women who are coming off welfare and working in the call centres and earning money and making a living and supporting their children do not believe they are McJobs. They believe they are opportunities that they have never had before.

So, Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to say how proud I am to be able to stand up to support this throne speech, to be able to look at all of the different things that are contained within this throne speech. The

balance that is there. The opportunity to continue to have a balanced budget, to live within our means, to be able to live with a balanced budget without raising major tax rates, to be able to make Manitoba stronger than it has ever been before in terms of investment, job creation, and new opportunities for the future, growth, population, all of those statistics that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) used to quote as he tried to bring the most negative possible view on things.

Today he does not have that opportunity because this is a very, very positive view of the future. This is a very positive view, because we can say to Manitobans that our province is leading the nation in job creation; has the second best record in Canada for finding youth employment; that is leading the nation in manufacturing; that has jobs at an all-time high; has unemployment at a very, very low point in recent history; investment at an all-time high; an economy that is leading the nation in exports; many, many things that are happening that are more positive than we have seen in 25 years in this province. I believe, Madam Speaker, that it is as a result of the collective efforts of members of our government who have worked very hard.

Each and every member of this caucus has had input into it, has brought their views, their concern, their goals, their ambitions, their dreams, their vision for the future together in the policies of this government, and it is that collective wisdom that has resulted in us being able to make the changes that have been so necessary and so important to all of the people of Manitoba, whether it be our children, whether it be our youth, whether it be our adults, our single families, our people who want to have a solid, productive future in Manitoba. It is happening today as a result of the policies of this government that is the balanced view that we take in which we believe that all people are important, that all areas of the province are important, and that the future is ours, Madam Speaker.

I thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. According to our rules, I am putting the proposed motion of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in answer to his speech at the opening of the session.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

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

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

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 30, Nays 24.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

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

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

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 13, 1997

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