



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLIX No. 9 - 10 a.m., Friday, April 16, 1999

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
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FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISEN, 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.
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MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
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NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
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PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
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SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
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VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 16, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table certified copies of two Orders-in-Council made under Section 114 of The Insurance Act.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present for tabling the 1998 Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board; the 1998 Annual Report of the Appeal Commission under The Workers Compensation Act; and the Five-Year Plan of The Workers Compensation Board, 1998 to 2003.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table today financial statements ending June 30, 1998, for Assiniboine Community College; for 1997-98 for Red River College; June 30, 1998, for Keewatin Community College; the Annual Report of the Manitoba Textbook Bureau for 1997-98; and the Annual Report for the Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks, affectionately known as MERLIN, for 1997-98. Those reports had previously been distributed to honourable members.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities Food Services

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Four months ago the Royal Canadian Legion wrote the former minister responsible for the frozen food about the quality of frozen food and the hardships that frozen food experiment had

placed on war veterans residing in the Deer Lodge hospital. The Royal Canadian Legion has recommended that that contract be cancelled at the Deer Lodge hospital on behalf of the war veterans residing in that facility.

* (1005)

I would like to ask the Premier, who was copied on the letter: has he accepted or rejected the recommendation to cancel that frozen food at Deer Lodge hospital?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we discussed this issue on a couple of occasions in this last week. I have indicated to the member opposite that significant changes were made in terms of the delivery and provision of food at Deer Lodge hospital. I am certainly told that continual assessment is done in terms of the response to the food, and there is continually more and more acceptance that the food is of a reasonable quality and certainly appropriate nutrition. I also understand, and I think the member opposite might be aware, that just in the January issue of the Manitoba Society of Seniors, members of their board actually undertook to go to the Deer Lodge facility, to tour it and to sample some of the food.

I quote from the report from that board. It says: the food served on our tour group was a choice between a veal pate meal with potatoes, green beans, soup, a bun, cake and so on. It goes on to say that the group seemed to agree that the meals served were eye appealing, nutritional and tasty. So, again, this is coming from the Manitoba Society of Seniors who certainly have taken an interest in this issue. The objective throughout all of this is to continue to make sure that the food is of a reasonable and appropriate quality and nutrition for the people of the Deer Lodge facility. All steps continue to be taken to make sure that that is the case.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I will allow the residents and the families to speak on the quality of the food. The minister has indicated that the

economies of scale of preparing the food at one site provide greater, quote, efficiency for the preparation of the food.

We have received minutes from the residents and families of Deer Lodge hospital dated April 6, and they indicate that vegetables prepared for the residents of Deer Lodge hospital are first of all prepared in the frozen food centre; then they are shipped over to Deer Lodge hospital where they are steamed; then they are shipped back to the frozen food centre where they are frozen and trayed; and then they are shipped back again to the Deer Lodge hospital where they are thawed out and served. Is this the kind of efficiency that the government was talking about with the fiasco, the Filmon food fiasco? Why does the Filmon government not reject this proposal as recommended by the war veterans?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Madam Speaker, it is a similar question the member has asked before. We have outlined for him that, first of all, the capital cost requirement at nine hospital facilities would have been in the range of approximately \$40 million. The capital cost of one centralized facility is approximately \$20 million, \$21 million. You can certainly see the savings there in terms of the investment on the capital side of the facilities with one centralized service. Again, the member seems to have difficulty with understanding the concept that if you prepare services at one central location, that certainly can be and will be much more efficient than preparing things at nine different locations, again in terms of the economies of scale, the centralization of those services. So the objective throughout is quality food, nutritional food, done as efficiently and as effectively as possible so that the dollars that are saved as a result of that are left in the health care system for other needs to meet the needs of patients here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, you have got the legion saying the food is not acceptable and asking the government to cancel it. You have got a situation now where the food is being prepared at the frozen food centre, the \$20-million centre. It goes to a second site at Deer Lodge hospital. The cafeteria is there so you are not going to be closing down that site. Then it

goes back to the frozen food centre to be trayed and frozen again—so it is frozen twice—then back to the Deer Lodge hospital. Is the minister trying to tell us that that is more efficient than the way it was in the past where they just prepared the meals onsite for the war veterans at the Deer Lodge hospital?

* (1010)

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily accept anything that the Leader of the Opposition is saying. As I have indicated to the members, certainly in the case of Deer Lodge, continual steps have been taken to make sure that the food is of appropriate quality and nutrition. I think, as I mentioned to the member opposite the other day, there are some 190 residents at Deer Lodge now that are actually receiving full dining services featuring a dining room style food service. I understand on that same tour that the Manitoba Society of Seniors undertook at Deer Lodge that there were some nine members of the legion that were there as part of that as well. They, again, also certainly suggested that the food was reasonable and nothing to complain about.

The objective throughout is to be sure that the food is of appropriate quality and appropriate nutrition. Certainly the system that is in place can provide more efficient delivery of that food, thereby leaving more resources to meet other health care needs in the health care system that we are committed to provide.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the Health minister has defended the quality and nutritional value of the frozen food served to patients, and yet a review of the minutes of the long term advisory council dating from November of last year reveals a litany of problems still there today, including mashed potatoes with lumps so hard they cannot be cut with a knife or fork by the patients, soups with lumps of flour in them that are indigestible, vegetables that are too hard to chew and swallow and present a choking hazard.

Does the minister, in light of the minutes of this committee from November of last year, roughly a month or so after it was introduced at

Deer Lodge, still defend the quality of the food being served to Deer Lodge patients?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, as usual, the member for Crescentwood lives in the past. I have indicated to him he is talking November of last year, and I have indicated to this House and to him very clearly that steps have continually been taken to improve the quality of food at Deer Lodge. They have changed how the food is being served to a significant extent at Deer Lodge. They also continue to work at making sure that the food is of a reasonable quality. Tests are continually done at all of the facilities that are now providing this food.

As I have said before, I can certainly cite examples that show the approval rating continues to improve and increase. In fact, at one facility the approval rating for this food was significantly higher than the approval rating at the facility under the previous system.

But, again, the objective throughout is to provide quality, nutritional food done as efficiently and effectively as possible. This system certainly will and can do that. That is the overall objective, and that will meet the needs of Manitobans and leave more resources for other health care services.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, what does the minister have to say to families, for example, to Pat Courtnage who is with us today in the gallery, who have watched continuing weight loss in their loved ones in the months since the frozen food was introduced, weight loss so severe that incontinent patients have had to be placed in smaller diapers? What does he say to Mrs. Courtnage?

I am going to table this chart, Madam Speaker, the weight losses and gains from one ward of 36 patients in one of these facilities. Fourteen of these had to move into smaller diapers since November of last year.

* (1015)

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, first of all, I certainly would be concerned about the health of any individual in any of our health care facilities, but I am not so certain that the member for

Crescentwood has specific information to suggest that this is a direct relationship to food because, again, the assessment that has been done by the panel that reviews the quality of food, the assessment that has been done by the individual facilities, the feedback from other facilities that have come on stream with the new food services shows that the approval ratings for the food continue to increase, continue to improve. In fact, the survey showed, as I have already indicated, that the approval rating is higher at facilities today than under the previous food system.

Again, in terms of an individual's health, obviously I think we are all concerned about the well-being of all of the people who are in any of our health care facilities, but the objective of this process, with the support, I should remind everybody, of the nine hospitals themselves that are providing these services, is to do it through a centralized service to provide quality, nutritional food.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, does the minister continue to believe that weight loss among 33 of 36 patients on one ward averaging 5 pounds and in many cases exceeding 10 pounds is not in fact an obvious reflection on the nutritional value and the quantity and quality of food being served? Will he not put this frozen food experiment on hold and let our patients have decent food, at least—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I have sat by as Minister of Agriculture and heard this constant attack about the quality of food my farmers are providing for our hospitals. Manitoba Peak of the Market, the growers of Manitoba, supply all the vegetables for our hospital facilities, and they are of the finest quality in the world, under any measurement stick, under any measurement. I resent this talk and this implication about the nutritional value of the vegetables we grow in Manitoba. I resent the talk about the quality of the vegetables that we grow in Manitoba. It is a personal attack against the farmers of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I recognize it is Friday, but I would appreciate the co-operation of all members in having a more fluid running Question Period.

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, reluctant as I am to contradict the most senior member of the House, I suspect that is not a point of order. In fact, I think if the minister had been listening carefully, our concern is about the deliberate policies of this government putting in place a system of food preparation that is jeopardizing the situation of our war vets and many other patients.

Madam Speaker, I would appreciate it if the Minister of Health, without the assistance of the Minister of Agriculture, would deal with the question and stop dealing with our patients and our war vets as if they were part of a bottom line. Let us think about the people when it comes to frozen food in this province.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, the honourable minister did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, there is a long-term care food advisory council that meets regularly. It actually includes family members of residents and staff from Deer Lodge and from Riverview, continues to make recommendations in terms of continually providing quality food, and so on. I should remind members opposite that 100 percent of the food being used through Urban Shared Services Corporation is accessed right here in Manitoba, and well over 50 percent of it is produced right here in Manitoba.

So the comments of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture are absolutely correct. The objective throughout all of this is to provide nutritional, quality food to the people in our

health care facilities, and that is being done, Madam Speaker.

*(1020)

Standard of Living Average Earnings

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I know the Minister of Finance likes to come up with good-news statistics all the time, but I would invite the minister to look at Statistics Canada data on wage trends in this province, and he will see that between the time that his government was elected in 1988 and last year, 1998, the increase in average weekly earnings has not kept pace with inflation in this province. As a result, real wage, that is, after inflation is removed, has declined by 2.8 percent, which is equivalent to a drop of almost \$12 per week in the purchasing power of Manitoba workers.

Will the Minister of Finance explain to this House why the standard of living of workers in Manitoba has actually declined significantly under his administration?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Finance): Well, the member is quite correct. On this side of the House we do have an optimistic view of the future as opposed to the rather negative one that we hear from members opposite on a continuous basis. I think it is important that the member look at the real disposable income that Manitobans have. This is the money left in their pockets after income tax and CPP and EI. This also includes farmers, pensioners and the self-employed. Because we have had no tax increases for over 11 years and in fact some tax reductions, I am pleased to report that the disposable income of Manitobans has grown faster than the national average in five out of the last seven years.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I have a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I would point out that I have also checked personal disposable income, and we do not look very good there either. We decline there as well. Tell me, how can the minister explain that, in the same period, 1988 to 1998, we have Canadian average weekly earnings increasing? They increase by 2.7 percent or \$12.57. Why did Manitoba workers

suffer a decline of nearly \$12 a week while workers in Canada as a whole realized an increase of \$12.57?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, the latest statistics from Statistics Canada on average family incomes show that in Manitoba the family income is \$54,000, the fourth highest in Canada, exceeded only by Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta. Members opposite want to talk about the minimum wage. Certainly we have increased that to \$6, which is only exceeded by B.C., Ontario and Quebec. We also have the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 5.4 percent.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Madam Speaker, I wish the minister would address the concerns of Manitoba workers who look at their pay package and see that it is declining when you take the inflation into account. In fact, Manitoba wages—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Is there a question?

Mr. Leonard Evans: Will the minister explain, Madam Speaker, and acknowledge that Manitoba real wages were 91.7 percent of the Canadian average in 1988, but last year they had dropped to 86.7 percent. In other words, in 1988 there was \$38.40 less per week. By 1998 this spread had gone to \$62.95. We were worse.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Too many low-paying jobs.

Madam Speaker: The question has been put.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would encourage the member to look at the tremendous economic activity that is taking place throughout the province of Manitoba, particularly in his backyard with the tremendous expansion at Simplot and the hog producing plant that is coming on stream there. Family incomes in Manitoba have increased by 4.2 percent, which was the largest gain in the country by far and more than four times as large as that of Canada. So I would urge the member to look at all of the statistics, to recognize from visiting communities across Manitoba, including

Brandon, that there is a tremendous amount of economic activity happening in this province.

Education Conference Minister's Attendance

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, tomorrow is the day that all Leaders have been invited to address the educators of Manitoba at a conference called The Future of Public Schools. My question to the Acting Premier: is the Premier of Manitoba going to be in attendance at this important conference talking about the future of public schools?

* (1025)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I understand the Manitoba Teachers' Society will be hosting a panel tomorrow, and it would be my hope that I would be able to speak for the government of Manitoba in respect to matters related to education at that panel. It is not clear to me today whether I am invited or not invited, but I am certainly available and hope to take part in that very, very important discussion because I know that the people of Manitoba want to know the position of the governing party of Manitoba in such a discussion, and I would hope to be taking part.

Ms. Mihychuk: To the Acting Premier: can you explain why your party has decided not to attend this important conference when the Leaders of the NDP and the Liberals have both confirmed and only the Conservative Leader has refused to confront or face educators of Manitoba? Why will he not show up?

Mr. McCrae: Just a few short weeks ago the Leaders of the various political parties in Manitoba participated in a Leaders panel before the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. It was a very good discussion of the positions being put forward by the various parties. The honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Premier took part in that discussion, as did the Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr. Jon Gerrard. I think all in attendance were pleased that the positions of the various parties were put forward.

Similarly, that is possible to happen, that the positions of the political parties can be put forward in the panel discussion sponsored by

Manitoba Teachers' Society. I am certainly available and quite willing to speak for the Progressive Conservative Party at that debate. I understand the Leader of the Opposition will be there and Dr. Jon Gerrard. I think the issue that the honourable member for St. James is raising—the issue is whether the people want to hear the positions of the three parties. So the honourable member might want to direct her comments to the Manitoba Teachers' Society to ensure that I indeed would be welcome at that particular debate.

Education System Minister's Commitment

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I think the issue is: why is the Premier afraid to face educators of Manitoba, or is it that the Premier thinks public schools and the future of public schools is secondary to his other commitments?

* (1030)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): The implication in the honourable member's questions is quite offensive to me, especially when I know the commitment of the First Minister of this province to the education of our children. It was under this First Minister's leadership that this province took on the next century by making preparations in our school system. It was this First Minister who ensured, through his government and his ministers, that we have a curriculum in Manitoba that is second to none, that we have standards in this province again, that we test to meet those standards. It was this Premier and this administration that made sure that happened.

I do not need any lectures from the honourable member about commitment to education. We on this side do not accept that.

But, more importantly, Madam Speaker, does the honourable member want to have all the parties represented at that discussion or not? If she does, then she might use the considerable influence of her office to ensure that the Manitoba Teachers' Society understands that all three parties ought to be represented at that discussion, because I am ready, willing and quite

able to discuss the matters with my colleague the honourable Leader of the Opposition and Dr. Jon Gerrard.

Centra Gas Purchase Acquisition Details

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro.

Unlike the Conservatives, who failed to mention the purchase of Centra Gas in the throne speech, Liberals view the expenditure of more than \$500 million of public money as important.

Will the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro not admit that the efficiencies and savings claimed for the takeover of Centra Gas by Manitoba Hydro are in fact overstated, as efforts in part were underway to do joint billing before Centra Gas nationalization and that the efficiencies claimed would likely have been achieved independent of the takeover?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, quite to the contrary, the business transaction does have sufficient quality that the management and board of directors of Manitoba Hydro are very enthusiastic about this being brought to a conclusion. The main beneficiaries of this are going to be the customers of Hydro and of course the owners of Hydro, the people of Manitoba.

The customers of Hydro are going to benefit from an integrated system of not just billing but of course of having one streamlined management providing energy services, with all the advantages to the customer of having the ability through public education to make informed choices as to what is best for them.

The synergies of having one company, as I indicated, are estimated to be worth \$12 million a year. The suggestion that the major competitive advantage in the international marketplace is not for the benefit of consumers is also a problem for the honourable member. The fact is, it means prices will continue to be lower for consumers in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, I take it the answer is yes, that that was in fact the case, that there were efforts towards joint billing between the two companies.

Madam Speaker, my question then to the Minister responsible for Hydro is: has the government calculated the loss in taxes that Centra Gas is not going to have to pay because of the nationalization of Centra Gas?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, I can tell all honourable members that in giving general approval of the direction that was being taken by Manitoba Hydro, the position was taken by me representing the government that in any calculation of the business case that the factor of taxes not being paid by a private sector corporation, by a public corporation, should not be a consideration in evaluating the business case.

However, the fact is that because of the tax laws of Canada, there is almost like an up-front payment of taxes in one year. So there is triggered a payment to the province of Manitoba and the federal government of something that might approach \$30 million, Manitoba something more than that, and something approaching \$60 million to the federal government. This is amortized over a period of time, and when that period of time is past, there will be, pursuant to an arrangement with Manitoba Hydro in the form of an agreement, a social dividend to the people of Manitoba from not having to pay those taxes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we lost the annual tax loss. The minister did not make reference.

My question to the minister is: given the minister has had so-called independent evaluations, can the minister indicate to us is he prepared to share with the MLAs and in fact Manitobans what the estimated asset value was of Centra Gas, and to what degree is the minister prepared to have public consultation before the Public Utilities Board deals with this?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, of course we are precluded, because there is a negotiation towards a final agreement, from engaging in any

public sharing of the detailed information relating to this transaction. We are precluded by the vendor from of course doing that and the constraints that they have as a publicly traded private company. So that is just not possible to do until a deal is consummated.

Also, we have the Public Utilities Board that has a decision pending which might deal with the honourable member's question. So stay tuned and the process will ultimately allow, as the honourable member knows, for public participation. The standing committee of this Legislature, ultimately, through elected members, all parties can participate in an open, public discussion of this.

We have made sure that there will be an open access to information. That was one of the conditions of the whole transaction.

Centra Gas Purchase Public/Private Ownership

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My question is to the Acting Premier.

I am just wondering if now that the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman) has confirmed the social dividend of public ownership of the gas company, whether the Acting Premier will now confirm that we in the New Democratic Party were absolutely correct when we said there was a social dividend to public ownership of the Manitoba Telephone System. And will the Acting Premier also explain his government's stand through its four appointments on the board for MTS, which is now seeking a huge rate increase because of the loss of the social dividend, seeking a rate increase because of the loss of the taxes?

I wonder if he might explain why they did one thing on MTS and are doing another thing on Centra Gas.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Deputy Premier): Here is where we differ from members opposite because we assess each individual corporation, each individual situation on its merits at a particular point in time.

Obviously, the steps taken today with the acquisition of Centra by Manitoba Hydro is the

right thing to do in terms of the kinds of services that can be provided to all Manitobans, unlike members opposite, who are driven solely and purely by socialist ideology, which is government ownership at all costs, no matter what it does to services, no matter what it does to cost, no matter what it does to rates.

We need just think back to their management of Crown corporations in the province of Manitoba and the fiascos we had with Manitoba telephone services and the losses there and the mishandling of Manitoba Public Insurance, and so on. When it came to Manitoba telephone services, that was a company that 70 percent of their business was going to be in competition. They had significant financial requirements. There were a number of reasons to make the changes, and today Manitoba still has the lowest residential telephone rates in all of Canada.

Nonprofit Child Care Centres School Division Rent Policies

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Incredible, Madam Speaker. At the same time this government has introduced a new policy on child care centres in schools, school divisions are offloading this government's cuts of \$482 per pupil onto nonprofit child care centres in schools. I want to ask the Minister of Family Services if she thinks it is acceptable under their new policy for children to offload the costs of education onto nonprofit child care centres by having school divisions charge rent.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. I do know that school divisions right across the province of Manitoba have different policies on what they allow to happen within their school buildings and their school facilities. I know that very often school divisions and elected school boards make decisions that sometimes are not in the best interests of the families that they serve within their communities. I would strongly encourage and I have encouraged those parents who need support for child care within communities and those who are working within the child care system to strongly make their voices heard among their elected school officials

who set the policies within divisions. If those school trustees are not representing the interests of their constituents, they should be replaced by others who will make the right decisions for the right reasons in their own school divisions.

* (1040)

Ms. Cerilli: I want to ask the Minister of Education or the Minister of Family Services to clarify their new policy on child care centres in schools which states, and I quote: any agreements reached between host schools and child care facilities will require a demonstration of a partnership between child care facilities and school divisions as opposed to a landlord-tenant agreement. This approach serves to address some concerns with respect to rental costs.

Does this mean that school divisions can no longer charge rent to nonprofit child care centres located in their schools?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank my honourable friend for that question. Again, it does allow me to indicate quite frankly that we have schools right within our communities that could play a greater role in ensuring that they are meeting the needs of the families that live in those communities.

Madam Speaker, I do want to indicate that, in the past, the old, flawed NDP policy on construction of new schools and building of child care facilities, whether there was a need in the community or not, was a top-down driven policy that did not work. The policy that we have in place today is working with the community. Where the community—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister, to complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Where the community and the parents who live within that community identify a need for child care facilities and there is a renovation of a school or a new school being built, we are encouraging that community to work in partnership with the school division. Instead of the school division being the landlord and the

child care facility being the tenant, we are asking them to be equal partners in ensuring that families and communities that need child care can access that service.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, Madam Speaker, that sounds like very nice rhetoric, but what parents in Transcona are wanting to know is does this new policy mean that they are going to have fees increased and the offloaded cost to education put on to their nonprofit child care centre in the form of a rent increase. Are you saying that it is completely acceptable under your policy for parent fees and child care centres in schools to be going up?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have to indicate to my honourable friend that it has nothing to do with the policy that was announced and articulated, her comments the other day. Madam Speaker, I do not think that the families and the parents who are going to be receiving child care as a result of this policy at Montrose School and the people at Dieppe School and Sunnyside daycare think that our policy and our government's decisions are rhetoric when in fact they are getting the quality child care within their communities that they deserve as a result of working together in partnership to make that happen.

Justice System—Immigrant Investors Overpayment

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice: would the minister confirm whether his department has recently paid money out of a disputed fund held in the court to several immigrant investors, but a big mistake was made; these investors were overpaid, I understand, by over \$100,000? If in fact that has occurred, what steps is the government taking to ensure that this money is recovered?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I understand that there is an issue with respect to the payment to certain individuals of funds owing them, and my department is in fact looking at that particular issue.

Government Responsibility

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Well, I ask the minister if he would assure Manitobans that

taxpayers are not on the hook for this and that the government is going after that overpayment, or is the money long gone—I understand as far as Hong Kong?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, not only would I wish to reassure Manitobans that the department is in fact taking care of its responsibilities, but I certainly want to reassure myself that the department takes every appropriate step, and if there are ever any discrepancies, that those discrepancies and the reasons why they occurred are explained very clearly to me.

Future Precautions

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Well, can the minister assure Manitobans in this House that he is taking steps to ensure that this does not happen again, and indeed is he addressing the question as to whether this represents a more widespread problem in the court's administration? Is there a problem of lack of supports for staffing and technology, for example?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for that question. I know that the department has received numerous changes that enable it to better perform services, additional technology. I am sure that that incident is in fact an isolated incident, and that the cause for that is being examined and any steps that can be taken to ensure that any discrepancies are rectified will be examined.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Glenboro Collegiate Basketball Finals

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): I rise today as the newly nominated Conservative candidate in the Carman constituency. I thank all well wishes from each and every one of you.

I do rise today to congratulate the Glenboro Collegiate Varsity Boys Panthers Basketball

Team for recently capturing the provincial A basketball title at the finals in Lac du Bonnet. The provincial cup is the first in the history of basketball at the Glenboro Collegiate. The Panthers went into the weekend competition under the capable coaching of physical education teacher, Rick Scott, and the managerial skills of Elin Rawlings.

The players knew that winning the championship would not be easy, but they were well prepared for the championship game against Boissevain. The result was a 71-40 victory. Along with the coveted cup, some of the Panthers also took home individual honours. Trent Hamilton was chosen as the tournament's most valuable player. Marcel Vallotton and Travis Hamilton were named tournament all-stars. The Panthers' victory caps off a winning season for the Glenboro Collegiate. The school also won the provincial volleyball championship, and they won their zones for curling and golf.

Once again, congratulations to the Glenboro Panthers for their winning season. Your hard work and dedication has paid off handsomely.

Thank you to all members.

South Indian Lake Incorporation

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to voice my support and the support of our party for the historic first step towards greater autonomy for South Indian Lake. Yesterday the incorporation of South Indian Lake under The Northern Affairs Act was indeed an historic event. It is an important intermediate step. The next step will be full reserve status for South Indian Lake.

I was very happy yesterday to be able to participate in the celebrations at South Indian Lake. I thank the elders. I thank Mayor Joan Soulier and her council, Darren Ottaway, the town administrator, and the many volunteers. They put on a truly imposing northern feast.

Over a quarter of a century ago, Hydro development in South Indian Lake did create a very profitable situation for the province of Manitoba, but it almost devastated a beautiful

community. In fact, it did devastate the old community. The traditional livelihood based on fishing, based on hunting, based on trapping was severely disrupted. Now the community has tried very hard to build itself back up again, Madam Speaker, and I am proud of this community. I am proud of its tenacity. I am proud of the fact that they went out of their way to find new markets, golden caviar and so on.

There are outstanding issues, however, so we are happy on the one hand about the incorporation, but we are still not happy with some of the outstanding issues relating to the flood agreement, particularly the all-weather road to South Indian Lake which has never been built. So celebration on the one hand, yes, but mindfulness on the other hand that much needs to be done.

* (1050)

I want to thank all those who helped this community on its way to self-sufficiency and independence, and I am very proud to be able to represent that beautiful part of Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Carol Shields

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House as a newly nominated candidate for St. Norbert constituency and speak about a Manitoban whom we should all be proud of.

She has made tremendous contributions to the culture and identity of this province and has recently received public recognition for this. Manitoba's own Carol Shields was recently named an Officer of the Order of Canada. This is the highest honour a Canadian can receive and there is no doubt Ms. Shields deserves this distinction. This latest accolade comes in addition to the Governor General's Literary Award and the Booker Prize, which she has already received for her fine work of fiction.

Ms. Shields' novels vividly paint a portrait of this province and the country in which we live. The Stone Diaries, in particular, aptly describes the Tyndall and Garson regions of the province, as well as the city of Winnipeg in the

earlier part of this century. When we are exposed to our own symbols and traditions in literature, Madam Speaker, we experience a sense of pride that stems from familiarity. Our collective identity is reinforced.

Ms. Shields' work also touches on many familiar human themes, truly making her novels accessible to all who read them. I recommend her work—The Stone Diaries, Happenstance, Swann, and Larry's Party, amongst others—to all members of this House and to all people of this province.

I wish to congratulate Ms. Shields for her latest honour which has been bestowed upon her and thank her for her contributions to the literary tradition of this province. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Grand Rapids—Fishing Industry

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House are pleased that the confrontation at Grand Rapids ended peacefully and without incident. The provincial government should be under no illusions that this issue is over now; instead the province needs to finally work with the Grand Rapids fishermen's co-op, the Town of Grand Rapids, and the Grand Rapids First Nations to resolve the outstanding issues involved in this dispute.

The people of Grand Rapids have been extremely patient over the years anticipating to negotiate for assistance as the fishery declines. Sadly, their calls have fallen on deaf ears. The fishery in Grand Rapids has declined seriously over the past years with little recognition from this government. Alfie Cook, president of Grand Rapids Fisheries Co-Op; Robert Buck, the mayor of Grand Rapids; and Harold Turner, Chief of Grand Rapids, have all worked to better the fisheries and the community of Grand Rapids.

The provincial government needs to learn the true meaning of partnership. Restoring the fishery at Grand Rapids should be a priority of this government. All Manitobans benefit from the Hydro power generated in northern Manitoba and from the dams such as Grand Rapids. It is

only fair that the people who have paid great sacrifices to have these dams built are acknowledged and assisted as they work to rebuild their economy and maintain their way of life.

Average Weekly Wage

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I believe this government should be very concerned about the decline in real wages of Manitoba workers, as I indicated this morning in Question Period. There is no doubt about it that the trend has been very poor in terms of Manitoba versus Canada. Whereas the Canadian average has risen by 2.7 percent in this past decade, the Manitoba average weekly wage has declined by 2.8 percent, which means in effect that we, as a percentage of the Canadian average, have deteriorated.

In 1988 Manitoba, as a percent of Canadian average wages, was 91.7 percent, but 10 years later, last year, 1998, we had declined to 86.7 percent. Putting it in real terms or in dollar terms, in 1988 Manitoba workers on average earned \$38.40 less per week than the national average, but by 1998 this had increased to a gap of \$62.95, in other words almost \$63 per week less than the Canadian average.

Madam Speaker, the question then arises: why is this the case? Why are Manitoba workers worse off today than when this administration was first elected in '98? There is other data that supports this assertion that I have. I think the solution—not the solution but the answer to that question can be found in the makeup of our labour force. We have more low-paying jobs. The increase in low-paying jobs is out of proportion to the increase in lower-paying jobs in the rest of the country. Yes, some people may like telemarketing jobs, but they tend to be low-wage jobs, and the more lower-wage jobs we get, the worse our position is going to be relative to the rest of the country. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable

member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, 11 years ago when this government assumed office we had the best home care system in the country. We had the best Pharmacare system in the country. We had the best personal care home system in the country, and high-quality food was served in the institutions. Since then the government, under the leadership of the Premier, has tried to privatize home care, has turned morale on its head. We now have one of the worst personal care home systems in the country as a result of this government not maintaining personal care homes adequately.

Instead of innovation in health care, we have had schemes, schemes of the Premier, schemes like the frozen food, where we hear \$20 million has been wasted. We hear today frozen food is taken from the frozen food centre, sent to Deer Lodge, cooked at Deer Lodge, sent back from the Deer Lodge hospital, sent to the frozen food centre, put on plates and sent back to the Deer Lodge hospital, and they talk about efficiency.

We have seen schemes like \$100 million on computers while people wait in hallways. They wait in hallways while \$100 million, the largest expenditure in the history of the health care system in the province, goes to personal computers. An additional \$60 million is required by Winnipeg Health Authority.

Madam Speaker, I am trying to put a 40-minute speech into three minutes, so I hope members will bear with me.

Madam Speaker, what we have seen under this government is a Pharmacare program that the government campaigned on as the best in Canada in 1995, and now a Pharmacare program where two-thirds of the recipients have been cut off of Pharmacare, where individuals cannot get access to their drugs, where individuals in my constituency have been forced to mortgage their house to pay for their life-sustaining drugs. That

is a tragedy in Manitoba in the 1990s that individuals have to mortgage their houses to pay for their drugs.

So we are left after 11 long years of Tory mismanagement—people who pride themselves on management—they have left us with a health care system that is worse than ever since Medicare was introduced in this province, and instead we have schemes like \$100 million computer projects, \$20 million fast food, \$4 million plus expenses U.S. paid to Connie Curran. What is the crowning achievement this year of the Conservative government? A \$500,000 ad campaign paid by taxpayer dollars while people wait in the hallways to get service. A \$500,000 ad campaign, while people wait in the hallways, to tell us how good our health care system is.

There is no doubt that after 11 years of government, not only are they out of ideas, not only have they made the health care system far worse than it was when they inherited it, but it is very clear that now we are seeing cynical pre-election announcements, just like we did in 1995 by the former, former minister. When the minister announced in 1995, as the new minister is going to announce today, all of the capital projects, I said that this was an election ploy—and it is in print—and after the election they were going to cancel it. What did they do, Madam Speaker? They were re-elected and they cancelled it. The tragedy is not politics. It is that those 600, 800 personal care home beds were not built. People have to wait in hallways, and now we have had announcements again that those personal care home beds are being built again. I say: shame on this government, shame on your management. After 11 years of mismanagement, it is your time to go and spend some time in opposition. We will have the most comprehensive health care program that you have seen in 20 years in this province. We will turn it around. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1100)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I would like to be able to thank the member for Kildonan for his contributions, as restrained as they were. I hope that his colleagues will pass along my good words to him.

Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying, as I have now for 20 years, just about, in this House how much I appreciate the privilege that I get every time I can stand in this House and address the Speech from the Throne and talk about the issues that are of greatest importance to the people I serve and I represent and indeed all of us do throughout this province.

I want to begin by just saying welcome back to all of those members of the Legislature on both sides of the House—

An Honourable Member: We missed being here.

Mr. Filmon: I am going to talk about that. For the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I hope that he will give me a little bit of time to address those serious issues that he talked about. It was ironic that for five months all we heard from members opposite was: let us back in the House. Let us at him. We have got all these issues that we want to do. You know, we have been here now for almost two weeks and we have had absolutely zero in the way of new issues, new questions, or new ideas. All they have done is rehash all the old things that they talked about when we were here last time in the House. It was just kind of a replay, roll the videotape again from last session. That is all they have, and of course people all over the province are saying: Is that all there is? Is this what this was all about? Is there anything more that they have that they are hiding? Maybe they are keeping it in reserve.

That is the way it is. As a matter of fact, in preparing for these remarks, I just picked up one of my clippings. I have extensive clippings to resource, but this was about their annual general meeting just a few weeks ago. The story says: Task force offers few ideas to help kids, is the headline. It is from the March 1 Winnipeg Free Press. It says: There was plenty of rhetoric but few concrete solutions yesterday from an NDP task force that spent more than a year looking at ways to improve the lives of Manitoba children.

So there they are working for over a year and they have the best minds in their party. Now, that, of course, is an oxymoron, but they have the best minds in their party putting

together their plan for the future for the children of this province, and they do not have any ideas. But of course when they were embarrassed by the question by the reporters, Chairman Lawrie Cherniack provided a brief overview to the delegates. Then he said that things were desperate for children. But, when he was asked for anything concrete, he said: Well, just, you know, wait. We will have some ideas. Give us another year or turn government over to us. Give us some way in which we can act. Trust us, I mean, we will have some ideas.

That is unbelievable, but that is New Democrat through and through and through, every member of the New Democratic Party in this House and every member in their executive and beyond. No ideas, absolutely no solutions, but plenty of criticism and plenty of rhetoric, day after day after day.

Madam Speaker, I am not sure if you have felt the same sort of sense as we watched Question Period every day with no new ideas, nothing new to offer, no excitement, nothing. Just the sound of the air going out of the balloon is all that you hear day after day after day.

Anyway, I do welcome the members opposite back despite their lack of ideas, despite their lack of any positive contributions for the future of this province. It is nice to have them there, and it is reassuring to know that our judgment about them and their capability and the public's judgment about them and their capability have not changed in the number of months that we have been out of session. We get the same old, same old day after day, and the public, of course, is well aware of that.

Madam Speaker, I neglected, I got a little bit side-tracked there by a comment from the members opposite, to say how much we appreciate your presence here presiding over the Chamber in the fair and even-handed way in which you always do. Despite occasional criticism, despite occasional, I think, inappropriate comments and disrespect from members opposite from time to time, you have an even-handed, fair-minded way of dealing with the issues here. We respect that very, very greatly.

I want to, of course, welcome back the table officers and the staff and thank them for all the contributions that they make to the workings of this House and this Legislature and to the people of Manitoba. I want to thank and welcome the pages and say how happy we are to be able to see them here and to have yet another fresh influx of youth, enthusiasm, and talent to support the efforts of this Legislature, and we hope that they will find this to be not only an experience that provides them with information and knowledge but an experience that they look back on as an enjoyable one. We hope that it is always that for them as they look back on their days as a page here, that they will know that they have made a contribution to democracy in our province.

I also want to take the time to thank in particular four individuals on our side of the House who have chosen not to run again in the forthcoming election campaign, whenever that may be. I say that in every case our lives have been enriched by their presence among us as colleagues, as friends, and as fellow workers in the road to democracy in this province. I want to endorse very, very strongly the things that they have done for the people of Manitoba and their constituents.

I begin with Jim Downey, the member for Arthur-Virden, who preceded me in this Legislature, who welcomed me when I arrived in this Legislature, and who served, in so many different ways, the people of this province. I remember Jim Downey as the forceful, aggressive, very upbeat Minister of Agriculture in this province who made all of us sit up and take notice when he said he was going to wrestle the Wheat Board to the ground on a particular issue. Thankfully for us, the Wheat Board continues to exist, but the Wheat Board also has changed for the better as a result of the influence of a very, very strong-willed and well-informed and very caring representative of the agricultural community in Jim Downey. The Wheat Board continues to look at new and better ways in which it can expand the agricultural industry of our province in positive ways.

* (1110)

Jim Downey, more recently as the Deputy Premier, as the Minister of Industry, Trade and

Tourism, has been—I would say I would get almost no argument from this—in fact, last evening at the Invest Manitoba forum banquet, several people came up to me and said that there has been no greater promoter of Manitoba over the last decade than Jim Downey. He has ranged far and wide throughout the world in ensuring that everybody knew what a great place Manitoba was to live, to invest, to raise a family, to be able to prosper and grow. Whether it is trade or investment, in job creation, he has been very centrally involved in all of these statistics that I am going to talk about in just a little while of the great achievements of our province in all those areas of economic opportunity.

Every step of the way, of course, he was accompanied by his wife, Linda. Although, members opposite from time to time took cheap shots—and continue to, as the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) just did—I can tell you that Manitobans got two for the price of one. Linda Downey was an unpaid, unremunerated spouse who gave immense talent, knowledge and support to the job of raising the profile of Manitoba, of increasing investment in Manitoba, of increasing our markets for trade. Linda Downey was the type of person who would go out on a trade mission and she would have her purse full of little products that were Manitoba made. She would have bought these things to show people all the different things that we make that you might not be aware of.

Time and time and time again, I learned about Manitoba and the products it produces, and the innovation that was going on throughout our rural community because of Linda Downey and her interest. In every place that she was, she would pick up a new idea, a new suggestion for something that we could do to promote better the province of Manitoba and its people. What did she get from the members opposite? Criticism, cheap shots, all the kind of abuse that they are known for, Madam Speaker.

The member for Osborne, of course, is responsible for the Status of Women and jumps on another woman and criticizes her at every opportunity. That is the kind of thing—petty, and we do not appreciate that, but Manitobans do not appreciate it either. I can tell you that I had not too long ago two different media people say to

me that all you need to do to ensure success in the next campaign is invite the member for Osborne to be regularly on the media, radio and television, and every time she opens her mouth she loses support for the New Democratic Party. That is the kind of negativity, that is the kind of stuff that they have become known for.

The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), of course, as a former auctioneer was quite shy coming to this House, but he overcame that shyness with a great deal of hard work and effort, and he eventually became, as I say, the greatest promoter that this province has seen in decades. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude, not only the people of his constituency, who I know are immensely proud of him and his efforts, but all Manitobans who have been touched by his extra efforts, and it was not just the on-the-job things. I mean I have been to many an event at which the member for Arthur-Virden would stand up on a volunteer basis and have an impromptu auction and raise money for local charities as he did time and time again. He once auctioned off one of my ties for a \$150; the problem was it was worth \$200. Just kidding, I buy everything wholesale. I have never had a tie worth more than \$20. Anyway, the person who got it thought it was worth \$200, I should say. In any case, we thank him very much for everything that he has done, Madam Speaker.

The next long-serving member who is stepping down is my colleague the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), another member of the class of '77 who was here when I arrived in this Legislature and we were seatmates. We sat next to each other in the seats of the Minister of Urban Affairs and the Minister of Government Services, and we became friends instantly. I think in my first throne speech session we jointly moved and seconded the throne speech, and we both really hit it off and got along well.

I went out many times with him to various public events to learn from the master about how you really build a constituency from the bottom up. Albert Driedger took what was traditionally known throughout the early part of this century as a swing seat and turned it into a solid Conservative seat. He did it along with his wife, Mary, who was a tremendous partner for him,

tremendous asset not only to Albert but to the people of—at that time of course it was Emerson constituency and then eventually he became the representative for Steinbach. They would go door to door to door, from farm to farm, make friends at every stop, encourage people to get involved and created a network of support and an active community interest that ultimately became an absolutely solid foundation for Progressive Conservative voting in that area, changed it completely, so much so that even some of his former opponents are now very active members of our party. I met one when I was with our member for St. Norbert, and this is a former New Democratic candidate who is now one of our most active supporters and vice-president of the constituency association in St. Norbert. A lot of that had to do with Albert Driedger making friends everywhere he went and ensuring that people had trust and confidence in him and our party and our government.

Of course, as an almost nine-year member of cabinet, he had tremendous achievements there. In the area of Natural Resources, of course, our whole commitment to the World Wildlife Fund's Endangered Spaces Campaign was quarter-backed by Albert and the work that he did throughout that period of time that he was the Minister of Natural Resources. So many contributions towards our parks and our special places, the way in which we now ensure that we are leaving a legacy for the future of Manitobans and their children because of much of the efforts of Albert Driedger.

I have to tell you that I remember caucus debates over things like barbless hooks and catch-and-release policies, and I remember how people argued that Americans would not come here to fish or people from outside the province, and we now are regarded as leaders in Canada because we have preserved our wildlife resources, our fishery, some of the best fisheries in Canada.

Last year I was up in a northern fishing camp, and I spoke with Americans, some from Texas, some from Minnesota, some from the Midwest. I asked them all about these things, and they had been in previous years in northern Quebec, in Northern Ontario. They said this was

some of the finest fishing, in fact, the finest fishing that they had experienced in Canada, and they said they would come back. The reason was those visionary things that Albert Driedger had the courage to convince our government to do over the years and have changed entirely our prospects for tourism and northern economic development.

So obviously in Highways and Transportation, Albert had great achievement and made many friends. Certainly all of us now know the terror with which the heavy construction industry views even the remote possibility that members opposite would ever be in office because they remember all the potholes and the devastation to our road network that was left by the New Democrats who starved highway construction because they believed there was not enough votes in building roads, so short-sighted when you consider that this province is built on trade, transportation and distribution. They do not even understand the relationship, because members opposite, every time there is an announcement that there might be some jobs lost in the railway industry, they keep saying: Oh, we used to have so many more jobs. What they do not realize of course is the railways across Canada have diminished, and we have had a proportionate share.

* (1120)

What they do not realize is that this has become the centre of trucking in Canada. Eight of the 13 largest trucking firms in Canada are headquartered here. We have over 30,000 people employed in transportation distribution, more than ever before in our history. Members opposite of course are living in the past as they always are. The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is chirping away, and he does not know anything about transportation distribution because he does not understand that we are dealing in a world in which it is multimodal, that there are opportunities that continue to increase and grow for air transport. There are opportunities that continue to increase and grow in trucking, and that it is a big picture. But of course there is a lot of tunnel vision opposite, and the member for Transcona represents that very well.

I want to also recognize the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) who also is not running in the next election. The member for Springfield, of course, came to us as arguably one of the best-informed people on agriculture in this province. I remember him before he joined government as a professor in agricultural economics at the university, and many of my friends with a background in agriculture talked about his knowledgeability, talked about his well-informed position on so many national and international issues in agriculture. I know we could always turn to him for a cogent analysis on issues of international trade in agriculture, and all of those things. He, probably more than anybody else, led the way in Canada in getting the transition that needed to be taken for farmers as they faced so many different pressures in world trade changes.

I remember us arguing for particular things in the GATT round of negotiations. The position that Manitoba had on the table invariably was the position that ultimately Canada took because it was the best position to take in a lot of these trade negotiations. We had to get rid of all of those subsidies from the European community, from the United States. We have not been totally successful in that, and it is rearing its ugly head again; but, for a period of time, because Canada's position, which basically was the position of the member for Springfield and his people who developed it, was that we had to stop these subsidy wars because we had to go to the most efficient and lowest cost producers prevailing and not use government treasuries to impact and unnecessarily influence the agriculture trade in the world.

Then of course, very much so, Manitoba, through the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay), was instrumental in the development of things like GRIP and NISA in the aftermath of getting out of these kinds of subsidy wars. There still had to be things that were not GATTable, but that were able to be used as assurances on a long-term basis of income support for farmers. They were not perfect. Believe me, none of these programs end up being perfect. There are always concerns about them, and whether or not there are better ways of doing it. We continue to struggle for better

ways, but certainly the member for Springfield was always looking for creative solutions and better ways of ensuring the long-term sustainability of our farm economy and our farm community.

I can tell you that the whole effort towards diversification and value-adding, which has put us now light-years ahead of where we used to be decades ago when we were just growing whatever was the easiest, whether it is wheat or whatever, I mean today we are in a situation in which last year the value of our canola production and our pork production exceeded the value of our wheat production. We are now the largest edible bean producer in Canada, the second largest potato producer in Canada. We have changed in so many ways to diversify, to strengthen and to stabilize our farm economy. There is much more that can and will be done, but I know that the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) was so much a part of that.

His wife, Kay, of course, was with him every step of the way. Nobody attended any more functions than Kay did, perhaps Linda Downey, I am not sure, but every time you went to an event in rural Manitoba there were Glen and Kay, and it is because of that that they did such a tremendous job, first representing Virden, secondly representing Springfield, and in that field of, firstly, agriculture, and then of course they have made many people impressed and gained many supporters in the whole field of heavy construction. Again, as Minister of Highways and Transportation, he knew and understood the issues that had to be addressed and was more than willing and more than capable of taking them on and making positive change.

So the member for Springfield is one who leaves this Chamber with a tremendous legacy of achievement and certainly somebody who has made his constituents proud but indeed has served the people of Manitoba in a tremendous way, and I thank him for all of that.

The member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) is also leaving us and she has taken on many, many big challenges, and she has taken those challenges on and contributed her knowledge, her insight, her training as an educator, as a child

psychologist, her training in the law and in all those respects, but most of all she has a Ph.D. in working with people. The member for Fort Gary has made many, many friends, countless friends throughout the length and breadth of this province and beyond by virtue of her understanding of people and her ability to seek consensus and overcome difficult challenges.

I remember very well, and it brings to mind, of course, the great sadness that we all feel and will have an appropriate time to address that in our condolence motion for the member for St. Boniface, but I remember the workings to bring of course French language governance into our school system in Manitoba and how long and hard the member for Fort Garry worked then as the Minister of Education. The support that she received from some members in this Chamber, particularly the late member for St. Boniface who, in a nonpartisan way, wanted to find the right solution to an issue that had plagued us for a long, long time and ultimately took a Supreme Court decision to resolve, and then we had to implement the solution in a way that met the tests of the Supreme Court which was not easy. The member for Fort Garry was principally responsible for bringing it to a conclusion that was seen to be not only acceptable but perhaps better than solutions that have been implemented across Canada.

So she has taken on major challenges. She certainly had major challenges as the first woman Attorney General in Canada, and she did us proud as an Attorney General and brought in laws that are the example of the best in Canada in family dispute resolution, in all of those, and in reducing the incidence of family violence, whether it is dedicated prosecutors, dedicated court, all of those matters to be dealt with have seen us as the leaders in Canada. The anti-stalking legislation that was promoted, developed under the stewardship of the member for Fort Garry, these are all ways in which we are seen as leaders in Canada, thanks to her efforts.

* (1130)

Her husband, Mitch, of course, was very much part and parcel of all of her efforts and continues to be one of her biggest boosters, one

of our biggest boosters at every event that I see him. I say that as well in terms of her work on the Status of Women, immense legacy there, having appointed people as a member of cabinet, as the first woman to be the Provincial Auditor, first woman to be our Chief Judge, first woman to be our Provincial Trustee. The statistics that I saw recently of how many dozens of women we now have in the executive service category of our province, many, many times the numbers that were ever achieved by members opposite who talk, who have all the rhetoric and talk about women and women's issues and never walk the talk, never walked the talk when they had a chance.

The member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) has put us in the leading areas in Canada. You know, even the City of Winnipeg recognized the talent that she had showcased and raised to senior management levels by virtue of hiring firstly our Provincial Auditor, then nextly Gail Stephens, the Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Winnipeg. These are all people who were allowed to develop their talents and be promoted within a supportive environment in our public administration in the province. More and more of our women are seeing that we have removed the glass ceiling for them, and we have removed the opportunity for them to be discriminated against and created an opportunity for growth and personal development because of the efforts of so many, but certainly the member for Fort Garry was very centrally involved in that.

I want to say as well that I personally, and I think many colleagues, will miss the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). I still see him out at public events. He was at the first hearings on the Young Offenders Act changes. He is now practising his skills in getting back into shape to be an officer in the Winnipeg—[interjection]

We do not want to talk about the doughnut shops. No, no. Just kidding, just kidding. But I have admired the work of the member for The Maples because he has been so involved in community-based organizations, with respect to youth particularly. I know I have seen him at so many different events at which he has accompanied youth from the high schools in his

area and come out to these events, supported them, encouraged them.

An Honourable Member: The youth justice committee.

Mr. Filmon: Youth justice committee, so many different ways in which I know why he was so highly respected and highly regarded by the people of his constituency, because he was a good MLA. He was and is a good person who has tremendous commitment to his community and to the people of this city and this province. I, for one, am going to miss his integrity, his honesty and his forthrightness in this House in calling a spade a spade and being able to put his views on the record without fear or favour of anybody else's views in this Legislature. I wish him well in returning to his old career, a career that I believe we ought to respect very greatly and support very greatly, and that is the maintenance of law and order in this province.

Madam Speaker, I want to speak briefly about so many highlights in the throne speech that are very important. First and foremost, of course, the sense of optimism and confidence that is in this province today. It is one that is growing every year, year upon year upon year. Young people are coming back to our province, seeking their careers, and staking their future here. It is so exciting to see and to listen to those people.

Several of us were at that dinner last evening, and I turned to the member for Arthur-Virden and said: You know, look at this crowd that are here as entrepreneurs and investors and people who are working with the creation of jobs and opportunities here, and take a look at the average age. I will tell you, it was not much above 35. These are the people who are staking their livelihoods on making this a better, more exciting, more productive place to be. Boy, it was so good to see all of that last evening and during the day yesterday at that Invest Manitoba conference, but that is what has produced the all-time record levels that we are seeing in this province, all-time record levels of economic growth and opportunity being created.

Exports are at an all-time record high. You know, we went from \$3 billion a year of exports

from this province in 1990 to \$7.7 billion last year, phenomenal growth. Nowhere else in the country has that been exceeded. A tremendous number of jobs, because for every billion dollars of export growth, you add 11,000 jobs. So what we are talking about is there are over 50,000 jobs by virtue of that export growth from 1990 to 1998.

The members opposite ran against free trade. They hated free trade. Even in 1995, their candidates were going to the door saying that free trade is a bad idea. It reminded me of when I was in the debate at MAST with the Leaders of the other two parties. The Leader of the New Democratic Party, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) said, you know, in the coming global economy—the coming global economy? I mean, holy mackerel. Talk about Rip Van Winkle. I mean, this guy, where has he been for the last decade? But they were opposed to free trade, they were opposed to the creation of opportunities, and they still are to this day. You talk about living in the past and just not getting it—duh—there they are.

Capital investment is at an all-time record high in this province, and in fact we have had seven consecutive years of growth in private capital investment. No other province in Canada can say that.

Our numbers of jobs last year hit in the seasonal peak an all-time record level again, and it was the third or fourth consecutive year of hitting an all-time record peak; 560,000 Manitobans employed. They earned almost \$14 billion in wages and salaries last year, which again was an all-time record level of income for the people of Manitoba.

The members opposite are always wanting to compare themselves to some New Democratic administration who they think might give them a leg up as being maybe an example that they could do something worthwhile. They often-times compare themselves to Saskatchewan. I will tell you a number of things. Saskatchewan last year I believe added only 2,000 jobs. Manitoba added 10,000. This year we are projected to add another 7,000 or 8,000 or 10,000 jobs. Saskatchewan is expected to add zero jobs to their economy. Saskatchewan is in

the lowest three on almost all the economic forecasts, the lowest three for economic growth.

That is what the members opposite say, but in addition to that of course you have here a February 11, 1999, Western Producer article that says: more hospital doors may close in rural Saskatchewan. So even despite the fact that Saskatchewan has closed 52 rural hospitals and one urban hospital and even though they have done a great deal to try and keep things in balance, their economy is not diversified like ours. They do not have the diversification or the value-adding that you are seeing in rural Manitoba. It is not seen in rural Saskatchewan even in terms of one area that Saskatchewan used to have an advantage on us, which was in agriculture research.

* (1140)

We are getting Monsanto setting up the ag research centre for all of Canada here at the University of Manitoba. We are getting ag biotech research taking place in a whole variety of areas, because they know that this has become the most diversified, the most innovative, the most entrepreneurial part of the agricultural economy in all of Canada right here in our province. We are doing well in all respects.

I might say another thing, that members opposite oftentimes, and they will be, I predict, during the budget debate, criticizing the use of the rainy day fund. I want to just tell them that if they choose to they can read and learn a little about how Saskatchewan has been attempting to budget and finance over recent years. Do you know that in this past year Saskatchewan has taken over \$450 million out of their rainy day fund—it is what they call it—in order to keep their budget balanced? Now that rainy day fund, I might tell you, is made up of their revenues from liquor and gaming and all of those areas that they put aside in a separate little account that they call the rainy day fund. They have now got it down to the lowest level that it has been in a decade in order to try and keep their budget balanced through the tough times that we have.

It could also be that this is an election year and that they wanted to not only keep the budget balanced but do a little bit of tax reduction. Yet

members opposite are going to say, well, it is an election year and all those kinds of things, but what they do not acknowledge is that this is precisely what their colleagues in Saskatchewan have done, only in much greater degree than we have, in utilizing the rainy day fund.

We have balanced budgets, by law. We are paying down our debt, by law. All of these things members opposite are opposed to, absolutely opposed to. They are opposed to lowering taxes, if you can believe that. The members opposite say that they do not want to lower taxes. Well, Madam Speaker, I just want to give you a couple of examples of what happened under the six and a half years of NDP administration to taxes in this province.

The sales tax went up from 5 percent to 7 percent. They introduced and increased the payroll tax to 2 1/4 percent of payroll. They introduced a personal net income surcharge of 2 percent. They increased the corporation income tax from 15 percent to 17 percent, the highest in Canada. They increased the corporation capital tax from .2 percent to .3 percent and also introduced a .2 percent surcharge and increased the bank rate to 3 percent. They increased gasoline taxes from 6.4 to 8 cents a litre. They increased the diesel fuel tax from 5.7 to 9.9 cents a litre, railway fuel tax from 3.8 to 13.6 cents a litre. The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is red in the face, and he should be.

They introduced the land transfer tax. They increased the tobacco tax. They increased tax upon tax upon tax. They increased \$820 million a year of taxation.

The New Democrats never saw a tax they did not like or did not hike.

The one administration that they rarely compare themselves to these days is the NDP government in British Columbia. I want to tell you that the people who worked for the Pawley-Doer administration here, those who were out of a job, went to B.C. They did not go the Saskatchewan; they went to B.C. So all of those things that are happening in British Columbia are happening with the refugees from the New Democratic Party in Manitoba at the helm. You have a union boss in British Columbia leading

the party and a union boss in Manitoba leading the party. The parallels are awesome, I have to tell you, just awesome.

I will depart from that for a minute because I do not have a lot of time, and I want to talk about health care. I want to talk about the fact that we are in the process of investing massively now with some help from the federal government, we are investing very heavily in health care in the areas of principal need, and that is almost over 600 personal care beds that are under development right at the present time to take the pressure off our hospitals. We are investing in all of the technologies that will get down our waiting lists for diagnostic services and, of course, for surgery. We are ensuring that our health care system is going to meet the needs of today and the future, not the needs of 30 years ago.

What do we hear from members opposite? Oh, well, they do not give us any specifics. They do not tell us any better ideas. They just say they are against anything that this government does. They do not have one new idea. They have absolutely no idea of how to solve any of our problems. The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is chirping there, and I was going to speak about education and she reminds me of something. Members opposite are opposed to testing in schools, and the reason is, of course, they do not want to know whether or not our children are really learning. So now we have an understanding of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister was recognized to continue his debate. The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Here is a folder that was just sent out at public expense by the member for Wellington to her constituency, and what does it say? Centra deal, then hydro privatization. H-Y-D-O. I presume that it rhymes with Fido, her Leader. That is what a public school education did by the New Democrats, for a New Democrat, and that is why they do not want to be tested, because they do not meet any test of knowledge, understanding or anything.

Madam Speaker, I just want to speak very briefly because I am running out of time. I would like to read into the record a page and a half from the Monnin inquiry report, Madam Speaker. It is page 57. Now members opposite, I know, are terribly embarrassed by this, and the jelly spine from Concordia, of course, can talk here, but he will not say a thing to the little guy sitting in the back row who obviously has something on him. Here is what it says about the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), page 57: "I also wish to express my views on an incident which occurred during the investigative process. Sale is the NDP member for the constituency of Crescentwood. He was deeply involved in an investigation of his own and in the debate in the Legislature prior to the establishment of this Commission. My investigators held a formal interview with him on August 5, 1998.

"On September 21 or 22 he participated in a three-way telephone call with Sorokowski and the peripatetic Kim Sigurdson. He learned that Sorokowski was to be interviewed within a few days by Commission counsel and the two investigators. In response to Sorokowski stating that he was not keen on meeting with the investigators, Sale, by his own admission, told Sorokowski ' . . . it is my understanding that if you don't want to meet with the investigators, you don't have to.' Sale subsequently met with and interviewed Sorokowski before his interview with the Commission investigators."

* (1150)

What is wrong with that? Well, No. 1, the information he was giving was not only wrong, it was contrary to the requirements of our legislation, that, as is said by Justice Monnin, our legislation says "they must tell the truth and not rely on a statement to the effect 'I was not asked.'" So he was counselling people not to appear before the inquiry. He was telling them, contrary to the law, that they did not have to testify. Now we know that of the two people he was on the phone with, one, Kim Sigurdson, did not show and the other one eventually did.

So, Madam Speaker, we have one member of this Legislature implicated by the Monnin inquiry, the member for Crescentwood (Mr.

Sale), who was implicated not only for going against the things that he was speaking of in this Legislature, where he was saying: we want a full and open inquiry. His Leader and his party were saying that. He was behind the scenes counselling people to break the law and not appear before the inquiry.

That is ethics for you, Madam Speaker. But this is not new. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), when he was a member of the Crown Corporations Council, a New Democratic appointment to that council, was going out using the information from the Crowns of who was getting contracts from those Crowns, and he was then going and calling those people to raise funds for the New Democratic Party. That is what he was doing in the '80s.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the First Minister is clearly engaging in unparliamentary language, specifically Beauchesne Citation 484. (3), which makes it clear that a member shall not impute any member's unworthy motives. In this case, the Premier is making accusations of counselling for illegal activity, which, I think, is not only unparliamentary but definitely a rather bizarre statement by the Premier. I notice that he has not referenced the numerous parts of the Monnin report which have pointed to at least four individuals, all of whom are Conservatives, as having broken the law, and I would note that he did not reference the infamous comments about Judge Monnin never having seen as many liars. Those liars were Conservative members, including his former chief of staff, his campaign manager, his chief civil servant, his chief fundraisers.

I would note, apart from the irony of this Premier, who supposedly last week was sorry and learned his lessons from the Monnin inquiry, it is clear that today he abuses our rules by making comments that are totally unparliamentary and certainly unworthy of a Premier of this province who should know better.

I would like to ask, Madam Speaker, that you call this First Minister to order immediately,

ask him to withdraw those comments. He can engage in debate on the Monnin inquiry any time he wants, but he should not be making accusations which are totally fallacious and totally against our rules of this House.

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

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, all I am doing is quoting what is in Monnin. This is what Mr. Monnin said: "I would have expected Mr. Sale, a member of the Legislature, to urge in the strongest terms possible cooperation with the Commission's investigators. His advice is directly contrary to what he was expounding in the Legislature—a full inquiry in order to get to the bottom of the matter.

"I note that the 1998 amendments to the two statutes in question now provide that all persons called upon either at the investigative stage or at the hearing stage must co-operate and testify fully. They must produce all relevant and available documents and exhibits whether investigators require same or not. They must tell the truth and not rely on a statement to the effect 'I was not asked.'"

That is what the member opposite was urging them not to do is what Mr. Monnin says is required by our law.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe I have heard enough advice on the point of order, and I will—

An Honourable Member: I do not think so, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind all honourable members that a member has the right to speak when the member is recognized. I did not see the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and for him to utter what I consider almost a threat to the Speaker is terrible.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood has been recognized.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, if you perceived—I want to just apologize, get it on the high road.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am already on a point of order, and I have recognized the honourable member for Crescentwood to speak to the same point of order.

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, point of order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask for the co-operation of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) to deal with the point of order that the honourable member for Thompson raised. I have been advised you must deal with the point of order on the floor first.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, first of all, if you perceived any remark on my part to be a threat to you, I apologize for that. It certainly was not my intent.

Madam Speaker, Citation 489 of Beauchesne and Citation 492 both have clear indications that one member ought not to accuse another member in the House of an illegality or of counselling or committing an illegality. The proper place for that to take place, of course, is outside the House where the courts are equipped to deal with that sort of thing.

Further, I would simply say that the information I gave to Mr. Sorokowski was found to be true and correct in law by the commissioner in the hearings, as the transcript will say. Secondly, immediately when I told him that it was not required under law that he speak voluntarily, I said: You will then be subpoenaed and you will have to speak. That is also in the transcript, I believe in four different places. I not only counselled Mr. Sorokowski to comply with the law; I counselled Kathy Aiken and virtually everyone else we brought forward to do the same. To suggest we were not interested in having people come forward to the commission is ludicrous in the extreme. It is incorrect on the record, and it is incorrect in law. The minister was unparliamentary on at least two citations in Beauchesne.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I will take the matter under advisement to consult with the authorities and report back to the House.

* * *

* (1200)

Madam Speaker: Pursuant to our subrule 40.(4), I must interrupt the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that is the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: THAT a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows: We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address us at the opening of the present session.

Is the House ready to adopt the motion?

An Honourable Member: No.

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. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, please, Madam Speaker.

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

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that is the motion for the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Driedger (Steinbach), Dyck, Enns, Faurichou, Filmon, Findlay, Gillehammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, 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, Hickes, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

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

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think if you would

canvass the House you would find a willingness to call it 12:30.

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 12:30? [agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 16, 1999

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