

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 29, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Extended Care Bed Report

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, for 20 months we have been asking this Government for its policy on extended-treatment beds in the Province of Manitoba. For nine months we have been told consistently that a paper would be prepared and would be ready. First we were told May; then we were told August; then we were told the fall; then we were told December.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has had access to this paper since the 2nd of January. Will the Deputy Premier now make a commitment to table that review in this House immediately?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): I would be happy to take this question as notice for the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). I am sure he will take the question very seriously and get back to the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) as soon as possible.

Mrs. Carstairs: The problem is that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has not taken this issue seriously since he became the Minister of Health. Like every other paper that is conducted for this Government, the legislators of this province are the last to receive it. This paper is now being widely distributed around this province, and I would like to table it in this House so all Opposition Members can finally get to see it.

Would the Deputy Premier (Mr. Cummings) tell this House when they will act on the recommendations that are in this report, which the Minister has assured us he will respond to as soon as he has received the report?

Mr. Derkach: This is the second day that we see the Members of the Opposition tabling reports that, in fact, have been asked for and Members of the Government have indicated that they would table in any event as soon as enough copies have been made available.

Mr. Speaker, once again, because I am sure that the Minister of Health would like to respond more specifically to the question, I will take the question as notice on his behalf.

* (1335)

Deer Lodge Hospital Extended Care Beds

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has consistently told this House that the decision about beds lying vacant at Deer Lodge will be made by this review. Can the Acting Minister of Health tell this House, in that this report indicates that 67 of the beds at Deer Lodge should be used for rehabilitation and 25 for personnel care home beds, will this Government make a commitment to open those beds in the month of February?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Acting Minister of Health.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I find it almost ironic for the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), who would kick 40 percent of our senior citizens out of personal care homes, to now want to open this up immediately. I can assure the Member opposite that the Minister of Health will respond to her concern as soon as he is back in the House.

Municipal Hospitals Upgrading Funds

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Minnedosa Tribune for Wednesday, November 22, 1989. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has always stood for quality care, and the most quality enriched care can be provided in people's homes if we have the community services that kind of care will allow. The people who have been living in extended care beds at the Municipal Hospital have been living in substandard beds for years and years and years. This Minister made a commitment to act on the Municipal Hospital as soon as he received this report. Will the Acting Minister of Health now confirm to this House that the Municipal Hospital will get the renovations and the new hospital that have been planned?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal motto is spend, spend, spend. I can assure you that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is very serious about all issues as they relate to the health of Manitobans. To that extent, I think the Minister of Health has done an admirable job since we have taken Government. I know that the Leader of the Opposition would like the question answered in more detail. For that reason, I will take this question too as notice for the Minister of Health.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, it is not admirable care and it is not good planning when people who have been in hospital for 35 years are asked to live in substandard conditions. That is the situation at the Municipal Hospital.

Health Care Extended Care Beds

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Will the Acting Minister of Health tell this House how Winnipeg is going to meet its necessary target as defined by this report when their construction permitted only 25 new beds in this city in the last two years of their administration?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again for the information of the Leader of the Opposition Party, this Government has spent \$250 million on capital renovations and new capital facilities in this province. That is an unprecedented record for this province and we are certainly proud of that record. We will not allow Manitobans to go without care, not like the Leader of the Opposition who, when she goes outside of this city, can make all kinds of accusations including that she would take 40 percent of senior citizens—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Health Care Rural Services

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): With a final question to the Minister responsible for Rural Development, can the Minister responsible for Rural Development tell this House why the needs of rural Manitoba were not in any place addressed in this extended care bed report, not a mention of the needs of rural Manitoba?

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): The Honourable Leader of the Opposition asks a very valid question. Hospital care is a very important initiative and a very important issue in rural Manitoba. This Government, being a new Government, recognizes that. The Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has indicated very clearly in his capital budget that we are going to and intend to address the needs of rural Manitoba and in the reconstruction of some of the facilities. That has been made very clear by the Minister.

It is due to the neglect of the previous administration that we are now facing in rural Manitoba the kind of situation in health care that we are. As the Honourable Minister of Health has said many times, they are taking a good, hard look at that.

* (1340)

ERDAS Negotiations

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): My question is for the Minister responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst). Mr. Speaker, in 1984-85, Manitoba was one of the first provinces to sign a series of new, multiyear economic and regional development agreements with the federal Government. Those

agreements, which are the Port of Churchill Development, General Transportation Development, Forestry, Mineral Development, Cultural Industries Development, Agro-Food Development, Tourism Development, have been an important boost for our economy.

Now when our economy is sliding further into doom and gloom, we have learned that those agreements are in deep trouble. Can the Minister confirm that the amount of federal dollars for these agreements now sitting, or used to be sitting at \$250 million, is being reduced to \$60 million, a 75 percent drop by the federal Government?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I have to chuckle a little bit about the claims of the NDP with regard to these great agreements. The agreement they signed, an ERDA agreement, for instance on the airport in the City of Winnipeg, Transportation Agreement, whereby the federal Government had to do the improvements to the airport anyway and they guised it under an ERDA agreement to try and—of course, that was a federal Liberal Government too that did that. With regard—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ernst: With regard to the negotiations to ERDA replacement agreements, those negotiations are ongoing. I would indicate to you that we are anticipating approval by the federal Cabinet within the next couple or three weeks, and that agreement will encompass a number of issues, not just the question of a specific ERDA such as Tourism, or such as the planning agreement or some others, but will address a number of issues that we have been discussing with the federal Government.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: The point is that negotiations do not amount to much if you are being cut by 75 percent. That does not leave a lot of room to negotiate. My question to the Minister is this: what is the state of negotiations for each one of those agreements that I have listed? Which ones are not being renewed and why? How will the \$60 million total, that 75 percent reduction in federal monies, affect that decision for each of those agreements?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to my honourable friend across the way that the agreement that saw the expansion and renovations to the airport is not being renewed, because the work is completed.

I can also say that the agreement with regard to the grain handling equipment and dust collection equipment in Churchill will not be renewed because that has been completed as well.

So those that were allegedly ERDA agreements in fact were only federal Government expenditures that they would have had to make in any event. We are in the process of negotiating that agreement with the federal Government. It will encompass a number of

areas, areas much broader than what had been negotiated in the past, and we are anticipating that to be concluded within the next few weeks.

Impact Work Force

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, the Minister makes light of some very serious agreements that have benefited our economy and created jobs of incredible proportions for Manitobans. The Minister knows that forestry, mineral development, the Port of Churchill development, cultural industry development still require an enormous amount of work and leadership from Governments.

My question to the Minister is: how many jobs will be lost? How many fewer jobs will result as a result of this Minister's and this Government's incompetence around negotiations and this Government's inability to get a fair share of dollars from the federal Government?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I make not light of any of the work that was done under previous agreements. All I am suggesting is, under those agreements, they were guised as joint federal-provincial agreements when in fact they were federal responsibilities in total and in fact were carried out as such. So I make not light of those at all.

With regard to what is going to happen into the future, we are dealing with a number of issues much broader than what was narrowly focused under the earlier agreements previously. Mr. Speaker, we are working in that regard. As I have indicated twice already today, we expect an answer with respect to those within the next few weeks.

* (1345)

Core Area Renewal Agreement Negotiations

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I would like to ask a related question to the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme). Given that negotiations for the ERDAs are leaving Manitobans high and dry and given that the Core Area Agreement runs out in March 1991, can the Minister of Urban affairs give us any assurances that Core Area renewal is on track, that there will be a Core III? Can he tell us what progress he is making with ensuring federal dollars are put in the direction of this very important question of inner city and urban renewal?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Urban Affairs): First of all, Mr. Speaker, as an individual who was involved in the previous and the first Core Agreement and working to the second Core Agreement, I believe that the Core Agreement has been very, very important to the three levels of Government. We are having some informal discussions with the civic and the federal people, and as mentioned by the Member across the way it does not expire until '91. We will keep negotiating with those other three levels of Government. As she knows, it is a tri-level agreement. It needs requirement funds by all three levels of Government and when we come to that conclusion I will report to this House.

Rafferty-Alameda Dam Project Operation Startup

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I, with a lot of environmentally concerned people, were initially very happy on Friday evening when we heard about the setting up of an independent panel to review the Rafferty-Alameda project and the corresponding announcement in Regina by Mr. McLeod, the Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Power and Saskatchewan Water Corporation, to the same effect that construction would cease on Rafferty-Alameda.

Well, unfortunately things are not always what they appear to be, Mr. Speaker. Upon closer examination, we came to the conclusion that there seems to be some further problems with the continuing saga of Rafferty-Alameda. Saskatchewan has a valid operating licence and is contemplating operating that dam in its partial situation.

The question to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) is, given that operation of a 60 percent completed dam will have similar impacts to before with a fully completed dam, which is water quality down—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Is there a question here? Kindly put the question now, please.

Mr. Taylor: My question to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) is, what is he going to do about the fact that Regina, notwithstanding it is going to stop construction of the dam, contemplates operating it? What is he going to do given the impact will be contaminated fish, river silting in, water quality diminishing, water quantity down, water fall—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) was elated with the announcement that he saw on Friday regarding Rafferty-Alameda. They are faced with a dam that is partially constructed.

The ability of the Province of Saskatchewan to ensure public safety, I am sure, is one of the considerations that is being looked at between Minister Bouchard and Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has said, and I have no reason to doubt, they have voluntarily suspended all construction. Any other construction that is carried on in terms of the Rafferty Dam will be carefully scrutinized by the federal authorities to make sure that it does not indeed simply mean an ongoing construction but simply to stabilize the works that are in place.

Water Retention

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, George McLeod, the Minister responsible for SaskPower, told reporters Friday the province would keep the right to retain water and reduce the flow on the Souris River as it goes across the boundary into North Dakota. He further said the licence provides for the ability to retain

water. Albeit this is an incomplete structure, it is a structure just the same. I will table this for the House.

The question is not what are the minor works they are going to do to protect the construction. The question is, what is this Government going to do to make sure that Saskatchewan does not proceed and fill 60 percent of that reservoir, as it would appear they are capable of doing? They have the right to do now by the licence not being removed, and they are contemplating doing the same—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) would confirm the authenticity of his charges that he brings to this Legislature.

Under the agreement that was announced on Friday, Manitoba will achieve the requirements that we laid forward regarding Rafferty-Alameda. We will get the completion of the assessment. We will make sure the downstream impacts are either eliminated or mitigated. I think the Member for Wolseley should decide whether he is mad or whether he is elated or whether he wants to call out the bomb squad.

* (1350)

Mr. Taylor: I would like, Mr. Speaker, to call out the bomb squad and put a bomb under that Minister and get the Conservatives moving on the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I regret the remarks of the Honourable Member for Wolseley. It does absolutely nothing for the decorum in this Chamber, which we have said on previous occasions. Order, please.

Legal Compliance

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Wolseley kindly put his question now, please.

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask this Minister if he will convey Manitoba's concern to Mr. Lucien Bouchard, the federal Minister of Environment, over the precedent that he has set by paying compensation to Saskatchewan for their compliance with Canada's environment laws. I would like him to put on the record his position—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the issue of whether or not I am going to get blown out of the water on this next answer does not particularly bother me, because the fact is the federal Government is acknowledging that they need to clarify a federal environmental law. That is what has created

unnecessary havoc in the licensing of this particular dam site.

They are now proceeding to deal with that issue so that there is some clarity not only for Saskatchewan but for projects that take place in Manitoba. We need to be able to make sure that we are in a position to answer the federal concerns.

I can tell you that that is something we are pledged to do, one we will continue to do, and in that particular connotation we have already had several lengthy conversations with Mr. Bouchard on this issue. We are actively working with him to make sure that Manitoba and the federal Government understand each other's responsibilities.

Autopac Cyclical Renewals

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Autopac, MPIC. It is that time of year again when the Government dips into the pockets of Manitoba citizens.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for St. Norbert has the floor.

Mr. Angus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is that time of year when the Government-owned monopoly dips its hand into the pockets of the citizens of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years we have been concerned, the people of Manitoba have been concerned, about Autopac, its method of operation, its premiums and things of that nature. Judge Kopstein introduced a very lengthy report to which some of the recommendations were concurred in and implemented. A large number of them were not.

Mr. Speaker, as it is timely, has MPIC conducted any studies regarding the merits and costs of birth date renewals, as was recommended by the Kopstein Report, and would you share that information with the House please?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, we now see the Liberal version of public accountability when it comes to Crowns. They believe, as the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) clearly put on the record, that they are there to be controlled day by day by the Government. This corporation—

* (1355)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the rates that the Manitobans seeking automobile insurance this March will be paying are rates that were scrutinized in front of the Public Utilities Board and were established as

being appropriate and acceptable increases, given the cost of operation the corporation would face.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of his question was whether or not Autopac had considered the possibility of introducing cyclical renewals. I made that announcement several times in the last year and a half. The goal that the corporation has set for itself is to begin cyclical renewals in 1992.

Quarterly Payments

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Judge Kopstein on page 51 also suggested quarterly payments. The question is, why has this Government not, at the very least, introduced quarterly payment options to help alleviate the stretched budget of already overburdened Manitobans?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the corporation, in establishing its time payment process, has to take into consideration the fact that it cannot be seen to be collecting premiums after the insurance has been extended. In other words, premium is generally collected before insurance coverage is extended. Therefore, it is very difficult to extend into the quarterly payment system because you have to provide—and it was decided by the courts that there is a period of grace that must be provided. Therefore, the notices for approval or notices for collection of payments have to go out so far in advance that we would literally have an overlapping within the billings of the corporation when it sent bills out to the policyholders.

Mr. Speaker, they have endeavoured to make the time payment process as painless as possible, but it is never painless when we come to paying these types of bills. I can assure you they have attempted to make that as reasonable as possible and—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Merit Discounts

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans that have been judged at "no fault" in accidents are being penalized premiums by the surcharge method. Will the Government replace its accident surcharge system with a system of discounts on surcharges so that drivers without any "at fault" accidents can be rewarded with their good driving?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Insurance Corporation Act): The system that the corporation presently has in place—I believe there are 100,000 more drivers that are going to merit driving discounts within the corporation structure that is presently in place. It seems to me that structure does correctly benefit those people who have safe driving records.

I would suggest to the Member for St. Norbert that we can continue to modify and improve. We are working

on every aspect of that that is possible, but each improvement that we make on the merit or on the coverage that is made available for the dollars of premium charged ultimately have to be figured back into the premium cost. We want the system to be as fair as possible. I do not see that the Member has brought forward a strong enough case to do that ad hoc.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, have the Conservatives ever changed their tune on Autopac.

Health Care Professionals Negotiations

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My question is for the Deputy Premier (Mr. Cummings) and it is with regard to health care, and this is one area—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member's postscript obviously has nothing to do with your preamble, therefore is entirely out of order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the fact that the Conservatives have changed—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1400)

Mr. Ashton: —their tune on Autopac.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier and is in regard to health care, and an area I hope they will change their tune.

The president of the Manitoba Medical Association has stated, and this is a direct quote: "If the Conservative Government has its way, I believe that Medicare as we know it will soon be non-existent. This could lead to a two-tiered system with two different levels of health care being provided for two economic classes of people." That is what the doctors of this province are saying, and it is what many people in this province are increasingly saying.

What I would like to ask the Deputy Premier is, when is this Government going to reverse its current course of confrontation with doctors and nurses, Mr. Speaker? When is this Government going to realize the seriousness of what it is doing in the health care system, that we are headed for a two-tiered health care system if they do not withdraw from a course that has them set on a system right now of confrontation with both doctors and nurses in this province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, aside from reflecting on your position as Speaker, the Members also do not understand what confrontation means. I would like to know what it was called when they were trying to deal with the doctors, absolute confrontational attitude if ever it was epitomized in this province. It was an out-and-out war. We are prepared to negotiate with the doctors. We will negotiate in good faith, and we will make absolutely

sure that doctors of this province and the public of this province are properly served, because we are committed to the sustenance and continued support. We will stand behind the Medicare system in this province.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I hope they will change their course of action.

Health Care Extended Care Bed Report

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My supplementary question in regard to the continuing problems of crisis in the health care system is, when are they going to act on the recommendations of the extended care review in response to questions that were raised in this Legislature by Opposition Members in November, questions that were raised in Estimates, questions have been raised throughout this year as well in the current Session of the Legislature? What are they going to do with the crisis in extended care and emergency care in the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, now we see the one Opposition Party parrotting the other. They do not have anything new to bring up, just the question of health care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Acting Minister of Health indicated earlier that we will take the questions regarding the release of the report as notice on behalf of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and I would encourage the NDP Opposition not to work on fear and smear tactics in order to agitate the feelings of Manitobans regarding Medicare.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we are not resorting to those types of tactics. The Government through its inaction in health care, through its confrontation with the health care providers, is creating the atmosphere that we are dealing with.

Two-Tiered System

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to ask the Minister once again, in terms of statements, not coming from the New Democratic Party but coming from the doctors of this province, from the nurses, from patients, when are they going to deal with the growing crisis in this province in terms of health care that is leading, in the words of Dr. Bartlett, to a two-tiered health care system, one for the rich and one for everybody else in this province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated numerous times in this Legislature our support and our concern for the maintenance of the Medicare system in this province within the capabilities of this Government and within the financial capabilities of the province. It is obvious that the head of the doctors association is in a bargaining mode, and I categorically reject the charges that are coming from the NDP Health Critic.

Public Schools Finance Board Mandate

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) spouts frequently about the need to promote autonomy for school divisions. Yet when an individual board requests three times, not once, not twice, but three times, to have an unsafe school replaced, the Public Schools Finance Board makes the policy decision for that board. Last May, the Minister said, and I quote: school divisions have the responsibility of projecting their needs, whether it is in the north end of the city or in any other part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, when the Winnipeg 1 School Division did just that three times, ultimately, just who is responsible? When the requests were rejected all three times, who is responsible for a school having to close its doors—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Mr. Speaker, that is true that school boards do have autonomy over certain matters with regard to education. Mr. Speaker, it is also important to know that there are procedures to follow when there are capital expenditures to be made on behalf of students in this province. Those capital expenditures must come from the province. There is a process to follow in terms of applying for the replacement of a school or the building of a new school. There are criteria that have to be met in order for that building to be replaced.

Unfortunately, in some circumstances there are situations where school populations are declining where there are other schools in the neighbouring area that can absorb the number of students available. For that reason, the Public Schools Finance Board has the responsibility to make those decisions and to make sure that the school division is apprised of the reasons for the decision.

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, there are enough spaces available in community schools—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Winnipeg School Division Enrollment Projections

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): Winnipeg No. 1 is the largest school division in the province, Mr. Speaker, with unique needs.

Margaret Scott is only one of nine schools that was built between 1919 and 1921. Will the Minister immediately review the enrollment projections and current available spaces in the other nine elderly schools in Winnipeg No. 1 so that the same sort of disruption does not occur in such a hurry in these schools?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Obviously, the Member for Sturgeon Creek

(Mrs. Yeo), who used to be a school board member, does not understand the process that is to be followed in order to replace schools.

Mr. Speaker, in the division that she represented, there were school closures after school closures because populations were declining. She was a member of a board that made those decisions. Now she is suggesting when there are not adequate numbers of students to build a school that we should build a school because Winnipeg No. 1 has requested it. That is a foolish and irresponsible position.

Mrs. Yeo: I understand the process. This Minister does not respect the process.

Is this Minister suggesting schools that are located in areas like St. James-Assiniboia are identical to schools that are located in the core area of this largest school division in the province?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker the fact is that I do follow the procedures that are in place and that is that the Public Schools Finance Board will make decisions and make those recommendations to me and we will follow them.

When there are not sufficient numbers of students in a school to warrant replacement that school will not be replaced, especially if there are four schools within a half mile of that school which can absorb every student in that particular building.

Bill No. 42 Standing Committee Referral

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Churchill.-(interjection)- Order, please. The Honourable Member for Churchill.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, day by day we are hearing more reports about poor housing conditions and the hardship that those conditions are creating for Manitoba families and tenants in the city. Manitobans deserve quality housing and they deserve strong legislative support to provide them with the protection to afford them with that quality housing. Bill 42, The Residential Tenancies Act, which was passed before Christmas, will provide stronger support for tenants.

My question to the Minister is, why has the Government not yet brought that Bill forward to a standing committee so it can be reviewed, brought back into this House for third reading and passed quickly so that the protection afforded to tenants in that Bill will be available as soon as possible to protect against conditions that we are hearing about every day?

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we had heard much about the lack of unity in the New Democratic Party. The fact is that if the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) would get in touch with his House Leader and put his request to the House Leader that issue would come up amongst the House Leaders. The fact is it is very apparent that there is a breakdown in communication between the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) and his House Leader, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Bill No. 42 Landlord Lobby Group

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear from the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) on this. I believe a strong landlord lobby is having its effect on the Government and, while they are anxious to proceed to strike deals with land developers very quickly, they are less anxious to continue on with this work to protect tenants.

I would ask the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) why it is he has not talked to his House Leader to ask his House Leader who has full responsibility for scheduling committees, to get that Bill before committee, so landlords can be afforded the protection they deserve.

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, by the closing remark—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, by the closing remark, we can see why this legislation was left so long and took 15 years, and it took this Government to put it before this House.

To the Member across the way, there are all types of groups that will lobby the Minister, will lobby the staff. There are all types of groups. There are tenant groups out there that I am still meeting with. There are land groups I am still out there meeting with. I will continue to meet with those people. It is a very large Bill. We are still on track to bring forward this legislation to this House during this Session.

Mr. Cowan: Both tenants and landlords would want to see this matter resolved and I know that tenants' groups are pushing to have it brought before the standing committee.

* (1410)

Veterans' Manor MHRC Restrictions

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): On a related matter, those parties involved in the construction of the Veterans' Manor should be congratulated for the work they have done in improving quality housing for many Manitoba residents. Can the Minister investigate the concerns which have been expressed to myself and also publicly that some restrictive policies by MHRC regarding the moving of those veterans already in subsidized housing into Veterans' Manor is not being allowed to ensure that all veterans have access to this quality housing?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Housing): I am glad the Member has brought this concern to the House, because this was a priority of this particular Government. We have been congratulated by the veterans' housing project for conducting and going

through with this project at a very, very fast pace. I have investigated what the Member has talked about. This Government does not support what a staffperson brought forward, this information mentioning that Jack's Place could not be looked at for tenants to be brought forward.

At the request of this Minister, I have instructed my staff to be meeting with the Veterans' board of directors at 2 p.m. this afternoon to make sure that everyone is available, an opportunity, and especially our veterans who we are looking at to come forward to apply for this project.

Used Vehicles Safety Standards

Mr. Ed Mandrake (Assiniboia): Recently we learned that other provinces are dumping unsafe vehicles which are purchased by low income and senior citizens. My question to the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) is, how many unsafe vehicles were dumped in Manitoba through the auction process?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): That information I do not have available to me at this time. I do not know whether we can even make it available. I just want to indicate that we have our safety standards that we basically have applied in this province. My recent correspondence with the federal Minister of Transportation, the concerns that were expressed by having vehicles come in from across the line, their safety standards are very similar to ours.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I understand the Estimates of the Department of Labour are under consideration in Room 255, and the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training are under consideration in the Chamber.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshamer) in the Chair for the Department of Labour; and the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—LABOUR

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gilleshamer): I call this committee to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

When last we met, we were discussing item 2. Labour, Section (m) Labour Adjustment: (1) Salaries \$177,200—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Chairman, as the Minister knows, this particular unit of the department has sparked very many questions from certainly our caucus, but as well I think the other Opposition Party.

Labour Adjustment in my view is an area that has become very important in recent months and will increasingly become so, I believe, as we enter the free trade era. I think that regardless of how one feels about whether or not free trade is going to be advantageous for Manitobans, and indeed for Canadians, one has to acknowledge that the role of labour adjustment in our society and in our economy is going to increase and is going to be absolutely critical to how we provide for workers whose particular area of expertise becomes redundant or unusable in this particular province, indeed to provide for those people to maintain their homes and stay where they want to live and where they have in many cases been for many years and retrain to become effective in the labour market again.

There are so many problems senior workers face and indeed all workers who face layoffs that it is truly staggering. I have had the experience to meet quite a number of them and share some of their frustration and anxiety as they try and live through this quickly changing economy that we live in, which is of course increasingly a world economy. Things that happen on the other side of the world have direct impacts on what happens here. As the world shrinks and we enter this era in which we have shrunk our continental economy to basically one economic structure, we I think have to look seriously at what our labour adjustment experts are doing.

I noted with interest that there was passing reference in the Speech from the Throne to attempting to deal—I cannot remember the exact page, I do not have it in front of me—with labour adjustment in broad terms. I believe that the initiatives with respect to training were referenced in the Speech from the Throne, but I also took that statement from the speech to mean that Labour Adjustment would be beefed up and given some additional responsibilities and resources to meet those responsibilities. I was unhappy to see that in fact the new funds in the Labour Adjustment unit amounted to a total of what is approximately \$66,000, that is in terms of salaries and in terms of other expenditures, again approximately \$60,000.00. Most of that I am sure will be eaten up by simply inflation.

I do want to ask the Minister what new programs, if any, has this unit been able to undertake in the last year to deal with the ever-increasing numbers of Manitobans who face labour adjustment problems through layoff? We have had many of them in the last year, both in the manufacturing and the service sector, and of course as well with the pullback of Government institutions in this province.

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): The principal objective of the Labour Adjustment Program is to accelerate the transition to employment of

dislocated workers experiencing difficulties in finding new jobs. Once the department is notified of a layoff, then that is when the Labour Adjustment unit gets right to work. They get in touch with the employer, the employees, to see if they can assist in setting up an adjustment unit.

Once they establish a committee, then there is representation from all the parties that are affected and may or may not include an independent chair and contractual staff as required. They analyze the situation, they gather information on who will be affected and how they will be affected, and they determine when they will be affected and what assistance will be required. From that, they develop an action plan.

Once they decide what services are required including who will deliver to whom, when and where and for how long, and that includes job search techniques, workshops to determine what information is required, including who will deliver, how it will be delivered, committee newsletters, bulletins and meetings, they develop a communication strategy to decide how to make the information flow both up and down and within the organization and with the public and they put in an implementation strategy to ensure organizational supports, infrastructures are in place and the adaptation of the plan as required.

They evaluate ongoing to allow for mid-course changes to establish measures of effectiveness. They survey the employees to determine skills and needs either through an interview process or a self-completed questionnaire. They hire an outside consultant to determine needs or options and provision of basic information on site through group meetings, determination of retraining requirements, newsletters, survey of other employers for job openings, and assistance with resume preparation.

There is a provision for information on pension benefits and options, unemployment insurance benefits and training assistance options. There are direct job placement referrals. They establish and deliver a training program for affected workers. There is provision or referrals to career counselling, hiring or contracting of individuals to provide counselling, workshops or job placement services and other activities as are determined by the committee or the parties to the adjustment agreement.

So in essence that is what happens with the adjustment committees. They really cannot get started until the department is given a layoff notice or a closure notice.

* (1430)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairman, I notice the Minister has explained and summed it up in her last sentence that all of the activities of the unit appear to be reactive and start to occur only when a layoff notice is sent to the department. I do notice, however, that one of the objectives of the unit is, and I quote, "to assist Manitoba industries to adapt to changing labour force conditions and skill requirements." I had assumed, when I read that, that included some pro-active work on the part of the unit. Is that not true?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, in addition, we are also doing training for committee members so that we have chairs and placement co-ordinators doing videos and manuals with background materials. It is a "train the trainer" program for the workshop job search facilitators in rural areas. We are going to do a couple of pilot training projects for workers in particularly difficult layoff situations where re-employment will be difficult.

Mr. Edwards: With respect to training trainers, is the Minister saying that certain workers in certain industries prior to a layoff notice are trained to deal with a future layoff in certain industries?

Mrs. Hammond: Where we would try to do that is in a situation like Portage la Prairie where they can see there are going to be certain areas that will be affected.

Mr. Edwards: I see. Again I would certainly classify that as a reactive response and I appreciate that the Minister has made that clear in her first answer. There is a clear indication that people are going to be laid off and then the unit goes into action and attempts to do its thing.

I want to ask the Minister what that third paragraph then means, which I have quoted, in terms of any proactive activity on the part of this unit with respect to keeping in touch with industry leaders and union leaders, with respect to assessing and analyzing the impacts of factors such as the Free Trade Agreement on various industries in the province to attempt to predict what industries may or may not suffer in terms of labour adjustment in the coming short term or long term. Is there any of that done under the third heading to assist Manitoba industries to adapt to changing labour force conditions and skill requirements?

Mrs. Hammond: A piece of this program was split off to Education and Training and that part would go to looking at the work force and seeing what kind of training is needed. What is here is specific to worker adjustment and is specific to the industry that has the layoff.

Mr. Edwards: I think I am fairly clear on that then. This unit only does go into any activity once a layoff notice has been given. I just want to—

Mrs. Hammond: That is right.

Mr. Edwards: With respect to the recent agreement in principle, I would call it, which seems to have been drafted with the federal Government, the POWA Agreement which was appended to an Order-in-Council under which I believe this Minister got the sanction from her colleagues to sign, can the Minister give us any update as to progress in the negotiations with her federal counterpart and when she anticipates being in a position to sign such an agreement?

Mrs. Hammond: The agreement is signed and we are just finalizing the administrative document at this time.

Mr. Edwards: I recall that agreement. It dealt with older workers. I wonder if the Minister can give us any

guidance on what can be done for older workers in Manitoba, aside from specific agreements with specific employers when there are layoffs.

I am talking generally in terms of older workers who maybe are not in an organized workplace or who are not laid off in a large enough layoff that the department becomes involved. I think it is a serious problem for older workers trying to deal with the changing economic climate in our province.

I had occasion to have a meeting with the gentleman who ran the Job Finding Club and other such similar activities. He was very persuasive on the need to deal specifically with older workers and to become pro-active and to set up centres that they can feel comfortable going to and learning how to deal with changing requirements in the marketplace in a way that is not threatening to them and in a way in which they can retain their pride as working people, and yet find a way to successfully reintegrate themselves into the workplace. Is the Government doing anything, aside from this agreement, in co-operation with the federal Government or otherwise to set up some specific centres for older workers in Manitoba and/or some specific programs?

Mrs. Hammond: We do support the clubs that are set up for older workers, but what the department has found, what the unit has found, is if they get directly to the worker and try and get them employed as quickly as possible, that this strategy has been working fairly well. The federal labour force development strategy is still coming forward with recommendations on older workers and we will be looking forward to see what they have to say.

Mr. Edwards: I am sorry, I did not hear. Which committee is that, that is coming forward with the—

Mrs. Hammond: It is the CLMPC, and it is the federal labour force strategy.

Mr. Edwards: Who is on that task force, or committee, or whatever that is? Does that include representation from this province?

* (1440)

Mrs. Hammond: It is a labour management bipartite, but there are representatives from all the provinces. My deputy sits ex officio on the board.

Mr. Edwards: Is there any specific program initiated by this Government directed to older workers?

Mrs. Hammond: Nothing specific. We are working with the feds on the POWA agreement, but we are giving our older workers the full range of services that we do to any of the workers, because we do recognize that this is a problem and it is very difficult for someone who is older to have to think of uprooting and so we do make an extra effort to see that those jobs are found.

Mr. Edwards: I guess when there is a large-scale layoff of a size that would warrant the intervention of the

Labour Adjustment unit, I think that may all be well and good and these POWA agreements may be of some use. I am wondering just generally though, in terms of Manitoba workers who do not happen to be involved in one of those larger layoffs but happen to be older workers, happen to be out of a job, displaced in the labour market, what services are there for them. I think they have specific problems. I think the Unemployment Insurance Commission has proven again and again that it is quite fundamentally incapable of dealing with those unique problems.

In fact it is my information that the federal Government has recognized that and has seen the need to target this group specifically. I recognize that there is this CMLP committee, or whatever it is called, looking at the issue. What is this Minister doing in terms of corresponding, meeting with her federal counterpart, to try and work on an initiative for generally older workers who happen to have been displaced in today's fast changing labour market?

Mrs. Hammond: The federal Minister asked not specifically for Government advice but asked for the outside agencies like labour and management to bring forward recommendations as far as worker strategy was concerned and that is what they are dealing with right now.

Mr. Edwards: Under this POWA agreement, is it anticipated that the province can take advantage of the recent announcement by the federal Government, which has come forward. I am reading from an article, dated October 7, 1988, it is a long time ago, which said that there was a program coming forward, and I believe it was specific to the Canada Packers incident, but it seemed to be a general program in which the federal Government was committing some large sums of money to dealing with older workers. Is that what this POWA agreement is all about?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, it is.

Mr. Edwards: How come this article is dated October 7, 1988? What has taken some 15 months to come to this point? Is there some specific reason?

Mrs. Hammond: The Government went with Quebec first. They used that as the pilot. Until that was completed, we were not able to start into negotiations.

Mr. Edwards: The provincial Government, I believe, picks up 30 percent of the costs. Is that still the ratio?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Edwards: What is it anticipated this program will mean in terms of dollars for Manitoba, 30 percent of what?

Mrs. Hammond: The amount that they work from I understand is approximately \$60,000 a worker. So it is all dependent on the number of workers that are in a particular layoff.

Mr. Edwards: It is interesting that in this article I quote, that the president of the local of the United Food and

Commercial Workers at the Canada Packers plant, Mr. Bruno Zimmer, said that he expected that about 100 Canada Packers employees laid off six months prior to this article and about 30 in the original layoff of 1987 at Canada Packers would be benefited by this program. That has obviously not proven true.

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, there are about 106 from the second layoff.

Mr. Edwards: I received correspondence from a gentleman who was at Canada Packers who has complained bitterly about the program at Canada Packers and I am wondering if the Minister can give, just as an example of how Labour Adjustment is working in this province, a rundown on what the success rate was with respect to the Canada Packers layoff.

Mrs. Hammond: The first layoff evidently missed the federal Government's legislation so we have been trying very hard to get them included in the whole piece because we feel it is only fair that they should be there but we have not been very successful at getting them included in that. The second piece is going very well I understand.

* (1450)

Mr. Edwards: Does the Minister have any statistics to show how many people—let us just deal with the second layoff of approximately 106 workers—how many of those were able to secure other employment and at what average rate of pay as opposed to the rate of pay that they had been getting at Canada Packers?

Mrs. Hammond: If we are dealing with just the older workers, it is 106 and of those workers there have not been many who have been re-employed. About 100 are still seeking employment of the 400 workers affected, which is including the first layoff.

Including the first layoff, there were about 700 laid off and there are about 100 still looking for work.

Mr. Edwards: So approximately 106 of those 700 were older workers, I take it the Minister is saying. The Minister is also saying that those 106 have not been extremely successful in gaining other employment. How many of the 100 who are still looking for work are older workers? Does the Minister have that figure?

Mrs. Hammond: This is just a guesstimate that it may be about 50 percent, but because in Manitoba they are not required to give their age—I believe that is correct—people will not always come up with their age, so we cannot tell what group we are dealing with as far as what would be considered an older worker. What is the range, from 55 to 64?

Mr. Edwards: I have a final question to the Minister, and it is perhaps more of a statement. Taking those statistics then just as a case study of, let us say, approximately 50 percent of the 106 older workers are still looking for work many months later, whereas only approximately 50 out of the other 600 younger workers

would still be looking for work, I conclude by simple arithmetic that is a dramatically different ratio for older workers.

I think it proves the point that these people need special attention and need special programs directed towards them, because while you may say that they have perhaps accumulated larger pension funds by that time in their career, they may have not. Even if they have, oftentimes at that stage in a person's life they are looking forward to some disposable income for retirement, which of course they deserve.

I simply say to the Minister that I appreciate she says she is working on this agreement, and that it is the fault of Quebec, and that Quebec was a pilot project. The Minister says she denies it was the fault of Quebec. Okay, perhaps that is a misstatement. It is because they needed to do a pilot project they did it in Quebec. Therefore, they could not sign agreements with other provinces. That is what I took the Minister to say. Therefore, only recently have they been able to sign such an agreement with the federal Government.

Let me simply say to the Minister that it is high time that we attempted to get funds to this province and put up matching provincial funds. I believe 30 percent is the figure used to deal with this problem because it is truly tragic to see older workers unable to gain employment of an equivalent nature. Their self-confidence is smashed after many, many years of being wage earners in the workplace, and they require very special psychological counselling, in my view, as well as job-training counselling to deal with these very special problems which they face.

Mr. Chairman, I simply want to conclude by asking the Minister to reiterate the gist of those comments, and I am sure she will and she has, and work as quickly as possible to conclude an arrangement with the federal Government so that we can deal with this problem in Manitoba. I fear, and I am sure the Minister will take issue, but I fear that given the statistics over the last year we are going to face more and more and more layoffs in this province. It is going to be more important to be able to deal effectively with labour adjustment and, in particular, that of older workers to keep Manitoba workers in Manitoba at jobs equivalent to the ones they are going to lose.

I do not believe that, at this point, you can say that is simply bad mouthing the province and raising scare tactics. That is the fact. That is looking at the bare, hard statistics of the last year and simply being ready to deal with those events as they come up in the future, and they increasingly will.

Mrs. Hammond: I understand what the Member is saying. We are really very concerned about older workers, and we are working as quickly as we can to get the agreement off the ground and working. As far as older workers are concerned, this is certainly a long-term program. It is difficult to place people at that age. We are working to see what can be done to help them so that they will be able to retire with dignity and that their working years will not have been wasted.

At the same time that the Member is talking about a loss of jobs, we are hoping that with the creation of

jobs there will be other jobs that come into the community, although it is very difficult to place this type of worker. I understand that. We are working to help in the best way possible.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Chairperson, I obviously missed a bit of earlier discussion on this. I have asked the Minister if she can just cover some ground that may have already been covered very quickly and indicate when it is that she believes she will be able to follow through on the approval which she received on December 6 to enter into an agreement with the federal Government regarding a program for older worker adjustment.

Mrs. Hammond: We have signed an agreement and they are just finalizing the administrative side of it as I understand.

Mr. Cowan: So the Minister is saying that there is now an agreement in effect?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: That agreement is based on the Schedule A in its entirety which was attached to the Order-in-Council of December 6?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: I have asked the Minister what she thinks the Premier (Mr. Filmon) meant when in answering a question of mine on January 19, he suggested, and I quote him directly, he says, we could have signed an agreement when we first came into office if we were prepared to accept, as the NDP was, getting only 25 percent of the cost of course from the federal Government.

Can she substantiate that there ever was a 25 percent offer on the table, or was the Premier entirely incorrect in that statement and in his assumptions?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, I certainly cannot answer for the Premier.

Mr. Cowan: Was there ever a 25 percent offer in effect?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, I could not say. If the Premier said there was, I would take it that there is.

Mr. Cowan: You are the Minister and I know that there are briefings on these items. I know that your staff have been involved with the items for a fair amount of time. Would the Minister just be honest and straightforward and say no. The Premier was wrong, there never was a 25 percent offer, and that will be the end of the matter. It is time for some truthfulness.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, I believe that I will leave that question for the Premier to answer.

* (1500)

Mr. Cowan: I can appreciate the hesitancy on the part of the Minister to embarrass her Premier so we will

leave the matter drop. One would expect that her Premier would be more accurate in his statements in the House and not mislead the House in the way in which he did on January 19.

One would expect, from this Minister, if that did happen intentionally or unintentionally that the Minister would have the courage and the forthrightness to come forward and say, yes, the Premier was wrong in that respect and this is how the situation really did transpire.

Can the Minister confirm that when the Government took office that there was essentially exactly the same agreement in terms of cost-sharing, available to the province as is being signed at the present time?

Mrs. Hammond: I understand that is incorrect.

Mr. Cowan: Is the Minister aware of a letter from Pierre Cadieux, or her staff, that was addressed to the previous administration which said in essence that they would agree in principle that they would enter into an agreement with Manitoba on the basis of 50-50 or on the basis of 70-30 if the other provinces outside the Atlantic provinces were to receive 70 percent federal funding and 30 percent provincial funding? It is a letter, it can be tabled, it is factual, and it does not mistake the situation or misspeak the situation.

Mrs. Hammond: Because there have been a number of negotiations going on, I could not really comment on whether the Member is accurate about that correspondence or not.

Mr. Cowan: Let me read the letter, which is short, in its entirety into the record. It is from the Honourable Pierre Cadieux, it is dated April 5, 1988. It is addressed to the Honourable Muriel Smith.

"Dear Mrs. Smith: Thank you for your letter of March 25, 1988, regarding the Program for Older Worker Adjustment. I am extremely pleased that the Manitoba Government agrees in principle with the plan for implementing POWA.

"With respect to the Canada Packers layoffs, I share your concern for the situation. My officials have already begun to compile all available facts relating to these workers and their current status with a view to permitting all pertinent options to be assessed as necessary in the light of these facts.

"Finally, I accept Manitoba's proposal that cost-sharing be on a 50-50 basis, provided that the federal share of the cost will be automatically increased in the event that more favourable cost-sharing arrangements are later concluded with any other province outside the Atlantic region.

"Once again, thank you for your support for POWA. I have asked my officials to communicate with yours immediately to pursue further aspects of the implementation plan as well as the joint efforts with respect to the assessment of the Canada Packers situation. Sincerely."

Mrs. Hammond: If the Member has the letter, then certainly I acknowledge that. From what I understand

is that the deal did not go forward because we wanted to include Canada Packers and the federal Government would not include them.

Mr. Cowan: Is Canada Packers in the current agreement?

Mrs. Hammond: No specific agreement has been signed related to Canada Packers, yet.

Mr. Cowan: Is there a clause in the agreement which says, effective date, major permanent layoffs occurring on or after January 1, 1988 are eligible for consideration?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: Would that allow for the inclusion of Canada Packers?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: Does the Minister intend to pursue the specific agreement, and noting that there has to be specific agreements on every major layoff with respect to Canada Packers for inclusion under this program?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: Is that clause not in there specifically to allow for Canada Packers to be included in this agreement, that one specifically?

Mrs. Hammond: Not the first layoff.

Mr. Cowan: The second layoff which is the one you have pursued.

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, the second layoff.

Mr. Cowan: Can the Minister indicate what action she will be taking with respect to the Lynn Lake layoffs under this agreement?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, there are workers who can come under this agreement. The committee will be bringing that forward with a recommendation.

Mr. Cowan: There are workers who will be able to come under this agreement. What committee specifically is she referencing?

Mrs. Hammond: Both of the adjustment committees that we are dealing with. That is the LynnGold committee and the community committee.

Mr. Cowan: Under Section 2.2 of the agreement, there is a mandate that a committee shall be struck under this agreement which would be responsible for the following: (1) identifying layoff causes; (2) analyzing major permanent layoffs which may be eligible for the program; (3) determining the eligibility of laid-off older workers; (4) developing the terms and conditions of federal-provincial agreements with respect to each designated layoff; (5) developing the terms and

conditions of calls for tender and subsequent contracts for payment of annuities; and (6) monitoring the administration of benefit payments.

Will such a specific committee mandated under this agreement be struck for the LynnGold situation?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, the committee is struck for the province as a whole, not for each layoff.

Mr. Cowan: Will the committee be asking that the LynnGold situation be reviewed from all those perspectives?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Cowan: When will that take place?

Mrs. Hammond: As soon as the Chair brings us the information, we would want to be ready, but I understand that POWA does not kick in until the UI benefits have ceased.

Mr. Cowan: I am not certain that is exactly the case. Certainly the financial part of POWA does not kick in until the UI benefits have been fully taken care of, but this work here, the mandate of that committee, should certainly take place before that happens.

Mrs. Hammond: I agree with the Member, and certainly that will happen as soon as we get the information.

Mr. Cowan: What information?

Mrs. Hammond: How many older workers there are, if they have found re-employment, issues like that.

Mr. Cowan: No, that is what this committee is responsible for doing. The committee is responsible for finding out the layoff causes, whether or not they are eligible for program, the eligibility of laid-off older workers. That committee itself has to begin its work. I am asking the Minister, has that committee been mandated to start that work now with respect to the LynnGold layoffs, in other words, to start the review of information and the analysis of information so that they can determine whether or not this layoff and to what extent this layoff will fit in under this program.

* (1510)

Mrs. Hammond: This committee is still working on the adjustment of workers, and what they are doing is they are still placing workers. As soon as there is any information brought forward, we will start dealing with it. We have no desire to put off any kind of work that we can do ahead of time to help the workers that may be designated.

Mr. Cowan: I am having some difficulty understanding the process from the perspective that the Minister provides. There is a committee that we have already talked about, which is the Canada-Manitoba POWA Committee, that is composed of two officials designated by Labour Canada and two officials to be designated

by the Department of Labour and co-chaired by a representative designated by each of the two departments. Then that committee has a mandate, when there are major layoffs, to do a number of different things. When is it going to start, for example, identifying the layoff causes with respect to the LynnGold situation?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, the Member is correct about the Canada-Manitoba POWA Committee. To qualify for benefits under the program, a worker has lost his or her job as a result of a designated layoff, and must meet the following conditions: Canadian citizen or permanent resident as defined in the Immigration Act; must live in Canada for more than six months a year; on the effective date of layoff, the worker must be between the ages of 55 and 64 years; must have worked 15 of the last 20 years—a year equals 750 hours or more; worker's employment must be terminated permanently, which of course applies; they must have no realistic prospects for permanent re-employment; they must have exhausted unemployment insurance benefits subsequent to layoff; eligibility shall end in the month in which an eligible worker reaches the age of 65 or dies.

Until we get that information from the committee, we cannot go forward with it, so we have to get that information first.

Mr. Cowan: The Minister is focusing in on the eligibility for individual workers. That is fine. That is a part of the program. The program is much larger than that, and I reference her to Section 2.2, which talks about the committee and the mandate. I also reference her to Section 3.3 which is an analysis of layoffs.

Let me just read that. It says, the Canada-Manitoba POWA Committee, which I am told is in place, shall study major permanent layoffs—and this is a major permanent layoff—in order to determine to what extent they may lead to severe hardship for a number of older workers, taking into account all relevant considerations including very significant economic disruption in the region—certainly there was that in the case of Lynn Lake; significant loss of employment in the industry—certainly there was that in Lynn Lake; layoff very large relative to the size of the community.

When you decimate a community in the way in which Lynn Lake has been decimated, there is certainly a very large relativity factor to the size of the community; a large proportion of older workers affected, which there is in Lynn Lake; permanent loss of jobs, which there is in Lynn Lake; few prospects for re-employment of laid-off workers, which there is in Lynn Lake; and no realistic prospect that retraining or mobility will lead to job opportunities.

Now, that sort of review and analysis, along with the analysis and review that is called for in mandate under Section 2.2, should be taking place now even although you may not be flowing money until a year from now. I think it is important that when we have a major layoff and closure such as we had in Lynn Lake that the Government does everything it can do to analyze why that happened, the effect it will have, and how to prevent it in the future. This agreement provides for at least

two of those things to be done, and then the Government can use the information that is taken out of this agreement, cost share it to the federal Government to apply it to how to prevent further closures of that nature.

So I am asking the Minister not to wait until the first worker becomes eligible, which is a whole different set of criteria, but to take action now to ensure that the analysis, which is supposed to take place under the committee mandate, does take place immediately.

Mrs. Hammond: As soon as we know which workers cannot be re-employed, we will start working on this. I think the Member seems to be of the opinion that he is the only one interested in getting these people back to work. That is not so. We really are very anxious that we can do something for these people. We are well aware as the Member is of the hardships that have happened with LynnGold. We have worked very hard to make sure that we were able to ease their burden as much as we could. As a Government, I think we have done most of the things that anyone could do to ease their situation.

So I do not know exactly what the Member is getting at. We are working toward the end to get them some help and I do not know what more he is expecting me to say.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairperson, I, and more importantly the people of Lynn Lake and the area, have watched the Government bungle the situation from Day One.

An Honourable Member: Order.

Mr. Cowan: Well, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) says, order. Well the fact is, to the Minister of Northern Affairs, that there are people in that community now that face a very bleak future, face no future actually with respect to re-employment, who are of a working age, who are going to have to leave their families, who are going to have to leave their homes, who are going to have to suffer the type of hardship that no individual should have to suffer for the rest of their lives because the Government did not take the opportunity, avail itself of the opportunity, to enter into some serious negotiations to save that mine and save that community. They have bungled it from Day One. We have watched this Minister of Labour not even know when her own legislation was being violated. We had to bring it up in the House to bring it to her attention with respect to vacation pay early on in this situation.

We have watched this Minister of Labour not take the type of progressive and aggressive action that is required. We have watched the colleague of this Minister of Labour, the Minister of Mines (Mr. Neufeld), turn his back on the community and totally, totally destroy any opportunity of reaching an agreement with the other parties that were involved.

So she asks what is my concern? My concern is that this Government stop bungling this particular situation and start taking progressive action. Time after time after time in this committee room, whether it was a standing committee or in that House or in Estimates,

we have said to the Minister of Mines, take action now because it is required now, and the excuse has always been, there is time, there is time. The plant, the mine, the mill is not going to shut down until November 6. We still have time. They always begged for more time on the basis that something was going to happen. Nothing happened, and as a result of that this agreement is now required for that community.

What I do not want to see happen again is the Government put off taking decisive action and progressive action to protect those workers, to assist those workers, particularly under this agreement now that they have it, in the same way which they did all along.

So she may have concern, and the Government may have concern, for the people of Lynn Lake, but they certainly have a strange way of showing it. That strange way has been to ignore many of the opportunities that were available to them to prevent the closure in the first place and to take pro-active action in the second place to deal with some of the disruption created by the closure. That is all we are asking for now, for the Government to say, look, the first worker may not be eligible to get UIC benefits for a year from now, but certainly there is work that can be done now and we can give a commitment right now that that LynnGold closure will come under this particular agreement, and we can start with the committee. The committee has a mandate to consult with various parties. As a matter of fact, not only does it have the mandate, but it must. The committee shall consult with representatives of the older workers and of the company concerned. That work can start now. We do not have to wait until the payments are about to begin before that consultation starts, because if you wait that long it is too late. You have waited too long already and we are in the dire situation that we now have because of that.

So if the Minister wants to know what I am getting at and why I am having this discussion at this time, it is based on a very sad experience of the past several months where I saw Government, through its own inaction and through its own inability to take decisive action, destroy a community, destroy many lives in the process, and I want to see that stopped. I want to see this Government take the type of action that is required. This provides them with an opportunity to do so. It is not good enough to say we are going to wait until the first worker becomes eligible for UIC payments.

* (1520)

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, we have as a Government taken very active strides when it came to LynnGold. The minute we were given notice that there were going to be layoffs at LynnGold, we had somebody from the adjustment unit get right up there. There was an adjustment committee that was formed pretty immediately.

What was happening with the Government, we were in negotiations to see if we could keep that mine going because we knew that was the most important thing that we could do. The negotiations fell through and the miners were then out of work. We then made sure,

because it was a bankruptcy, that we were able to get their \$1,200 vacation pay through by waiving the 30-day period to make sure that they got that money before Christmas. We did everything possible that we could.

We were working very actively with labour and the community when it came to the Labour Adjustment committee. We have served orders on the directors to get their severance back, to get their vacation pay. I think that we are doing everything possible to help and make sure that the workers get a fair shake out of what is a terrible situation and nobody doubts that. We will be working actively to help the workers, both young and old, in LynnGold.

Mr. Cowan: We have heard it before, Mr. Chairperson, and we have seen the results of Government in action before. I just hope for the sake of the workers and their families and others in the Lynn Lake and Lynn Lake region that there is a bit more substance to what we are hearing today than what we have seen in the past. I have some very strong concerns.

If the Minister thinks that they did such a wonderful job with their adjustment committee, maybe she better read the minutes of those adjustment committee meetings and get some sense of the frustration that was experienced by people who are most directly involved, not only workers but employees at both levels of Government, with respect to the lack of action on the part of the Government during that entire process.

Those minutes are not minutes that were drafted by a biased party. They were drafted by the committee and accepted by the committee. There are some very strong condemnations of the Government's lack of information, lack of action contained throughout those minutes. I do not want to go through it all once again but if the Minister has not availed herself of the opportunity to read those minutes, perhaps she should. I will not ask her like I asked her earlier to contradict her Premier (Mr. Filmon) or to contradict her own statements, because obviously she considers her loyalty to her Premier and her loyalty to her past statements more important than putting the full facts on the record.

I will ask her in her own heart and in her own mind to take a look at how her Government acted on the basis of how it was perceived by those on the receiving end. She will find that all the glorious comments she just made about her Government's decisiveness and quick action certainly did not make it down into the area where they were needed. Certainly it was not a perception of the people who were most directly affected. They are mad, they are angry, and I think they are justifiably so with this Government because this Government so totally bungled the situation. They are looking now to a reverse of that situation and looking to some positive action. This committee can provide the positive action.

When is the Minister, under Section 2.2, going to consult with representatives of the older workers and of the company with respect to the responsibility of the committee to identify layoff causes and go through the six items which are identified in Section 2.2?

Mrs. Hammond: As soon as the work of the adjustment committee has been completed.

Mr. Cowan: When does the Minister consider the work of the adjustment committee to be completed?

Mrs. Hammond: When the adjustment committee determines that we have the information needed, then we will proceed with the assessment. If the adjustment committee would say in the next couple of weeks, well, then in the next couple of weeks is when we would start.

We really have to take our lead from the adjustment committee. They are the ones that are set up. They are the ones that are working. That is the group that has labour, that has all the people involved, and I am sure they are as anxious as anyone that we get started on this.

Mr. Cowan: What information is the Minister expecting from the adjustment committee that will initiate this process? What specific information?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Chairman, the critical piece is the re-employment prospect, and that is what we will be basing it on. POWA I understand will not kick in. This is a federal-provincial agreement, you must remember, and it will not kick in until they are absolutely sure that there is no chance for re-employment.

Mr. Cowan: How do they determine that there will be no chance for re-employment?

Mrs. Hammond: I understand that when their Unemployment Insurance runs out and they cannot get a job.

Mr. Cowan: When does the Minister expect the Unemployment Insurance to run out for these individuals?

Mrs. Hammond: In some cases, it could be a year down the road.

Mr. Cowan: Is that as long, or could it be longer?

Mrs. Hammond: I guess it would depend on vacation pay and what they have coming to them in that area.

Mr. Cowan: If some of these employees receive—and it will be the older workers who would receive the highest vacation pay and the highest severance pay, not necessarily the highest vacation in every instance but most likely because of the way vacations are structured in the collective agreement, but certainly the highest severance.

Some of them are owed in the area of \$30,000 to \$40,000.00. That \$30,000 to \$40,000 would be equivalent to probably three-quarters of a year of wages, which means that their unemployment would not kick in until three-quarters of a year, as I understand it, or thereabouts and that their unemployment would run for a year, so we could actually be looking at a year to a year and a half in many instances before the unemployment ran out. Would that not be the case?

Mrs. Hammond: What the Member says is possibly correct. What we are saying as well is that, although

this is what the agreement says, we will do this in consultation with the adjustment committee. If we get the opportunity to move quicker, we certainly will. We want to make sure that we give the older workers all the help we can.

Mr. Cowan: Let me just run through what we have learned today in this short discussion and tell you why I am concerned, even more concerned now than when I entered into the discussion earlier.

The Minister said to us earlier today that this would take effect soon, that we have the agreement in place. When she was asked a specific question as to when she would start to see this Section 2.2 mandated committee, or the analysis as mandated in 3.3 start to take place, she said the next couple of weeks.

* (1530)

Then when she was asked when it is going to start, when are they going to actually start their work in the consultation with the representatives of the older workers in the company, she said when the UIC runs out. That is what she was hinting at earlier, that this whole thing did not really take place until the UIC ran out. The point I was trying to make is the financial benefits do not flow until the UIC runs out, but certainly the work that is mandated in 2.2 and 3.3 of the section can start immediately.

She is now telling us, if I understand her right—and the Hansard will I think confirm it—is that this will not happen until the UIC benefits run out, which could be a year and a half from now.

Quite frankly the Minister is sort of shaky on this agreement. I do not think she understands it very well. I think, with the type of circumstances that are confronting so many older workers and the seriousness of those circumstances and the severe hardship that is created for them, she better get a better understanding of the agreement so she can work hard to make it work for those individuals.

All I can say at this point in time with respect to LynnGold is I hope that soon she will contact representatives of the older workers, through their union and representatives of the company, to start the work that is mandated in Sections 2.2 and 3.3 and that she will not wait, as she said would happen, until the unemployment runs out, because it is not a year, as she first said, it is much longer than a year in many instances. I make that point.

Before dropping this matter—and I do not see too much benefit in pursuing further on LynnGold, we have made our comments known—I would ask the Minister if they have consulted with the representatives of the older workers at the Canada Packers layoff, which in fact is anticipated in this agreement under Section 2.2 and that they are now working on the responsibilities of the committee with respect to identifying the layoff causes, analyzing the major permanent layoffs, the eligibility of laid-off workers, the terms and conditions of federal-provincial agreements with respect to each designated layoff and developing the terms and conditions and calls for tender and subsequent contacts

for the payment of annuities and the monitoring of the administration of the benefits.

Mrs. Hammond: The answer is yes.

Mr. Cowan: Is that committee now undertaking that work?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, the work has just been completed I understand.

Mr. Cowan: When does she expect that under this agreement monies will be flowing then to the workers who are eligible under the agreement?

Mrs. Hammond: Right now we are working on the administrative procedures with the federal Government.

Mr. Cowan: Money is flowing in both Quebec and New Brunswick under this agreement. The administrative procedures should have been worked out fairly fully with respect to those programs. How long does the Minister expect it to take to work out the administrative details on the Canada Packers layoff?

Mrs. Hammond: Quebec, yes, and it took two years and New Brunswick has not flowed any dollars yet. We have been working on this actively for two months and we are at the administrative procedure right now. It is moving along fairly quickly in light of what happened in Quebec.

Mr. Cowan: I think the Minister is mixing apples and oranges a bit if earlier she said the Quebec project was a trial project, and now—

Mrs. Hammond: Just do not.

Mr. Cowan: The Minister says, just do not. I mean, the Minister has to stand by her words. She has to choose her words carefully. She has to know what she is talking about, and I do not think she does either. What results from that, Mr. Chairperson, is people out there who expect some sympathy and some responsibility and some competence from their Government are disappointed time after time after time by this Minister and her colleagues.

So do not let her slough off the concerns that are being expressed in this Chamber on behalf of those constituents, on behalf of the people who elect us to serve them here, as being something other than the desire or effort to make this Government finally live up to its responsibility and finally act with some competence and finally say what it means and finally tell us the truth rather than have the false statements that are put on the record by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and the statements that are obscured by the rhetoric and not substantiated by the fact by the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond).

Mr. Chairman: Order, please. I would urge Members to choose their words wisely.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Portage (Mr. Connery), on a point of order.

Hon. Ed Connery (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Is "false statements" a term that can be used in this Chamber, or is it one that has to be withdrawn from the Member for using it, and apologize?

Mr. Chairman: My advice is that false statements is unparliamentary and I would ask the Member to withdraw it.

Mr. Cowan: If the Minister finds the statement "false statements" to be unparliamentary, or the Chairperson finds it and the Minister objects to it, I will certainly withdraw the statement "false statements." I will say it suggests that the Premier has provided some very serious misinformation to Members of this House and to the general public through his statements which have not proven to be accurate.

Mrs. Hammond: After all that, Mr. Chairman, I think what we were trying to tell the Member is that we were pleased with the way things have been going considering the length of time that the other agreements took. Whether it was a pilot project or not, it took two years. We are moving along a lot faster than that and we are very interested in making sure that the workers get fair treatment.

Mr. Cowan: Well, that interest has not been proven out in programs that are being applied to the workers in a way that they do get fair treatment. In Quebec, the federal Government and the provincial Government have indicated that \$13.1 million had been set aside for eligible workers. There is a figure of \$1.24 million that has been set aside by the federal Government in New Brunswick for financial assistance to their older workers under specific programs. What amount of money has been set aside by the federal Government in the Province of Manitoba to fund this program?

Mrs. Hammond: Approximately \$7 million, federal and provincial.

Mr. Cowan: That money is able now to be flowed as soon as the agreements are reached on the specific layoffs?

Mrs. Hammond: The administrative document has to be agreed on and then it—staff are concerned it is not to the cent, but it is approximate.

Mr. Cowan: Can the Minister provide us with a copy of the signed agreement, not the administrative agreement but the signed agreement, between the federal and provincial Governments?

Mrs. Hammond: Unless there are any problems with doing that sort of thing, and I do not know, but if there

are not legally I will consult, and if so we would give you the copy. I do not know what the legalities are.

* (1540)

Mr. Cowan: I am sort of asking for it now because I cannot think of any possible reasons that the Minister or the Government cannot release a document which they signed on behalf of the public which provides for the expenditure of monies by the province. It would be nice to be able to compare while we are still in committee, and there is a time urgency to it, the draft of the agreement with the final agreement. Just to make the point, the draft of the agreement has already been released publicly.

Mrs. Hammond: If my staff indicates that there is not a problem legally, I certainly do not have a problem releasing the document.

Mr. Cowan: How long do they anticipate it would take to get that legal opinion?

Mrs. Hammond: Tomorrow morning.

Mr. Cowan: We certainly will have most likely been through this section by tomorrow morning. Let me just ask the question now. Are there any changes between the draft agreement and the final agreement? The draft agreement is the one that was circulated with the Order-in-Council of December 6? None whatsoever?

Mrs. Hammond: No.

Mr. Chairman: Item (m)(2) Other Expenditures \$819,000—pass.

Resolution No. 103: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,810,800 for Labour, Labour Branch, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1990—pass.

Item 3, Workplace and Worker Services, consists of activities to prevent, detect and eliminate safety and health hazards in all places where people work. Provides assistance and services to claimants respecting workers' compensation claims. (a) Workplace Safety and Health: (1) Salaries \$2,713,900—the Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: This particular branch of this department has given me, and indeed most Members of our Caucus, serious concern in the last year—

An Honourable Member: And other caucuses.

Mr. Edwards: I hear my friend from Churchill saying, other caucuses. I accept that.

It is an area which has been consistently problematic for this Government, to say the least. I think it all really started when this Minister was probably saddled with the decision of her predecessor to reduce standards for carcinogens in the workplace. She was forced to defend that policy very shortly after taking her position as Minister. While I think her efforts were certainly

spirited and valiant, obviously as time went on it became apparent to the Government, and in particular to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), that the decision taken had been incorrect and should be rectified and that the standards should be put back to where they were supposed to be, at the lowest detectable level.

Indeed it came to light, and I raised it in the House, that the Chamber of Commerce, whose advice had apparently been taken, had themselves expressed reservations at the lack of research and analysis that had gone into their suggestions to the Government. So without any further analysis the Government had stepped into the breach and taken their advice on very shaky grounds indeed. It also came to light that the particular standards adopted in Manitoba were some of the lowest in Canada and were being challenged in the United States of America. So it was an extremely ill thought out reduction of standards in Workplace Safety and Health and I think put Opposition Members on guard with a lot of vigilance, and of course workers. But specifically in this House, Members of the Legislature I think in both Opposition Parties were aware that this Government was certainly capable of and indeed desirous of stepping back from Workplace Health and Safety standards and reducing them.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, I think that in large part those fears have been borne out by this Government. While that reduction was corrected by the Premier, we have yet to see the changes put back into the legislation, the correct standards put back into the regulations. The Minister says she is waiting for a report from the Workplace Health and Safety Advisory Committee with respect to labelling standards, but the fact is that there is no apparent reason to me and I believe most in the field as to why you would have to link the two.

The carcinogen levels issue, I think in terms of maintaining consistency in the workplaces around this province, should be put back to where they are going to be as soon as possible so that you do not create confusion amongst employers in the workplace and indeed amongst workers.

Mr. Chairman, we have also seen other problems in this province come to light, many of which have involved the department and inspectors and inspections which apparently took place and yet problems have continued to exist. Of course most recently we have seen the problems with the gas and oil burner regulations. We have seen problems with the power engineer regulations. We have seen quite tragic consequences at an apartment building in this city. While I acknowledge that is not specifically a workplace, it did involve inspections done by department inspectors and certainly the problems in that apartment building also are potential problems at workplaces around the province.

I also raised an issue with respect to Grace Hospital. Asbestos levels found to exist in that hospital, other problems at other hospitals and specifically Concordia Hospital were raised, and the Minister appeared at first in those instances to defend the situation. However, it became increasingly clear as those situations worked their way through the proceedings of the House that the standards were nowhere near what they were

supposed to be. Mr. Chairman, I am very concerned that we do not have the ability within the Workplace Safety and Health Branch to deal with enforcement of the regulations which are already on the books. I am concerned that in response to that the Government is seeking to reduce the standards rather than increase the number of people we have to inspect and enforce.

Specifically I want to lead into this area by asking the Minister what she is planning to do to deal with the lack of inspectors in her department generally. It is my information that there are now four less inspectors and I acknowledge that this is perhaps going back to the Mechanical and Engineering Branch. However, I do ask her indulgence, Mr. Chairman. I believe that it generally has to do with the area of Workplace Safety and Health. This information has only recently come to my attention. It is my information that because of a promotion wherein Mr. Paul Hagen retired and he was replaced by Mr. Andrews that vacancies occurred. Then in addition to that an elevator inspector resigned last June and went to B.C. He was not replaced. Mr. Chico Nevaro (phonetic), who had been a boiler inspector in Thompson, apparently quit last summer. The result of all of these is that the department is short four inspectors.

* (1550)

I wonder if the Minister can comment on what her department is doing to replace those inspectors and what the prospects are for getting the full complement back into place for these very important inspections.

Mrs. Hammond: With regard to the gas inspection, there are no vacancies. There is one vacancy in the elevator inspection program that we will be filling. That, in essence, is it I think.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate while I believe this does have something to do with Workplace Safety and Health, perhaps other officials who were here earlier in these Estimates might be able to give complete answers. I would like to clarify from the Minister, she is saying then that there is only one vacancy unfilled in a position of inspector throughout her department?

Mrs. Hammond: Actually, the question that I believe the Member asked was about the Mechanical and Engineering which we have already passed and that was a vacancy we will be filling.

Mr. Edwards: How many other positions as an inspector are presently unfilled in the department?

Mrs. Hammond: I wonder if the Member could clarify that?

Mr. Edwards: There was a boiler inspector who quit last summer. Has he been replaced?

Mrs. Hammond: There are two vacancies in Workplace Safety and Health and one industrial hygienist and we are planning to fill that, and one safety and health officer and we are going to fill that as well. There is an inspector's position at Leaf Rapids which will be filled shortly.

Mr. Edwards: I am sorry, just to clarify, the two positions with Workplace Safety and Health, are the industrial hygienist and the safety health officer?

Mrs. Hammond: Three, including Leaf Rapids, and they will all be filled.

Mr. Edwards: How long have those positions been vacant?

Mrs. Hammond: Approximately two months each.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister concerned that the regulations and the statutory requirements presently in place under The Workplace Safety and Health Act cannot be adequately enforced with the present staff, or is that a problem which has come to her attention, or is she satisfied that adequate inspections and enforcement are being carried out in this branch?

Mrs. Hammond: We believe that with the resources we have the department is working well with the committees.

Mr. Edwards: Can the Minister indicate how many fatalities occurred in the Province of Manitoba in the last year due to accidents at the workplace?

Mrs. Hammond: About 10.

Mr. Edwards: Can the Minister indicate, and perhaps it is not at her disposal at this time, I am not sure how many injured workers there were in Manitoba in the last year due to workplace incidents?

Mrs. Hammond: We are planning to work closely and we are working closely now with Workers Compensation so that we may be able to get a better handle on the number of injuries, but we do not have those numbers.

Mr. Edwards: Can the Minister indicate if the number of accidents is on the rise or the decrease?

Mrs. Hammond: We are working again with Workers Compensation and we are trying to get a data base established so that we can track these types of figures.

Mr. Edwards: Does the Research and Planning Branch of the Department of Labour not do tracking work with respect to accidents and injuries and fatalities in the Workplace Safety and Health Branch?

Mrs. Hammond: The Research Branch is involved but the Workplace Safety and Health Branch just became a part of the department in May, so what we are trying to do is establish these things with Workers Comp. and with our research and planning.

Mr. Edwards: When it speaks in the Estimates Supplementary Information booklet about expected results of the department being the development of codes of practice relating to existing regulations, what progress has been made in the last year on that regard?

Mrs. Hammond: I am sorry, I did not hear the first part of that question.

Mr. Edwards: I am just referring to the supplementary information leaflet. One of the expected results in the department is the development of codes of practice relating to existing regulations. I am wondering what progress has been made in that regard in the last year.

Mrs. Hammond: The three areas that they have been working on are working alone, confined entry, excavations, and machine guarding.

(Mr. Darren Praznik, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairman, with respect to the development of a code of practice relating to working alone, what has been the conclusion of the department? Is there going to be anything forthcoming shortly about what can be done to reduce the workplace health risk of working alone?

Mrs. Hammond: From what I understand, it starts off with guidelines and then it works along to a code of practice. They are working with the advisory council on these areas.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister in a position to give Members a copy of the guidelines and code of practice?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, whatever we have available.

Mr. Edwards: Again, reading from the expected results, one of them is the adoption of a general safety regulation and revisions to the Safety and Health Committee regulation. Can the Minister indicate what that is all about and what has been achieved this year?

* (1600)

Mrs. Hammond: The advisory council has given recommendations and the staff will be reviewing them. Then the staff will go back and meet with the advisory council to come up with a final position.

Mr. Edwards: What is the anticipated time line for completing that project?

Mrs. Hammond: I understand it could be six months to a year.

Mr. Edwards: Is it anticipated that any new safety regulations would be new regulations or would be changes to existing regulations?

Mrs. Hammond: Does the Member have any specific regulation that he is referring to or is this just general?

Mr. Edwards: I am reading specifically, and I know the revision to the Safety and Health Committee regulation is obviously a revision. With respect to the adoption of a general safety regulation, is that going to be a new regulation?

Mrs. Hammond: They are both existing regulations and they are being revised and augmented.

Mr. Edwards: I am confused by the wording, adoption of a general safety regulation.

Mrs. Hammond: I understand that it is confusing to read. What they have been doing is working on the regulation development plan. So they are looking at existing regulations and probably would be incorporating some new regulations as well.

Mr. Edwards: What sectoral committees for occupational safety and health have been developed in this last year?

Mrs. Hammond: The Health Committee.

Mr. Edwards: Can the Minister outline who sits on that committee?

Mrs. Hammond: It is a tripartite and there are representatives from hospital boards, labour and Government.

Mr. Edwards: Can I assume that committee has been meeting in this last year on a regular basis? What is the progress of the committee?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, it has been meeting regularly.

Mr. Edwards: What will the process be if that committee has recommendations? Do they then go to the Workplace Safety and Health Advisory Committee, or do they go directly to the Minister?

Mrs. Hammond: They will be producing the report which will be given to me, which we would share with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Mr. Edwards: When is it anticipated that that report might be coming forward?

Mrs. Hammond: They have not advised us when the report will be coming in, so I really could not give an answer to that.

Mr. Edwards: Who set the mandate for that committee and, if the Minister did, is she in a position to table a copy of that mandate?

Mrs. Hammond: It was a committee that was set up by the former Government and it was to deal on sectoral issues and with WHMIS.

Mr. Edwards: Clearly being a health committee and having representatives from Government, labour I assume means workers who work in the health care industry, and hospital board representatives, I assume when the Minister says they were going to be looking at working with WHMIS and attempting to deal with the problems, she is speaking specific to that industry, to the health care industry. Does the Minister have a copy of the original mandate, even if it was from the prior administration, so that we can know exactly what that committee has been mandated to look into?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes I think that we can probably get that information for the Member. It may take a bit of time, but we should be able to get it for him. I have been advised that issues have evolved as the committee

has met, so maybe the mandate has broadened or narrowed as the issues have been as they found them.

Mr. Edwards: Has there been any report as yet on any subject from this committee?

Mrs. Hammond: There is a working document which is, as it says, still in the department, and it has not been presented to me. It is just a draft, a working document that they are using.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister in a position to release that working draft to Members?

Mrs. Hammond: No, I am sorry.

* (1610)

Mr. Edwards: When it says that one of the activities identified for this branch is to develop legislation that provides for the maintenance of reasonable standards for safety and health of workers and self-employed persons, what legislation is coming forward in this area other than the reduction of standards for carcinogens, which have come forward, and indeed more recently the changes under The Gas and Oil Burner Act, which came forward in December?

Mrs. Hammond: The division is working with the advisory council on general safety regulation, as well as the first aid, the Workplace Safety and Health committees and the noise regulation.

Mr. Edwards: Is the Minister in a position to advise us if there is any legislation coming forward that has been solidified within her department? I guess in particular I would be interested to know if there is anything coming forward with respect to the noise regulations?

Mrs. Hammond: The advisory council with the department has just begun their review of the noise regulation.

Mr. Edwards: One of the problems which was noted—and I appreciate that the Minister has spoken earlier in this Estimate process about this problem—is that work orders were given to companies with certain deadlines, compliance deadlines, and then invariably they were extended on a regular basis. I appreciate that the Minister has indicated earlier that some changes are going to be put in place.

Can the Minister indicate what progress has been made with respect to putting a system into place whereby these orders have compliance dates that workplaces are then held to, because there must be a problem in setting those dates if they have to be continually reset?

The ultimate result of that is that the institutions which are affected come to have less and less respect for these compliance dates as they are continually extended. What progress has been made in revamping that system? When can we expect that the issuance of those compliance orders will be modified so the

dates set are in fact the dates that the employer is held to?

Mrs. Hammond: I think the Member is mixing the department a bit. Workplace Safety and Health had a very good record on compliance. It was Mechanical and Engineering in the Fire Commissioner's Office that we were bringing a departmental committee so we could look at the compliance orders.

Mr. Edwards: Well, Mr.—

Mrs. Hammond: —and if I may, Workplace Safety and Health is sitting on that committee as well.

Mr. Edwards: It does encourage me that they are sitting on that committee, and I appreciate the Minister says that there was a good rate of compliance in the last number of months. Well, actually since this Government has taken office, I have had occasion to raise a number of concerns under Workplace Safety and Health with respect to compliance orders, which simply were not met and then were continually extended.

One of them was at Headingley jail with respect to range bars. That was ultimately rectified, but that went on and on and on. I appreciate that very little of the blame lies with this administration, but it certainly is a problem which was allowed to drag on for an extended period of time at Headingley jail to the detriment of both workers at that jail as well as inmates.

Secondly, Schmidtke Millwork in Steinbach was another case in which there were work orders outstanding for many months, which were extended repeatedly and of course most recently there was another incident, and I have referenced it already, at Grace Hospital where asbestos levels I believe were noted by the Government. Yet there simply was not an enforcement or a recognition of the seriousness of the problem. So it does encourage me that Workplace Safety and Health is involved in this committee, which is going to look at compliance orders generally.

What I would like to ask the Minister is, what percentage of compliance orders are in fact complied with by the date originally set?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, we do not catch every one. It is not 100 percent, but we do get over 90 percent compliance.

I would just like to mention, the Member has talked about Grace Hospital. We were never advised of that situation. Workplace Safety and Health was not advised of that situation at all but, when it was brought to our attention, someone did go out and check on it.

Mr. Edwards: Of course the debate over whether or not the department was advised is one of public record already and certainly workers at Grace Hospital dispute what the Minister says, but I do not intend to rehash that here today.

The Minister has indicated that over 90 percent of the orders were complied with. My concern is not that the orders are ultimately complied with, but are they

complied with in keeping with the time line originally set on the compliance order itself? Is she saying that 90 percent of the compliance orders are complied with within the time frame originally set?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes.

Mr. Edwards: That is very interesting.

I have just one more question I think, and then I will pass it to my friend, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak). With respect to the inspections of workplaces around the province, is the department able to do spot checks of workplaces on a regular basis, and how much of their time are they able to do preventative work as opposed to simply reacting to reports of problems?

Mrs. Hammond: About 30 percent would be pro-active. That would be including construction, which is mostly spot checks.

Mr. Edwards: In terms of the pro-active spot checks other than the construction industry, are certain industries targeted? If so, which ones?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, the auto body industry and logging, because of the high fatality rate.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Acting Chairman, just on that last point about that 30 percent, the time that is spent on pro-active work, I have heard some complaints from some people that there is no pro-active work done in the logging industry because of the shortage of hygienists. There is only time to be doing an inspection after there has been some difficulty. Have there been some vacancies recently that have prevented that 30 percent pro-active work to take place?

* (1620)

Mrs. Hammond: We do not use industrial hygienists in logging and we are filling the vacancies that there were in the hygienist positions. Two are filled, one a Ph.D. in chemistry and an M.Sc. in industrial hygiene. We are filling the other position.

Mr. Harapiak: Has that 30 percent pro-active work, which is the target of the department, has that been happening in recent times?

Mrs. Hammond: If you count logging, auto body and construction, it will come to 30 percent.

Mr. Harapiak: Which area has not been getting it? You say if you count them all, if you average them out, it has been getting them. Has the logging been getting their 30 percent?

Mrs. Hammond: In the logging industry, we have done mailouts to quota holders, we have done lectures to the association, we have videos that are available, and we paid for a training session for safety officers at Pine Falls at Abitibi.

Mr. Harapiak: There was raised in the House a question dealing with the radiologist position that has been

vacant and the equipment has been purchased and it is now not being used. Is there any effort being made to fill that position at this time?

Mrs. Hammond: We are filling the industrial hygienist position. In the last year, Manitoba adopted four radiation protection standards: One is laser safety; two, radio frequency radiation safety; three, microwave exposure standard; and four is, ultraviolet emission standard. The equipment has been purchased to measure the above.

Mr. Harapiak: There is a person filling that position now to operate that equipment?

Mrs. Hammond: The position is not dedicated solely to this. All the hygienists will deal with this particular area and will deal with the equipment. We are getting pretty qualified people in the department, and we want to make sure that they can do more than one thing.

Mr. Harapiak: Somebody told me that there was some difficulty because of the workload that these people had in releasing them in order to give them the necessary education to operate that equipment. Has there been an opportunity now for those people to get leave to take the necessary education?

Mrs. Hammond: As far as training goes, it has been pretty extensive in the department. We have had three people go to Cincinnati for one week to get training, and it was not on that specific issue. It included it, it was on all the issues. We have sponsored a NIOSH course, or a NIOSH course was sponsored and eight people attended, and in-house seminars for all of the staff on radiation. We really have been fairly heavy into training in the division.

Mr. Harapiak: One of the areas that there has been a vacancy for quite some time, and I am wondering if that position has been filled now, is the Chief Medical Officer. Has that position been filled or is it still vacant?

Mrs. Hammond: The board is going to be held on February 12 and I hope that the Member realizes that it was the former Government that cut that position in '85, which was against the legislation that was there, and that was one of the first things that I did was to make sure that position was reinstated. I did get the okay and we will be hiring.

Mr. Harapiak: I do not recall that position being cut by the previous administration. I know there was some difficulty in filling the position, but even if it has, why has it taken 20 months to fill it then? If we did cut it, and I do not believe we did, why has it taken 20 months to fill that position then?

Mrs. Hammond: In the mid-80s a doctor was cut from the division and was never replaced. I think we have worked pretty quickly to make sure that this position has been replaced. It is a hard position to fill so I am pleased that we are having a board as early as February.

Mr. Harapiak: I will have to get some further information on that because I was under the impression that position

was filled with a doctor when we left Government and he resigned shortly after. So I will have to get some further information on that.

Who is putting on seminars in the field of agriculture? Now with women's regulations and increased hazardous materials that the farming communities have to deal with, there is some difficulty in getting people out there. Has that position been vacant, or is there someone in there now putting on the seminars, dealing with the education of seminars?

Mrs. Hammond: There are not any vacancies in that area and we have a staff team supporting the Advisory Council on Agriculture issues. The Chair is Dr. Helgi Ostman (phonetic).

Mr. Harapiak: They deal with the necessary education for agricultural workers right across the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: We are developing education materials for agriculture. This is one of the areas that we are finding is the only thing that works. In fact, when I had asked that the division make sure that when there are any conferences to do with farming, and especially if—is that what they call it?—The Farm Women's Association when they have their conference that we make sure and they have been out there, but I had asked them if they would specifically see if they could address the conference. So I think that we have to come at farm safety from many ways, and one of the areas is to inform the women so that they will get as actively involved.

Mr. Harapiak: I wanted to ask some questions around Solvit and some of the difficulties the Government was faced with after that explosion with the plant that was handling the hazardous waste. There were some recommendations made that there should be some legislation brought forward dealing with the security of operations of this sort. Is the Minister considering bringing in legislation this session to deal with that difficulty?

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

* (1630)

Mrs. Hammond: The recommendation was that the Manitoba Fire Advisory Committee review the present requirements of the Manitoba Fire Code and prepare a report identifying revisions which would strengthen the standard. A committee has been set up of the people involved in the fire protection, and they will be looking at this issue as well as, of course, the advisory council.

Mr. Harapiak: Who sits on that committee that was set up to study the regulations because of that explosion at Solvit?

Mrs. Hammond: It is Manitoba Labour, Mechanical and Engineering Branch, Workplace Safety and Health Division, the Office of the Fire Commissioner, Manitoba Environment, Emergency Measures Organization, Municipal Building Inspection Authorities, Municipal Fire

Authorities and that includes the City of Winnipeg Fire Department, also ICG, I believe. We are waiting for the City of Winnipeg, because we would like their participation as well.

Mr. Harapiak: How long do you anticipate this committee will go before there is a report handed down?

Mrs. Hammond: This committee is looking at things that we could be doing right now. If they come up with areas that have not been looked at before, then they would make recommendations and make sure that there is liaison. I think that was the big thing. We wanted liaison between all these groups because that seemed to be one of the areas that fell through the cracks. Then of course they will be liaising with the advisory council as well.

Mr. Harapiak: Can the Minister give us some comfort that there will not be any more licences granted to operations of this sort until such time as the committee comes down with recommendations on regulations that should be in place for this type of an operation?

Mrs. Hammond: We are working in the department with the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) on that particular area. I would think that with the recommendations that come through from the advisory council and the recommendations that come through from this committee that we will be looking at something more overall before a licence is given out, although there are a lot of, I understand, safety features in the granting of a licence now. I think it is advertised if I am not mistaken and there are hearings.

There are public hearings with this type of thing, but we are making sure that we liaise now with Environment. So Environment is advising us before they give a licence so we can check to make sure that the property is adequate and that the building would be. I would hope that the recommendations that come through from the advisory council will give us a more overall recommendation.

Mr. Harapiak: I believe that Prime Motor Oil is operating an operation much similar to what Solvit was doing. Are they meeting all of the standards and regulations that are in place at this time when a deal comes with storing and transferring of materials?

Mrs. Hammond: As far as we are aware, yes, they are.

Mr. Harapiak: Is there any other corporation besides Prime Motor Oil that is recycling hazardous material either for their own use or for any other use in the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Hammond: There were two other businesses but they went out of business, so Prime Oil is the only one we know.

Mr. Harapiak: When Solvit was operating, did it have all of the proper licensing or was it operating just on a director's permit?

Mrs. Hammond: I understand it was on a director's permit and I believe that was because the legislation had not been proclaimed, and that came from Environment.

Mr. Harapiak: Is that one of the areas that the Minister is looking at strengthening?

Mrs. Hammond: We want to wait and see what the advisory council recommends, but I would hope that just the fact that this accident which happened gave us a lot of knowledge on things that we should be doing, that will come into play whenever there is an application now for such a licence.

Mr. Harapiak: Some of the difficulties after the clean-up dealt with disposing of materials down the municipal sewers. Have there been some regulations or some process set up to see that does not happen again?

Mrs. Hammond: That was under the Department of Environment, so I really could not—

Mr. Harapiak: That would include the dumping of barrels in the Brady waste site too, which really is not allowed. Would that come under the Department of Environment as well?

Mrs. Hammond: Yes, that would be City of Winnipeg and Environment, but we are asking, when we sent this report to the advisory council, they are to look at all the areas that were involved.

Mr. Harapiak: One more question I wanted to ask was, I received a call Friday saying that the Investors Building, which Schenkarow had just bought recently, was being renovated. There was asbestos being removed from the building and it was not done. Do you know if they are being done according to the guidelines or the standards that are put in place for removal of asbestos from a building?

* (1640)

Mrs. Hammond: We are not aware of any concern. No one has flagged it for us, but if there is a specific complaint that has come to the Member's attention, we would be very pleased to attend to it.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass; 3.(a)(2) Other Expenditures, \$710,100—pass.

Item 3.(b) Worker Advisor Office; 3.(b)(1) Salaries, \$357,900—Member for The Pas.

Mr. Harapiak: I know the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) asked some questions about how the workload has been with Workers Compensation. Has there been an increase in the number of claims that are being rejected, and has there been an increase in Workers Advisors' loads?

Mrs. Hammond: The Workers Compensation Board claims that 1 percent to 2 percent of all claims are rejected. I do not know if the Member was specifically

referring to the Workers' Advisor office. We are down now from 150 files outstanding to between 50 and 60, so we are very pleased to be able to report that.

Mr. Harapiak: There seems to be an increased number of claims that were previously accepted by Workers Compensation, that they are now getting cut off Workers Compensation. Has there been some direction given by the Minister responsible for Workers Compensation to interpret the regulations in a different way in order for more and more people to be cut off?

There are more calls coming into our offices, and this has always been an area that there has been a lot of calls, but now there is an increased number of calls from people who are being cut off, people that would previously have been accepted as having a legitimate claim and now have been on for a period of time, and now they are being cut off. Has there been some interpretation given that is different than what was in place previously?

Mrs. Hammond: Not to my knowledge, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Harapiak: There was some speculation of setting up an office in northern Manitoba. Is that still under consideration?

Mrs. Hammond: Is the Member referring to a worker advisor—

Mr. Harapiak: That would be under the Workers Compensation. There is a worker advisor in The Pas but it was Workers Compensation that I was referring to, so it is the wrong Minister. Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass; 3.(b)(2) Other Expenditures, \$51,500—pass.

Resolution No. 104: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,833,400 for Labour, Workplace and Worker Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1990—pass.

At this time we will revert back to item 1., Administration and Finance, 1.(a) Minister's Salary, \$20,600.00. We would ask the Minister's staff to leave the table at this time. Shall the item pass—the Member for Ellice.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I just have a question in regard to pay equity. I understand there has been a study that has been done by the Government in regard to how pay equity is working, the implementation, if in fact it is meeting its targets, objectives, et cetera. This was certainly mentioned to me by a meeting with individuals from the Women's Agenda. They had indicated that they felt that it had been done and completed. I am wondering if in fact that is the case, and is it possible to get the results of that review?

Mrs. Hammond: I am not sure if the review has been completed, but I could get the information and give it to the Member.

Ms. Gray: Has the Minister herself seen any review or results of?

Mrs. Hammond: No, I have not.

Ms. Gray: If in fact the review has been completed, we would appreciate a copy of that review.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I just have a few concluding comments. This is an important department. We would have liked to have spent even more time in terms of discussing its various activities, seeing some of the items that we have raised discussed in more detail. We did raise a number of important issues ranging from the Government's agenda in terms of labour relations generally to issues such as the minimum wage in Manitoba, issues such as pay equity, issues such as affirmative action in terms of the Civil Service Department. Basically, I think we got a bit of an idea of the current agenda of the Government.

First of all, I want to indicate, and I said this at the beginning of this series of Estimates, that I would give the Minister credit in cases where action was taken. There is one area where I am pleased to see there has been some response, at least initially, and that is in the area of the minimum wage. I am pleased the Minister is calling a meeting of the committee to look at that. I think that is a positive step, something we called for last year, the tail end of last year in the Legislature, something I called for in Estimates a year ago. It is overdue, but I do give the Minister credit on that.

I hope there will be a fairly expedited process reviewing the current minimum wage. I believe an increase in minimum wage will be the result of that committee's deliberations. I look forward to seeing some improvement in terms of the earning power of individuals on a minimum wage in Manitoba. I believe as we have determined in Estimates, as we have heard from the Minister, there is some progress in that area.

I should say in other areas I continue to be disappointed in terms of the Government's agenda. I believe it continues to be a biased agenda that is anti-labour. I believe that is indicated by its legislative agenda, in terms of final offer selection in particular. I am disappointed about the fact that there has been no commitment to legislative improvements in terms of The Employment Standards Act for workers affected by plant closures and layoffs. With all the talk of additional resources going to labour adjustment, I would think that has to be fundamental. There have been changes. Most recently in 1983, the previous Government had improved legislation. When we had left office, we made a commitment to improving it even further.

If the Minister wants to look at a parallel, she should look at Ontario where a minority Conservative Government under pressure from the NDP brought in some of the best plant closure legislation in the country. I really do not care whose name is on the Bill. We have introduced a Bill ourselves, but I believe action is necessary and I believe it is going to become increasingly necessary over the next period of time.

Similarly, we are disappointed about the lack of movement in terms of employment standards legislation generally. I raised this at committee last year. I raised

it again in committee this year. The Government has not moved to bring in a comprehensive series of changes to The Employment Standards Act, something that once again the previous Government had committed in the throne speech. In fact, amendments were drafted, but the Government has chosen to delay any action on this. I suspect probably they will not proceed at all. We are very disappointed in terms of their actions in this regard.

* (1650)

We are similarly disappointed in terms of the situation in terms of grants. We believe the Labour Education Centre should receive funding, that funding should be reinstated, and we believe that it is unacceptable the Government has continued to deny that.

We have raised our continuing concerns in the area of pay equity. We believe there still needs to be an improved focus on pay equity from this Government, even within the public sector. As I have said on many occasions, we want to see action in the private sector as well, but we are concerned about the direction that has been taken in terms of pay equity.

We are concerned about what has happened to the other functions of the Department of Labour, and particularly in terms of inspections. That includes both the Workplace Safety and Health side—our critic, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) has raised a number of concerns in that particular area—but also in the area of the Department of Labour.

I think it is important to point to the fact, as I pointed out in Estimates, that the Department of Labour lost two inspectors because of changes in regulations. I believe those inspection positions should have been maintained and should have been reallocated to other areas that need improved inspection, other areas where there are going to be improved regulations presumably to prevent, for example, the Solvit type of situation, to prevent the carbon monoxide poisoning incident. I believe with improved regulations we will need improved inspection. I am very disappointed about the Government's action in this regard.

What is particularly unfortunate I think is that in the Department of Labour, the Department of Workplace Safety and Health, we are dealing with a situation this year in comparison to last year, and last year in comparison with the previous year. These departments actually have fewer staff now than when the Government came into office. I believe that is an indication, in and of itself, of the priorities of the Government, and that is an indication that the Department of Labour is not a priority area. I am very disappointed in that because this department deals with many concerns of working people, deals with the concerns in particular of working women in the area of pay equity.

I believe it is an important department, and I believe that the agenda of the Government in not keeping pace with the demands in this area, in fact reducing the number of staff, indicates that their bias is against working people, working men and women and their families in terms of the issues of concern to them. I believe that is the only way in which we can sum up these Estimates.

As I said, I am pleased in the area of the minimum wage, but I am very disappointed in terms of the general trend in the department, and I believe we do have a different style from the current Minister. I believe that there are some improvements from the previous Minister's style. I do believe the Minister has attempted to answer questions. I was a bit disappointed in the area of the Civil Service that there were no answers forthcoming on the proposed decentralization but, even though the style may have changed, I believe the bottom line policies are still the same. They are still Conservative policies. They are still right-wing in nature and there is a bias that is very evident by the bottom line of this department, and that is that there are fewer staff working in the Department of Labour today than there were even last year. We are not even talking about comparisons to other years.

Once again, we are disappointed. We will continue to raise these issues. The Legislature will be debating final offer selection, will be debating plant closure legislation in the upcoming period of time, but we are very concerned about the Government's deaf ear to the concerns of working people. We will be continuing to raise those concerns throughout the rest of the legislative Session, which by all indications could be a fairly lengthy one, and I believe increasingly focused on issues that affect working people.

I will indicate now perhaps to the Minister to put her on notice that if she thinks we have raised a lot of these concerns up to this point in time, she has not seen anything yet. Believe you me, "you ain't seen nothing yet," as the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) said.

I hope that she will take the opportunity of these Estimates and the debate that has taken place to go back to her Cabinet and say that this is unacceptable, there has to be a greater priority. In fact, I would hope that the next budget that is brought in by this Government, if it does bring in another budget, will include a far greater allocation of resources for the Department of Labour and a far greater priority on the concerns of working people in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass—pass.

Resolution No. 102: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,539,600 for Labour, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1990—pass.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Labour. The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the committee shall be the Status of Women Estimates.

Given the hour, what is the will of the—we will call it five o'clock. The hour is now 5 p.m. I am interrupting the proceedings for Private Members' hour. The committee will return at 8 p.m. this evening.

* (1420)

SUPPLY—EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Gilles Roch): Committee will come to order to continue considering the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

We are on item 1.(g)(1), shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): I would like to ask some questions with regard to funding, and I think this is the appropriate area. I would like to ask the Minister what is the actual dollar figure that will be set aside this year for the funding of independent or private schools?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Acting Chairman, I would ask the Member for Sturgeon Creek if she could hold that question until we get into Section 16-3, which deals with the independent schools. At that time I will have staff here available to answer those questions.

Mrs. Yeo: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as I look under Activity Identification under 1(g) it talks about calculating and dispersing all grants to all public and private schools funded under the various support to education programs. Therefore I felt this was the appropriate place to ask such questions.

Mr. Derkach: That is the general direction of the ADM responsible for Finance and Administration. The specific questions with regard to grants and allocations would come under 16-3, and that is where the independent schools are covered. I would be most happy at that time to answer those questions. We are not trying to stall the Member for Sturgeon Creek. I am just trying to direct her to a more appropriate place to ask those questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Yeo: All right I will try another line of questioning then. I would like to ask some questions regarding teachers in Manitoba, certification, et cetera. Is this the appropriate appropriation?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, this is the appropriate place.

Mrs. Yeo: I have some letters from some of the teachers associations in the province who have said there was to be a letter coming from the Minister indicating, to the teachers associations, the Minister's position with regard to removal of teachers certificates or not removing teachers certificates if they are charged with sexual abuse or sexual assault. The teachers associations are saying they do not have a document from the Minister or the Minister's department.

I would like to ask the Minister if these written guidelines are being put into place? When can teachers associations throughout the province anticipate receiving a written letter?

Mr. Derkach: As a result of some discussions we had with the Manitoba Teachers Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, teachers as a whole

and the Superintendents Association there was an agreement that we would not be suspending teachers certificates when a matter was reported, and in fact instead of that from that time forward we would simply be referring the matter to the Certificate Review Committee, still holding the right to suspend the certificate if the need arose or if the circumstances warranted that.

There was agreement that any certificates that had been suspended prior to that time would stay suspended. The Teachers Society, the Trustees Association and superintendents all concurred that we would all move in that direction and they would be satisfied with that.

Following that a letter was sent to all superintendents with regard to the action. I am sure the Manitoba Teachers Society was also apprised of that by letter and so were the major organizations such as the Trustees Association, and I have mentioned the Superintendents Association as well.

Mrs. Yeo: The group I referred to were the various teachers associations. I know there are some individuals in some of the teachers associations who are concerned because they have not yet received any actual documents stating that this in fact would be true. I suppose they could obtain that from their various school divisions or their superintendents.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, it is the responsibility of the Manitoba Teachers Society, as a whole, to notify its membership of the new regulations or the new guidelines that are going to be followed. We do not, as a department, correspond with every teachers association throughout the province. We simply correspond with their parent organization and that is the Manitoba Teachers Society. Then it is their responsibility to take the information from there.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister indicated in a meeting with the Manitoba Teachers Society, and then he referred to some of the other educational organizations, that they in fact agreed to not look at the backlog of teachers who have been charged and have been called guilty until they are proven innocent, and so many of them therefore do not have certificates and cannot teach.

Can the Minister tell me if that was a negotiated agreement, or just how did this particular agreement come forward? Why in fact would he not exempt those teachers who had been charged in the past?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, as the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) should know within The Public Schools Act the Minister does have the authority to suspend a teacher's certificate if the Minister or the department deems that it is necessary to suspend that certificate.

The power of the Minister has not been changed in any way, shape or form. All that has happened is we have changed the course of action that we are going to take with regard to suspending teachers' certificates in cases of child abuse. In those circumstances, as a result of discussions we have had with the Teachers

Society and as a result of concerns that have been raised because of teachers' certificates being suspended and then teachers not being eligible for salary from that particular time, whenever that was, teachers' certificates would not be suspended they would be referred to the Teachers' Certificate Review Committee.

The reason that was done was simply to ensure that the salaries of those teachers would not be suspended by school boards. We had recommended that school boards continue paying these teachers while they have been taken out of the classroom. It was not in any way a negotiated position. It is not a negotiable item at all. It is a matter of trying to approach a situation in the most reasonable way that we possibly can.

* (1430)

However, to try and go back and review all of the cases that have come before the Minister beforehand would certainly lead us to assume that we would have to review every case in prior years as well. We were not prepared to do that. We had pointed that out to the Teachers Society, and as I indicated they concurred that they would be satisfied with the action that was taken by myself at that point in time.

Mrs. Yeo: Mr. Acting Chairperson, what about the teachers who are not able to teach today, are not able to work today, who are, many of them, even those who have had their certificates reinstated, even those teachers have found that they are having difficulty with normal day-to-day living, because, in fact—and I think the Teachers Society said it in their MTS update that these teachers, even though they are found not guilty and that the charges are without foundation, these people are not able to teach in the classroom, even with some help from the school division in which they are employed to try and find a different school for them to teach.

I know that in an article from TEMPO, a St. James-Assiniboia Teachers Association magazine, the article states that there are only 20 or 30 out of 14,000 teachers in the province who have in fact been accused of abusing children, and that is not a high percentage. Of these 20 to 30, many of them have—in fact, the charges have been dropped and the person has been reinstated in a classroom, but they still are labelled.

Is there any thrust in the Minister's department to help, particularly those teachers in the rural communities, to reinstate in another school division without losing their seniority, without losing their years of accumulated service to the children in Manitoba, even if these teachers are found—well, certainly if these teachers are found not guilty. One would not want them back in the classroom if they were proved to be guilty. Is there any thrust in the Minister's heart to help these people relocate and find employable service in other school divisions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, we have to understand one thing first of all, and that is that teachers are the employees of school divisions. They are not under the employ of the Department of Education. I

have to also indicate that the Minister, whoever that person may be, has the authority to suspend a certificate for whatever reason if that reason warrants suspension of a certificate.

The fact that teachers are found not guilty and then returned back to the school division is really the responsibility of the school division. My department nor I would ever want to get involved in trying to find other areas for those individuals to teach in. That certainly would destroy any kind of rational approach to teacher employment in this province. I do say at the same time that we are concerned about the fact that there are many teachers who are not guilty and then find it difficult to assume their ordinary responsibilities within the same classrooms or within the same schools.

We are not responsible for controlling media either, Mr. Acting Chairman, so therefore we cannot control what will go into the papers once an action has been filed against an individual. Therefore, we are limited in what we can do as an administrative department, as a Department of Education and Training, but I understand the problems that they are facing. For that reason, there has been some action taken by the Teachers Society to try and, first of all, inservice teachers on the types of behaviours that are appropriate on inservicing, also perhaps informing students on the kinds of mischievous conducts that should not be entered into.

All of this takes a matter of consultation. I think one of the ways that we can remove some of this unwarranted abuse or accusation is by ensuring that there is a proper link between the parent and the school, the teacher and the parent, to ensure that parents and teachers understand one another, because if that link is built and that bond is there and that communication and liaison is there, I am sure we will see that many of these circumstances would not occur during the school day.

Mrs. Yeo: I certainly commend the inservices that are being prepared for school divisions, because only last week I had a resource teacher say to me the Minister might as well present a Bill doing away with all resource help because a good part of resource teachers' jobs is providing the hugging and the encouragement that is necessary to help the self-esteem of these children who maybe need more hugs and more encouragement and that teachers are terrified, are really concerned, about this sort of action.

If the Minister has the opportunity to pull a teacher's certificate, and he has said he has, and I know he has under The Education Administration Act, why then could this same Minister not have the opportunity to reinstate a teacher and to give direction to the school division to place that teacher in non-contact responsibilities until such time as the court, the law, decides or until such time as there is a certificate review appeal committee that looks at the teacher's certificate. Could the Minister not reinstate, and is there not a two-way stream?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, The Administration Act does not allow for that at the present time. The

Administration Act clearly spells out that the Minister has the right to suspend the certificate and then also refer the matter to the Certificate Review Committee. If the Certificate Review Committee finds that the teacher's certificate should be reinstated, the teacher's certificate will be reinstated. That is as far as the Minister of Education or the Department of Education and Training will go. After that it is up to the school board who has responsibility for that teacher's contract to analyze the situation, to evaluate it and to see whether in fact that teacher should be reinstated within that particular classroom again or in another school or in another classroom.

I would say that the situation would vary from case to case depending on the circumstances and depending probably on the size of the school and the community because what is maybe appropriate in one community may be indeed inappropriate in another community. Therefore, I think those have to be weighed by those school boards on a case-by-case basis.

I might say we have increased the professional development or inservicing budgets substantially over the last couple of years, I think they have tripled as a matter of fact. This is an indication that we are trying to encourage more professional development even in areas such as this, which is a very important area, where teachers need to be apprised of their legal rights and responsibilities under the new child abuse legislation.

* (1440)

Mrs. Yeo: In the Charter of Rights, Section 7, it states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. I would think that Section 7 is saying that an individual has a right to be employed.

Will the Minister tell me if he sees that there is a difference, a place for departmental interference, if you will, a place for assistance for a fellow human being from a small school division who has been accused by the superintendent of the school division and that superintendent has actually gotten up before the appeals committee to state the concerns that that superintendent has. Does the Minister not have some responsibility for this teacher, to assist this teacher to get back into the workforce? Can the Minister not agree that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for that teacher to go back to work in that same school division where in fact a superintendent has been the accuser, the one who has brought that teacher to his misery?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, if the Member for Sturgeon Creek is suggesting that the Minister should then intervene and take over the responsibilities that rightly belong to a school board, not necessarily the superintendent, but the Member has to understand that it is the school board that will make the decision, and it is up to the superintendent to work along with that school board to ensure that the best possible placement is found for a teacher when that teacher is found not guilty.

But under the same Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Mr. Acting Chairman, that the Member quotes from, certainly there is a right of children to be protected, and we all understand that. I know the kind of dilemma that we have before us with regard to teachers who are accused wrongfully. I have to indicate to you, again, we are limited in terms of the amount of action that we can take. For that reason we have gone as far as we can legally, but I think beyond that the Department of Education and Training has ensured that we do have training opportunities or inservice opportunities available, that information sessions are available to teachers, parents, so that in fact we can do away with much of this wrongful accusation and get back to what is normal in a classroom situation.

The Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) brought the matter of resource teachers to the House here just a minute ago. I concur that not only is it resource teachers who maybe need to give a child a hug, but it is probably the primary teachers, and I think that is where we get back to building a relationship with parents so that parents understand what kind of activity is going on in the school so that the teacher can explain to parents what kinds of activity he/she are doing in the school so that then there is an understanding between the home and the school.

That is why we are advocating, as a Government and as a department, that links between parents and schools are very critical to a conducive environment for education in our schools. But I cannot say that I will interfere or intervene in a matter that rightfully belongs to a school division and a school board.

Mrs. Yeo: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I think that is unfortunate in some individual cases because I would not want the Minister to interfere arbitrarily with all kinds of situations. I think for something as sensitive as this, and the very definite need for some thoughtful and meaningful change and some help for a couple of individuals in the province who are, even though they now before the law are judged innocent, before many of their colleagues and before their boss, in some situations, they are not termed innocent, they are still and will continue to be, stated guilty.

We even are now getting letters, and I know this letter was sent to the Minister so he received it, too, from The Pas, Manitoba on behalf of a teacher in one of the Winnipeg School Divisions, not Winnipeg No. 1, but one of the others, and the individuals in The Pas are upset because this person is not presumed innocent until proved guilty, but is called guilty, and the hearing for this individual in urban Manitoba will not take place until May 22, so this person for a whole year goes without a salary, is ostracized, is feeling very badly, but not feeling guilty because he in fact knows he is not guilty. Is there no way that the Minister would intervene to have this person placed in a departmental position totally away from students? Is there not some kind of an action that could be taken to assist this person who has not been judged guilty, who has not been before a court of law, to give them some meaningful occupation? Can the Minister not use this person's previous expertise, his 15 years of teaching experience, to some good for the children of Manitoba?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I have to reiterate that the employer of the teacher is the school board. The school board can very well move to assign the teacher to another responsibility. That is a matter that needs to be addressed with school boards by such groups as the Manitoba Teachers Society.

The department is not going to go ahead and hire a teacher who has been suspended just so that teacher can have a salary coming in. We would be the laughing stock of the province if we were to do that as a Government or if any Government were to do that, because the teacher is really the employee of a school board.

The school boards have been encouraged not to suspend pay, if they are going to suspend the individual to suspend with pay. Nevertheless, I cannot interfere and say that you must do that, because that still is the responsibility of the school board. They, if they so choose, may assign that teacher to a research project if one is available. I remind the Member that there are some very small school divisions in this province where it would be very difficult to reassign a teacher and hire another one in his or her place.

Now with regard to the Certificate Review Committee, we attempt to deal with all matters as quickly as possible, and I have instructed staff to that extent. However, in many cases there are reasons for a postponement of a case coming before the Certificate Review Committee. In most cases, the postponement has been at the request of counsel of the teacher. Therefore, there are many reasons and many variations why matters are not dealt with more quickly than they are. It is too simplistic to say we should deal with them immediately and then reinstate the individual. I think that we would be really taking the law into our own hands.

We have a Teachers' Certificate Review Committee that really is independent of the Minister. They hear the case, they have witnesses come before them, and then they make their judgment based on the evidence that is presented to them. On that evidence they then make a recommendation to the Minister and we try to follow up in the best way that we possibly can and as quickly as we can. More than that it is difficult to do unless we were to change the administration Act completely.

* (1450)

Mrs. Yeo: Well, I can tell I could probably beat this for the rest of the hours that we have this afternoon. There is not much budging, although I was pleased to hear the Minister say that, yes, it would be very difficult for some of the smaller school divisions to find a placement for the teacher. That is precisely my concern that some of the smaller school divisions where the teacher is labelled and he lives within that community and there are no other schools for him to go to, obviously it is a difficult if not impossible decision.

What the Minister is saying is, tough bananas, this teacher is unemployed, even with his certificate reinstated probably does not have a hope of getting

back in the classroom because his life would be made so unbearable for him that he would have to pull out anyway.

Under 1(g), there is a statement that says, to provide administrative assistance and information on the education system to other branches in the Department, school boards, teachers and the public in general. I would like to ask the Minister, if somebody from the public calls and has questions, it is, I have permission or I should direct the individual with questions that I am not able to answer to the office of the Minister. Is that correct?

Mr. Derkach: Yes to the latter part of the question, Mr. Acting Chairman, but I would just like to go back to the comments that were made by the Member with regard to suspension of teachers' certificates, because I did not say anything that would indicate that we are throwing up our hands and doing nothing about it. I have indicated some things that we have done. Previous Ministers have suspended teachers' certificates when they were informed of allegations. I indicated that we have done something in that regard, and that is that we are not suspending them automatically. We are referring the matter to the Certificate Review Committee.

Secondly, I have indicated that we have increased professional development and inservicing budgets to ensure that teachers are informed if necessary. If teachers feel that they want inservices on those matters, those are available. Mr. Acting Chairman, I also have to indicate to you that, as a result of the changes in the child abuse legislation, all schools were informed as to the procedures. There have been guidelines set down. They clearly spell out the way the teachers should conduct themselves and carry on their affairs.

So, Mr. Acting Chairman, I think we have done everything that we possibly can to date. We will continue to monitor the situation, and if we can be of assistance within the framework of the Act, we will do whatever it is that is required.

Mrs. Yeo: Back to his response to my question about having the general public phone his various departments to request information, I am wondering if the general public is allowed to phone the various departments to ask questions, why am I not given that same privilege? Why can I not, as an individual, phone his Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, or the Assistant Deputy Minister and other Assistant Deputy Ministers' offices to ask further questions? Why do I have to have all my calls screened through his individuals?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I think it is a sort of an understood protocol that, if a Critic of Education from an Opposition Party requires information, usually that information is of such a nature that is probably much different than that an individual taxpayer would have, or an individual parent may have of the department. But the reason this has been put in place—and it was not put in place by our Government—it was put in place by previous administrations to ensure that in fact we were not putting civil servants in

embarrassing, if you like, situations, or in situations where they felt very awkward and intimidated because of the questions that were asked.

We have to ensure the protection of these people so that they in fact will give information that is accurate and will not jeopardize their positions as employees of the Civil Service. So, Mr. Acting Chairman, I say it only means that there is a proper protocol to follow that has been adhered to by all departments, and no matter who the critic is, or who the Opposition Member is, they have been advised that they should contact the appropriate Minister for the information.

That same process was in place before. When I was in the Opposition, if I wanted some information with regard to Education, I simply phoned the Minister of Education then, asked the questions or asked if I could meet with one of his officials, and there usually was a special assistant at that particular meeting and there was no problem. I always got my information but it meant that there was a proper procedure to follow. That is all we are asking the Members of the Legislative Assembly to do now.

Mrs. Yeo: No comment on that response. This appropriation also talks about the conciliation and arbitration for disputes for school divisions when negotiations are taking place. Is this Minister and his department in favour of binding arbitration for the various school divisions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, that is a reality now. Schools and/or the Manitoba Teachers Society have the right to binding arbitration because of their historical—I do not know what you want to call it, but because of the agreement that was reached way back in 1958, I believe it was, where they did not accept strike action in place of binding arbitration. I am not sure about the year. Oh, I am advised that it was 1956.

An Honourable Member: '56?

Mr. Derkach: Yes.

Mrs. Yeo: There is also a statement in here that this department is responsible for maintaining Manitoba students' high school credits, et cetera. Are there any changes anticipated or is this something that is being reviewed by the High School Review Committee?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, one of the difficulties with the student records is that they have fallen behind so badly because we have not been able to keep up with recording them on computers, et cetera. We are looking at changes. There are changes recommended in the High School Review with regard to student records. Yes, we have to improve the system. Staff are working on ways in which we can do that and I can assure the Member that we are going to address it in all seriousness to ensure that the system is such that when records are requested by students or anyone else the information will be provided on time and within a reasonable time frame.

Mrs. Yeo: I am pleased to hear the Minister saying—I think he said "students who request the information."

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As a former post-secondary educator I found it very difficult to assess the credentials, if you will, from the students who submitted their high school marks from throughout the province, because of course despite the fact that the aim is for equity, we all know that equity is a very difficult thing to actually attain.

What I am hoping is that somewhere in the credentials—the new forms that are put into place and that are created, if you will—that there will be some easier way for those who are having to assess high school credentials to ascertain what that credential actually means, if they have vocational courses or if they are University Entrance, or whatever. Not just, this person has a high school diploma but this is what this particular high school diploma describes. I think today, although the move was to try and implement that, I do not think it is really up to scratch yet. I am wondering if the Minister could comment on looking at ways of defining what is meant by the actual credential that the person has.

* (1500)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, we certainly support a standardized way of reporting student records. The department has always been available to access the credentials, to give assistance in assessing credentials so that those individuals making inquiries would understand very clearly what those credentials really meant. That service has always been there.

I agree that it is just not something that has happened over the last year and a half. It is something that has sort of compounded itself over time and that is that we have a need to upgrade and update our system. We cannot put it off any longer. It is going to take dollars, it is going to take time and we are certainly not going to be able to do that overnight.

We support the high school recommendation of course that was made in this regard and as I said staff are currently working on a system whereby we will be able to first of all put everything into the computer system and then be able to access it quickly.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): Shall the item pass? (pass)

Item 2.(a), shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Yeo: I have just one question under The Teachers' Pensions Act. Is there any move—and I am sure the Minister will be very interested in maybe moving to do something—to address those teachers who enter some level of politics to see that their pensions can be carried over into the political arena and then back into the teaching field should they go back and teach?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I have to indicate that at this point in time I have not seriously looked at any changes, but it would require a legislative change, and it is something that can be looked at in the future. I know it has been expressed to me by several people who are from the teaching profession who have entered politics, but it is almost a self-serving kind of interest.

I think that given time we can look at it in a sensible way, but I have to indicate very honestly, I have not looked at it seriously to this point in time.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): Before proceeding with item 2, I neglected to ask if item (g)(2) would be passed. Shall item 1.(g)(2) pass—pass.

We will set aside Section 1 for the time being and continue with Section 2. Section 2(b) shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Yeo: I have submitted a letter—and I do not know whether the Deputy Minister has received it or not—requesting some information with regard to these five boards that are listed there and I think perhaps I will just wait until—Oh, he has foreseen my letter even, mental telepathy, he must have. Okay. I just did not want to waste time right at this point discussing each of these boards, so I will await the written response.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I have not seen the letter so I was wondering if the Member for Sturgeon Creek could put her question forth, and then I would see if I have the correct information available with me.

Mrs. Yeo: I have not got the letter in front of me, but what I was asking for basically was the make-up of each of these boards. Who is on them? How many times have they met in 1989? What is the criteria that they function from? What are the anticipated meetings that are projected for 1990? Basically, that is the way the letter was put together.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, it is very difficult to project the meetings they will have in 1990, because by and large the boards meet on a fairly regular basis so the number of meetings would not change from '89 to '90. I have that information here, and I guess I could read it into the record, but it would chew away at the valuable time that we have left since I understand that we are running short of time for these Estimates and not as a result of what the Government has done, indeed, but I will table this information so that we can hasten the process.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): Item 2.(a), shall the item pass? (pass) Item 2.(b) shall the item pass? (pass)

Resolution Number 29: BE IT RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$29,888,000 for Education and Training, Statutory Boards and Commissions for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1990. Shall item 2 pass? (pass)

Item 3. Financial Support - Schools: Provides financial support to school boards and assistance to educational organizations. Item 3.(a), shall the item pass—the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Yeo: I have several questions in this particular appropriation that I would like to ask, and before I ask them, I want to respond to the Minister's response saying that it was not the Government that was trying to delay this particular Session. I can assure you that nobody more than those on this House would like to

be able to do more constituency work, and I can assure you that this particular Member has never once asked a question for which I did not wish a legitimate solid answer, and in some instances I have actually had just that.

I would like to ask the Minister, how are the per pupil grants to the public school students calculated? What kind of a formula is utilized to calculate the per pupil grants?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, since 1984 I believe the schools in this province have been operating under the GSE formula, the formula that was put in place by the former administration. Since then there have been some modifications to the formula, because it did not apply adequately to some situations. We have modified the formula further. However, I must indicate that the principles of the formula are still in place and we still abide by the basic principles of the GSE formula, but because there have been such variations in the way that the formula was adhered to and because there was such inequity in the way that school divisions were receiving funding, we found it necessary to bend the formula, if you like, to adjust it so that in fact school divisions throughout the province would be treated more equitably and receive a fair share of the provincial funding.

I guess we could talk for hours on the funding formula and the funding approach, but I do not think that this is really what the Member is wanting. If there are some specific aspects about the GSE that she would wish, I can certainly answer those.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me how many school divisions are actually grandfathered under the GSE formula?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairman, there were 11 school divisions grandfathered in 1989 under the formula.

* (1510)

Mrs. Yeo: I am surprised, I thought it would be higher than that. That is nice.

Can the Minister tell me how the per pupil grants to independent schools are actually calculated. In other words, 50 percent, if you are moving to 50 percent, it is 50 percent of what?

Mr. Derkach: For some time now we have been struggling with the approach that has taken to funding independent schools, and there was recognition that there needed to be a significant change in the approach when we came to Government. For that reason, we indicated that we would be seeking some greater accountability by independent schools as to how public funds are being spent. At the present time, the grants to independent schools are based on 50 percent of the support that is given to our public school system and that is based on a full-time student and it is also based on the guarantee, the categorical, the equalization and the block grant.

Mrs. Yeo: Does each school division receive the same amount then with the GSE? Is the actual dollar figure the same per pupil from school division to school division?

Mr. Derkach: The grants to independent schools, if the Member is asking whether each of the schools get the same, are based on the average per pupil grant that is supported to public schools. Then we take the formula and apply it, whether it is 50 percent or 45 percent, or whatever that figure may be, to the independent schools.

Mrs. Yeo: Just so that I am sure that I have heard what you say. You are saying the per pupil grant from school division to school division varies from school division to school division fairly radically. You take an average of that amount, and then 50 percent of that averaged amount is what each qualified independent school will receive on behalf of their child.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, yes, the Member is right. The amount that each school division across the province would get varies based on the formula and based on their needs and so forth. You take the average for the province, and that is the figure that one would use to establish the amount that an independent school or that independent schools would receive in the province.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me if there are any residency requirements imposed by the province on school divisions for both public school students and independent school students?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there have never been any residency requirements for students attending independent schools in Manitoba, just as there is not any residency differential fee for our university students who are attending from out of province and out of country. So up until this time there has been no residency requirement for students to be eligible for funding for the independent schools.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister mentioned a moment or two ago something about regulations. Can he indicate when we might anticipate looking at written regulations?

Mr. Derkach: We have been trying to seek some reasonable accountability of independent schools now for the last year and some months. That, on the surface, may appear to be a fairly simple exercise, but when one takes a careful look at the make-up of independent schools in this province, the way they are governed and who they are owned by if you like and when we bring them all together and we begin to speak about accountability on the surface, as I indicated, it looks quite simple but once you get into the details it becomes a fairly complex matter.

We have certainly identified our priorities and our parameters in terms of accountability requirements, and independent schools all understand those. We have been working very hard, staff have been working very hard, with the officials from independent schools to

ensure that we cover every possible angle. We are very close, I would have to say, to being in a position where we can announce those kinds of accountability guidelines.

There are some details that have to be finessed yet and perhaps some final touchups that have to be done before that announcement can be made. We are anticipating that some—at least the announcement on accountability will be ready within the next few weeks.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me if it is correct to say that Manitoba Education gives grants for foreign students who attend private schools?

Mr. Derkach: If the Member is asking whether students who come from other countries are eligible for grants when they attend independent schools, the answer to that is yes.

Mrs. Yeo: Do foreign students who attend public schools get these same grants then? Do they qualify for the same grants?

Mr. Derkach: Foreign students who attend public schools in the province would have to establish a residency in the province and then they would be eligible for grants, the same as any other student in the province.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister is saying that there is some discrimination then, that in fact the residency requirements for the foreign student attending a private school, the residency is the private school in which the student lives and the same thing does not occur. Is it true that private schools receive pro-rata money for special needs students, even though they may not have any?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, they do. This again is one of those areas that gave us some concern and still does, that there are some instances where perhaps one could define it as double funding occurs or calculations are made in such a way that it would appear as though there may be evidence of double funding. These anomalies are not things that were put in place since we came to Government. They are things that were there before. It was just a crude way of, I guess, calculating how independent schools were funded in the past. We have indicated that this is not correct. It certainly is not a proper way to calculate those kinds of grants. There needs to be some separation and an understanding that we can only fund once; and secondly, that students in the public school system would be treated the same as students in the independent school system.

Mrs. Yeo: Is it true that private schools receive pro-rata money for transportation?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, they do. Again this is one of those same areas that gives us some concern. If you go through it a step at a time you will find that indeed there were many areas that needed to be addressed. That is why I indicated that, on the surface,

accountability appeared to be a fairly simplistic issue and one that could be settled overnight. When one delves into it, there is certainly a need then. It becomes evident that there was a need to discuss it very carefully and very fully with all those members of the independent school system. That is why it has taken this length of time to negotiate, if you like, or to get agreement on this whole issue and to ensure that everybody understands where it is that we are all going so that once the announcement is made there will not be any surprises to the independent school system, nor to the public school system. The same rules will be followed regardless of whether students attend public or independent schools.

* (1520)

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister indicate the dollar figure per pupil that the independent schools would receive for the special needs students that they may not have and for transportation services that they may not provide?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the way that we calculate per pupil grants to independent schools is taking the average that students get in the public school system, using the block equalization and guarantee, and then taking an amount, the percentage of that, and that is what the independent schools would get.

Within that figure you would have the figures for per pupil transportation, special needs, et cetera. That grand total, if you like, per pupil amounts to \$1,672 per full-time student for 1989.

Mrs. Yeo: Is it not true that over \$570 in categorical grants are paid pro rata to independent school students which offer little, if any, of the related programs for which the public schools actually get these grants?

Mr. Derkach: Regardless of whether they offer the programs or not the way it has been handled in the past is that we take the average amount that students get in the public school system, we take a percentage of that, and that is what the independent school system gets, regardless of whether they offer the service or not.

That has been the reason we have indicated that we need to have the whole system reviewed and overhauled, because it was not addressing the educational needs of students that were in these schools perhaps. In some instances there were services that were being paid for that were not being provided. However, I have to indicate that there were many independent schools that were providing those services and then were getting the grants for them.

Yes, in a general sense we took the average that pupils get in the public school system, you take a percentage of that and that is what is paid to the independent schools on a per pupil basis.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Acting Chairperson, could I ask the Minister some questions in regard to the school of speech therapy and the post-

graduate medical education, if this is the right time to ask or shall I wait until we have the other people who are responsible for that department?

Mr. Derkach: I think questions relating to those areas would be more appropriate in 16-4. At that time I would have some staff available here for that technical kind of expertise we need.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I just wanted to confirm a couple of things here if the Minister does not mind.

I am not aware if the Minister has been notified that the speech therapy association is holding a two-day conference over the weekend. They are extremely concerned about the shortage of speech therapists. We have raised this issue a number of times. The Minister has acknowledged the problem and so has the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

It has been clearly indicated by the response that the Minister of Health said we do not have adequate numbers of speech therapists not only in Manitoba but throughout Canada, and possibly that is not correct.

Finally, what I want the Minister to answer, that he said on the record that there are grants or bursaries available for students who are going outside Manitoba, for example, to North Dakota, but I was notified by a grandparent and she was telling me that there were eight students last year who went to North Dakota for speech therapy programs and most of them applied for the grants and none of them were given any grants. Can the Minister provide us information, if he does not have it today, maybe tomorrow, so that I can answer those parents, is that true or not?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would be happy to deal with those cases on an individual basis with the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), but I have to indicate in a general sense that student aid can be applied for by those students who are going out of province, in this case, because we do not offer the program here. So they would be eligible provided they meet the other criteria, of course, that they would in a normal circumstance. There is no special grant that we would pay to students for attending that particular institution, but they are eligible for student aid as students would be in this province.

I have to say that the whole area of speech therapy is one that gives us some concern because we have difficulty recruiting enough qualified people to fill the vacancies that we have in the school system around the province. As I indicated before, we are looking at ways in which we could perhaps make it more attractive, if you like, for graduates to come to Manitoba, but then again that means dollars and it means competing with perhaps richer jurisdictions who can offer more lucrative, attractive programs to their graduates. So it is always a competitive kind of situation that one finds himself in.

But, by and large, our department has done a fairly commendable task at recruiting people into our province, professionals into our province. As a matter

of fact, just lately we just signed three more people onto the department staff for speech therapy and we are constantly on the lookout for those kinds of people.

But on those specific concerns about not being eligible for student bursaries, I would certainly be prepared to take a look at them with the Member and then address them on an individual basis.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is not even on an individual basis. The indication was given by the Minister when we were asking questions, do you have these grants available? But when those students applied for those grants we are talking about a specific area of deficiency. If you are not going to provide those grants they are not going to come back because they are spending more money out of Manitoba and when they are going to get 25 percent more in salaries, whether they go to Ontario or to Alberta, there is definitely less chance for them to come back. That is why the people of Manitoba are concerned, that if you do not provide them with some incentive to go for higher study, they will not come back.

I would like the Minister to make a statement clear on this subject, how you are going to tackle the situation of the speech therapist because we do not have a school here. We do not have any incentive grants and we have less surveys on how we are going to solve the problem.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, as I understand it, there is not really an abundance of this quality of person, or this type of professional person in other jurisdictions, as well. That is why there is some competition because if there was an overabundance of these types of professionals then you would not have the competitive kind of situation existing. As I indicated, it is a situation that has to be dealt with in a pragmatic way, if you like, in a rational way and, as I indicated, staff in my department are looking at it in relation to the 1991 Estimates, but at this point in time there are no guarantees in place as to what will be done.

But I can assure you that we do have some concerns about that, concerns that were raised in the House on several occasions, and we are trying to do what it is we can, given the resources we have to attract the best qualified people. I must say that we have attracted some very good quality people into the province.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as the Minister has indicated, they will discuss the various programs in the post-graduate medical education under (XVI)4. I would like the Minister to know that February 5 is the deadline when we are going to have the examination by the Royal College for various programs, and there is a lot of uncertainty for the various post-graduate medical education programs. If the Minister could have the staff available at that time, I will have a number of questions then. I would like to know this Government's clear policy, because we did ask the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and he said it has to be answered by the Minister of Education. I am giving him enough time to have the staff at that time available to answer those questions.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would just like to indicate that, yes, we will have staff here, but if there

are questions that are of a technical nature or some that we need to do some research on, if the Member would provide that question in writing for us I could ensure that we would have the adequate answer for him at that time. Otherwise, we will have staff here when we get to (XVI).

* (1530)

Mr. Cheema: Just a final note. The questions will not be of a technical nature. The questions will be the policy direction from this administration to deal with all levels of post-graduate medical education programs starting from anaesthesia to neonatology. There is definitely a problem, and we are going to have a lesser number of house staff as of July 1 if we do not tackle this problem. We are giving them enough notice. That issue was raised last year, it was even brought in the first week of January. CKY did the story on that. Dr. Gerry Bristow, who is in charge of the post-graduate medical education, maybe the Minister should get in touch with him and have all the information available to us when we discuss this very important issue.

Mrs. Yeo: The grant to independent schools is \$1,672 per pupil. I am wondering if the Minister could tell me, in the Hanover School Division, what the per pupil grant works out to be?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, for 1989-90 the average per pupil grant in the Hanover School Division was \$2,877.00.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me if in fact \$15 million will be given to independent schools, and if that figure is correct, will there be an audit performed on this amount of money?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the amount budgeted for independent schools for '89-90 was \$16,552,000 and of that, about \$14,500,000 will have been spent. I have to indicate that the latter one is an approximate figure at this point in time.

Mrs. Yeo: What about the audit?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, once again that is the whole area of accountability, financial accountability, which we have been discussing. As I said within the next few weeks we will be announcing those, and when we make that announcement that will be a component of the entire accountability question.

Mrs. Yeo: Will there be anything to address the ability of these schools to select students? Are independent schools going to be permitted with increasing public funds to still be able to pick and choose which children they will permit to cross their doors, unlike the public school system which must take in all those children within a school division or school district?

Mr. Derkach: The current policy as I understand it with independent schools is that they do have the right to select the students that are going to go to those particular schools. I guess each school has its own set of criteria that they would apply for admissions to the

school whether it is by grade level or some are denominational schools so, therefore, that varies from one school to another. So the admission policy is clearly there and it is one that is really the responsibility of those schools.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me in the public school system how special needs grants to children in the public school system are reached? What criteria is set up, and how much for the different types of funding are public school people per pupil given?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there are three different levels of funding for special needs. The first one is what used to be called the L-1 grant, which has now been changed to a grant that is given based on the enrollment within the school.

The second one is what we call the L-2 grant, Low Incidence 2 grant, which is given again to all those students who qualify under a set of criteria that have been established, then that amount is really established by meetings between the department and the particular school that is applying for the grant for that child, and that amount of the grant is \$6,600.00.

The third category is Level 3 and it is based on \$13,200 for each pupil. These are the pupils that we would classify as profoundly multihandicapped. Once again it is up to the school division to identify those students and then to make its presentation to the department to ensure that not only is the grant money made available to that school or to that child, but indeed that there is a program that is established according to the set of guidelines for that particular child.

Mrs. Yeo: Mr. Acting Chairperson, if in fact the Minister says the L1 funding now is lumped in depending on the size of the school division, how then could the Minister sanction the letter of February 14, 1989, that went to all principals of independent schools from his department saying that Level 1 funding could be applied for at \$3,300 per pupil, and inside in the guidelines they do not talk about Level 1 funding, they talk about Low Incidence 1, Low Incidence 2, and Low Incidence 3. How come this letter is okay for the independent schools but not for the public school system?

Mr. Derkach: The reason that the funding for the public school system was changed was to allow a larger amount of money to flow to those schools where they had Level 1 students. That was not possible for the independent schools because their populations were very, very low.

Therefore, because those students need supports as well, there had to be some reasonable, if you like, level of funding established so that these students would indeed get the programming and the support that they require. They are provincial students whose parents pay taxes, who are attending those schools, who need that extra support. Whether we pay for those students now or at sometime down the road, we know that those students require the kind of assistance that is provided through Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 funding.

Because the numbers in those schools were so small, and I raise the example of the Laureate Academy, the

Level 1 formula that was applied to public schools just did not work. For that reason we determined that a reasonable approach would be to revert back to the old formula which was in place previously which had Level 1 funding at \$3,300.00. There are two different approaches to Level 1 funding, one for independent schools and one for the public schools, but that is only at the Low Incidence 1 level. It is not for the other two levels.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister mentioned the Laureate Academy. I am wondering if he could tell me how many of their students qualify for this Level 1 funding and how many of them do not?

Mr. Derkach: From the Laureate Academy there were 24 students who were eligible for Low Incidence 1 Funding.

Mrs. Yeo: How many who applied for it were not eligible?

* (1540)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, of a total of 37 students who had applied, 24 were eligible.

Mrs. Yeo: Does the Minister know if any of those students who were eligible, when they are now at the Laureate Academy, were not eligible when they were in the public school system and the applications were made for Level 1 or Low Incidence 1 funding?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the same criteria would be applied. However, because of the new approach to funding students in the public school system, we would not have that list of students available, because in the public school system it is based on a total student count within that school. The funding is on a per pupil basis whereas at the independent school, the Laureate Academy, they would have to apply under the old set of guidelines that were established for Level 1 funding.

Mrs. Yeo: But in fact it is quite possible that prior to January 1988, when the new level of funding came into play under the former Minister of Education, Roland Penner, some of the schools, on behalf of some of these students, may in fact have applied for Level 1 funding or Low Incidence 1 funding and been denied. Now that that they are attending the Laureate Academy, they are all of a sudden rendered eligible for this \$3,300 per pupil. Is that not true?

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, with the greatest of respect, that is all speculation. There is no way that I could provide that answer or even anybody from the department could provide that answer. We would have to take each individual child and go back to the school where that child had attended before and see whether or not there was in fact application for that child under the old formula. Then we would do that on a case-by-case basis, but just from a general standpoint, I would not even want to hesitate to make a statement of that nature, because I really do not have any basis to make a statement from.

Mrs. Yeo: Well, in fact, there are some parents who have children at Laureate Academy who tell me that for a couple of years anyway the schools have applied for Low Incidence funding on behalf of their child. Because the previous formula did not work, in fact their children were denied this Low Incidence funding. So it is interesting that when all of a sudden they are in a different school, they have become eligible for funding. Is there -(interjection)- It is very interesting, as the Minister says.

Is there any guarantee that in fact with these levels of funding that tuition fees in the Laureate Academy will decrease by that amount? Does that come under the Minister's jurisdiction in any way, or would this in fact be interfering with their autonomy?

Mr. Derkach: I would like to answer the first question. First of all, Mr. Acting Chairman, when the Member makes the allegation that in fact there were parents who said their children were not eligible and now are eligible, I do not have that kind of information at my fingertips to be able to respond. As a matter of fact, the criteria that are applied are exactly the same as the criteria that were applied before. So therefore I would not see a change.

Now if the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) is suggesting that perhaps staff in my department are making arbitrary decisions, I would suggest that they are following the guidelines to the best of their abilities. They are assessing the needs of the students as they exist at the time of assessment. There could be something that whereby a student's needs or assessment changed from one assessment to another. I guess that would happen in almost every case, but to say that a student did not qualify once and now we have changed the rules so they qualify, that is completely inaccurate because that is not the way that the department is conducting itself.

With regard for the second question, I am sorry, I lost it for a minute. Could I ask her to repeat the second question?

Mrs. Yeo: It is okay, because I have lost the question.

In a letter of August 27, 1988, to the Free Press, the then president of MFIS said that it is appropriate that our schools also account financially to the Department of Education when the funds received approach the actual cost of the education provided. I think when Mr. Buchwald wrote this letter he was saying, we would be pleased to see regulations that we could abide by and I would certainly encourage the Minister to hasten his establishing of the regulations.

One last question regarding independent schools before I turn it over to my colleague from the NDP. St. Charles Academy along with a couple of other independent schools in our province have had some rather infamous if you will stories told about them. I am told that St. Charles Academy which is not quite in my constituency, just a bit beyond, but there are some students who reside in Sturgeon Creek constituency, not in the Creek, who attended. They tell me that there are many problems at that particular

school, the Vice Principal has left despite the fact that the individual was quite popular, the principal is reluctant to discuss events with people in the school community, board members are resigning, and many of the parents are pulling their students from that particular school. With this increased thrust towards accountability, with regulations coming into play for the independent schools and I think we all look forward to that, is the Minister considering increasing his staffing to assist these independent schools with this greater level of accountability?

* (1550)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I guess we are encouraging the Opposition Parties to join with us in supporting the regulations in terms of accountability of independent schools because this has been long overdue. The Member for Sturgeon Creek, says, well, tell us what they are. Certainly, as soon as we are able to, we will inform the Members Opposite as to exactly and specifically what those regulations are.

I think the Member has to acknowledge that I have tried to be up front with her and the critic from the NDP as much as I possibly can when we are making changes. Even with the legislation, I invited the Members into my office to go over the legislation to ensure that they understood it, and also to ensure that we could get support to get this through because I think it is in the public interest that we get the accountability issue settled, that we bring in regulations. I think that there is also a need to perhaps evaluate those regulations over the course of the next year to see that they are addressing the issues that are before us.

When the Member asks about additional personnel in the department, that certainly will be required whether it is additional responsibility on current personnel, or whether it means a shift, within the department, of personnel. There is going to be some more time required to evaluate and perhaps to monitor the independent schools in this province. We understand that and we are also dealing with that question as well.

Ms. Maureen Hemphill (Logan): I wonder if the Minister can tell us what increases there have been in the last couple of years with the equalization program, what level of funding overall, and what is the range of increases that were given by the school divisions through the overall funding.

I do not believe they all got the same percentage increase because the equalization program brings in—there are too many variables. Could you tell us the amount of the equalization program? Is it increasing? How much has it increased in the last couple of years? What is the range of increases that school divisions received this year in your budget?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, recognizing the fact that there were many school divisions throughout the province that were not receiving their fair share, if you like, or an appropriate amount of funding, we had to do some things about the GSE, because clearly there were divisions that had declining enrollments who

were not receiving adequate funding because of their declining enrollments. They could not reduce their costs as compared to the number of students that had declined.

We were seeing all sorts of problems. There were low spending school divisions that were clearly in difficulty. What needed to happen was that an amendment or a change to the formula would occur and that is what we did. We tried to address the funding issue by bending the formula, if you like, as much as we possibly could, yet keeping the basic principles intact.

In 1988 the equalization portion of the formula was \$112 million. It decreased in '89 to \$81 million. I can explain that by indicating that the reason for the decrease was that we put a greater amount of money into the block grant. That in essence triggered a decrease in the amount of the equalization grant that was required by school divisions throughout the province.

Ms. Hemphill: Could the Minister deal with the other part of the question, and that was, having changed the formula or bent the equalization previous guidelines a little to deal with some of the difficulties in funding, what did you end up with as a range of percentage increase for school divisions across the province?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, we do not have equalization grants calculated on a per pupil basis so, therefore, if you are asking about equalization percentage, I do not.

Ms. Hemphill: I am not asking for percentage of equalization grants. I am asking—the budget increase that school divisions got in the province, what is the range of the percentage increase in your total budget?

Mr. Derkach: The range for per pupil grants across the province varied from 3.4 percent to 10 percent and the average was 6.1 percent for last year.

(Mr. Albert Driedger, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Ms. Hemphill: Mr. Acting Chairman, with the changes that you made in reducing the equalization and putting more funding into the block grant, did you also make some changes in the declining enrollment grant? You were saying that was a major problem. Were there any divisions that still seemed to be in financial trouble, after you had done your bending and your maneuvering, which I understand only too well? Were there any school divisions that you still felt were in financial difficulty, where the problems could not seem to be addressed through the changes in criteria, and who were they?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, there were four school divisions who still experienced difficulty after we had done all the calculating. I know that the Member, having been a Minister of this department before, understands this whole process. Winnipeg No. 1 was experiencing a difficulty and they received a special grant of \$750,000; St. James School Division, because of their declining enrollment and their closure of schools,

was experiencing difficulty as well and they received \$500,000; Duck Mountain, again because of the very small size of the school division and their declining enrollment and many other problems were experiencing difficulties so they received \$50,000; and Sprague, the very tiny school division that has been struggling for years now, received \$11,000.00.

Ms. Hemphill: There were four. Did you miss one? Sprague, Winnipeg No. 1, St. James.

An Honourable Member: Duck Mountain.

Ms. Hemphill: Oh, and Duck Mountain, I did not hear you say Duck Mountain. This was an additional grant that you worked out on some basis to give them some extra money to make up for the deficiencies that they had through the existing criteria. What did Winnipeg School Division end up getting as a percentage increase?

Mr. Derkach: Winnipeg School Division received 4.9 percent increase plus the \$750,000.00.

Ms. Hemphill: Mr. Acting Chairman, has there been any change in the compensatory program in terms of funding? Has it gone up or down? Is it staying stable, any changes in the criteria for the use of the funding under this Government?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the criteria for the program are basically the same as have existed over the last number of years and the level of funding has not changed. It is basically the same.

Ms. Hemphill: Could you remind me what it is, Mr. Acting Chairperson? What is the amount, that the compensatory, is it now getting?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the total compensatory program is \$3.2 million. That breaks down to about \$2 million and loose change for the urban and about \$1 million for the rural. The overall is \$3.2 million, the urban is \$2.1 or so, and the rural is \$1.1.

Ms. Hemphill: The Minister is aware of all of the discussions and concerns that have been raised in the Legislature by, I would say, all Parties about the demise of the parent and school in the community, in the inner city. The Minister of Community Services does not seem to view these as a flexible or an alternative day care program, which I must say most people do. They seem to be leaning toward saying that funding, if it is going to be received by these other centres, should be done through the compensatory program by applying and attaching themselves to a school.

Could the Minister just put on the record his position about the possibility of having those parent and child centres funded through the compensatory program? Should they apply and be under the umbrella of a school? Is he supportive of that way of providing funds?

(Mr. Roch, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

* (1600)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, first of all, there is a set of criteria that has to be adhered to in order for any school division to be eligible for compensatory programming. Secondly, there is an adjudication panel in place that recommends whether or not any of these projects should receive funding. The criteria are such that a parent-child centre, if it is attached to the school and if it is under the umbrella of the school division, if you like, and if the school division has applied for it for compensatory granting and if it is recommended by the adjudication panel, then it would receive funding if it fits the criteria and if it is in the priority listing. There are only so many dollars in any compensatory program, and the panel would review those according to their priority and would make recommendations based on their findings.

I have indicated that to the parent group that was in to meet with the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) and myself. The Minister of Family Services has indicated that the funding that was extended to these parent-child centres was done under the agencies and that they do not really come under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training, and that is the way the matter still is. We will only consider it in the way that we consider all parent-child centres that are funded by the Department of Education and Training. We will not put together a new set of guidelines to try and fit the child centres that are there now. They will have to adhere to the rules and regulations that are set in place for all child centres that are funded by the Department of Education and Training through the compensatory program.

Ms. Hemphill: Mr. Acting Chairman, to go back to the Winnipeg School Division for a minute, in terms of their special needs funding, can the Minister give us some idea of the amount of funding that was given to the Winnipeg School Division for special needs? Was it able to cover most of their special needs students, or is the Winnipeg School Division still in the situation of having a number of special needs students for whom they do not get funding?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as the Member knows very well, this has been an ongoing discussion between Winnipeg No. 1 and the department for a number of years, and although I could be more precise when we get to the section on special needs, I can indicate that Winnipeg No. 1 receives \$8.6 million for special needs. Besides that, they receive several other special grants, one of them being the \$2 million grant that they receive because of the special circumstances that they have to deal with.

Once again, we get into that whole area of defining special needs students, and there has always been a discrepancy between the department and Winnipeg No. 1 as to whom they claim to be special needs students and whom the department recognizes as special need students based on the standard set of criteria that we apply to the rest of the province.

The criteria have not changed since the Member was Minister of Education at that time. We apply those same criteria to Winnipeg as we apply to Brandon or anywhere else in the province. So there is some discrepancy in

terms of what they claim they are getting and what they claim they need. Of course, there is never a complete level of satisfaction, but I can indicate that the province does afford Winnipeg No. 1 \$8.6 million for special needs programming.

Ms. Hemphill: Can the Minister tell me how the funding for small schools program is going? In terms of small schools, is the number stable? How many have gone out of the criteria, and how many have come into it? In other words, do we have a fairly stable small school population, and is the funding basically at the same level for small school support in the province?

Mr. Derkach: Between '88 and '89, Mr. Acting Chairman, it would appear that the figure is stable. We spent \$2 million in 1988 on small schools grants and there was 1.9 spent in 1989, so I would have to say that the number may have dropped a small amount but, based on the amount of funding that has been afforded, I would say that the figure is quite stable. The formula itself has changed somewhat in that there is not a definite cutoff anymore like there used to be at 200, or whatever that figure was. Now there is more of a phase-in and a phase-out so that a school does not automatically lose its funding because it reaches a magic figure.

So we have tried to address it in such a way that as a school population grows it phases out of the small schools funding, and as its population decreases they will come into it gradually.

Ms. Hemphill: Is the department still handling the clinician services out of the department? How many school divisions would be receiving clinician services through the option of being funded by the department at 100 percent of the clinician costs, and how many are on their own, hiring them on their own? Is there a move to decentralize and move clinician services outside to school divisions, or have you already done that?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, there are 23 school divisions who handle their own clinician services, and 30 who are served by the department, Clinician Services Branch. There is really, at this point in time, no specific move to try and either attract more school divisions under the umbrella of the department, or go the other way. We have had several requests from smaller school divisions who are having some difficulty in shared services to come under the, if you like, jurisdiction of the department, and I believe that we have put one or two—two—divisions, we have included them under the department right now. But other than that, many divisions try to do with what they have and in some cases they share services of clinicians.

Ms. Hemphill: I have just a final question on aid to private schools. With the increase in funding we are looking at all of the needs of the education system. I think both the Minister and I are aware that the needs are tremendous and that they are growing, and that they are growing in very expensive areas: special needs, learning disabilities, children that need a lot more resources and support that they did not need

previously. The requests are endless: poor school divisions, poor kids, special needs.

* (1610)

With all these growing demands and the great difficulty of the education system and the taxpayer to meet all these demands, does the Minister have any concerns in increasing funding to private schools, that they are in fact intruding their capacity to maintain the public school system? Does he, although they are moving toward increased support for the private school system, believe that the paramount responsibility the Government has is the maintenance of the public school system. How does he balance these two in terms of his beliefs, that he is going to be able to fund them both adequately?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, let me say that our responsibility, as a Government, as a department, is to ensure that we give every student in this province who is attending a school the best possible opportunity, whether that school is an independent school, or whether that school is a public school. Those are Manitoba students whose parents are also contributing to the tax dollars that we expend on education.

Secondly, if those school students were not in the independent school system, they would naturally be in the public school system. The funding that we would be affording on a per pupil basis to these students would be far greater than what we are affording to them in the independent school system. We do not fund capital facilities in the independent school systems, and we never will. We do not intend to go down that road. It is the operating funding we are concerned about. We have to ensure that every student in this province gets the best possible education that he or she can, whether they are attending a home schooling situation or an independent school situation or a public school situation.

Where we have qualified teachers we have to ensure that funding is appropriate. Having said that, we do have some schools in this province that are not registered with the province. That is causing some concern and some problem for us. In these schools we do not fund the students, we do not have any jurisdiction over those schools. In many of them there are not qualified certified teachers working. That gives us some concerns. Therefore, I would prefer to see a system where the schools were registered, where if they were receiving public funding they were accountable and that is what we are moving towards, accountability, not just financial accountability, but also program accountability, so that we can ensure those students are following a curriculum that is approved by the province, and when they enter a university or post secondary institution we can assess them based on a certain set of criteria. I think we are moving in a sensible direction. If you take a look at any other jurisdiction in this country, you will find that it is not unusual for Governments to fund independent schools.

The other thing we have to remember is that there was a remedial petition before the federal Government with regard to a legal question and the independent

schools or the Catholic schools. That is a situation that we had to address because the former administration, the Members own Government had agreed that that petition should go forth. If that petition were successful then the Government would be funding 100 percent of the Catholic schools in this province, including the capital aspect of it.

Therefore, we had an obligation to do something rather than sit back and wait for somebody else to pass judgment. I think it was incumbent upon us to do something pro-active which would ensure that there would be a quality of education in all of these independent schools, that would ensure that there would be a level of funding that we could live with, and that there would be program accountability, qualified teachers in these schools so that then we would know that students are getting the kind of education that all of us would endorse. We are estimating that the savings to taxpayers by supporting independent schools at the level that we have indicated we will support them, we estimate that the savings to taxpayers of this province is about \$10 million or more. Therefore, we cannot say that we are depriving the public school system. I think we are enriching the entire education system in this province substantially.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister alluded to capital expenses for independent schools. In fact, the public funds do not fund in any way capital expenses of independent schools.

Mr. Derkach: That is correct. Capital funding is the responsibility of the independent school and does not impact on our funds at all. What we will do is we calculate the operating funds, and that is what the money goes to, operating funds. Any capital facilities have to be looked after by the organization or the school that is in question.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister tell me if Calvin Christian School is one of the schools that receives education funding or is one of the approved schools, if that is the way they are worded, the independent schools that come under the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Education?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, the school in question that the Member raised is being funded by the Department of Education and Training. There are 290 eligible students in the school.

Mrs. Yeo: When the Minister says that the public funds do not go to provide for capital, I wonder how he can explain then that Calvin Christian School under Community Places Program grants was able to receive \$75,000.00. I realize this is not out of Manitoba Education, but it certainly is public funds.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I have responsibility for dollars flowing from Education and Training. Again we go back to the same old question of accountability, financial and program accountability. We have seen instances in the past where there have been such funds as lottery funds, et cetera, going to independent schools, but certainly from the Department of Education

and Training there are no funds that go toward capital facilities.

Mrs. Yeo: I would suggest there is some splitting of hairs here. It is nice that it does not come out of actual Education dollars, but it still comes out of taxpayers' dollars. Does the Minister have the list of the schools that receive capital funding out of such things as Community Places, lotteries, et cetera?

Mr. Derkach: No, Mr. Acting Chairman, I do not have the list of those institutions. That is not something that would be made available to us. I can indicate to the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) that we have indicated to the independent schools that the Government will not be extending to them lottery money after the accountability question is settled.

Mrs. Yeo: I have received a couple of requests from some of the secretary-treasurers of the school divisions with regard to the exemption of school property, including administration and transportation facilities, from municipal taxation. Can the Minister tell me his understanding of where that taxation now rests? Will in fact there be any exemptions for school divisions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I think that question was settled through the new Assessment Reform Bill that was passed just a week or so ago. In that there is a clear explanation of the size of property that is exempt from taxation. I think the property has to be over X number of acres or hectares before it is exempt, I think it is 10 acres. What that is in hectares I am not sure, or whether it has been rounded off, because I know there was some discussion about rounding that figure off. I can indicate that question is really one that was settled by the new Assessment Reform Bill.

* (1620)

Mrs. Yeo: The transportation facilities then would come under that new Municipal Act? Question. There were concerns raised by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and several other areas regarding this.

There was also a statement from Keystone Agriculture Producers in which they say that they have consistently expressed the belief that education is a people service and should be funded from a people form of taxation and recommends changes there. Is there any move on the part of Manitoba Education to encourage these sorts of changes?

Mr. Derkach: There are no plans at the present time, Mr. Acting Chairman. We are going to be looking at the entire question of the education of finance review, but in terms of the collection of taxes, I think the matter was clearly spelled out in the new legislation. We have no indication at this point in time to change the way in which taxes are collected for education purposes.

Mrs. Yeo: From time to time we see articles written about such things as free market schools and voucher systems for individuals who wish to select the school

in which they want their child to attend. Is there any movement toward looking at any of these with the thought of perhaps implementing some changes?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, not at the present time, no.

Mrs. Yeo: I believe in 1977 the Home Economics Directorate did a study and they found that at that point in time 10 percent of Winnipeg No. 1 School Division children came to school with no nourishment. In other words, 10 percent of the students come without having breakfast. The indication is that, if a study were done today, the statistics would be about the same. Laura Secord School, for instance, offers 100 lunch supplements per day to their children, because they are finding that these children are hungry.

Has the Minister established any working relationship with the Department of Family Services, and are they currently working on any policies that might be put in place to address this really tragic situation, because how can a hungry child become an educated child?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, this is an issue that has been discussed over and over again, I guess, between departments. What we have to ask ourselves from time to time is what is the responsibility of Education and what is the responsibility of other departments, whether it is Health or Family Services? I think what we have seen over the past few years, as a result of mainstreaming, is that a lot of responsibility has fallen on shoulders of school divisions and the Department of Education and Training as a result of children moving out of Family Services and perhaps centres like St. Amant and other such centres and into the school setting, and all of a sudden schools had to assume responsibility for a lot of the therapy and other services that we were not required to do before.

The question that the Member raises is a good one, you know. How can children learn when they are hungry? In a province like Manitoba and a country like Canada, should we in fact tolerate children being hungry when we have an abundance of everything? It is a question that school divisions themselves have been dealing with over a number of years. It is certainly not a matter that has been settled, not a matter where there is a clear delineation of responsibilities, but one that is being addressed.

I would have to say that, over the last year, the Department of Family Services, the Department of Health, and my department have been meeting to try and sort out some of these questions and some of these unanswered areas that need to be addressed because we know that every time we go out for funding requests, it is perceived that we are just spending money on education, if there is such a clear definition, when in fact we are spending many dollars on other areas which are attached to education, but maybe are not perceived as education responsibility.

Mrs. Yeo: The other bit of research that I read just recently was the fact that 35 percent, was the figure, of the children in the Frontier School Division do not

ingest an adequate amount of vegetables. I certainly appreciate the dilemma because it has become the responsibility of the school divisions in some respects to be all things to all children and I think that is an unfortunate scenario. It has been painted and expected now of many individuals and that is why I asked about the consultation with the Family Services. The study that was done in 1986 indicated that 35 percent of the children did not get anywhere near the adequate amount of vegetables in Frontier School Division. Is there anything that is done, any program that is being put in place that will address that rather unfortunate situation?

Mr. Derkach: Well, other than the education process itself of good nutrition, Mr. Acting Chairman, the department does not assume the responsibility of providing those kinds of nutritional meals, if you like, or those kinds of areas that may be the responsibility of either the family or Family Services or Northern Affairs or whoever. As the Member indicates, you know, it is becoming increasingly evident that some parents perhaps or some people would expect the Department of Education and Training to be everything to everyone and we cannot do that.

I think there has to be a line where we say, this is not the responsibility of education because we do have budgets to follow. As long as, I think, we make people who have the responsibility of those areas aware, and as long as there is dialogue between departments, if you like, who have responsibility for those areas I think something can be accomplished. There is no reason why you cannot have a co-operative approach to some of these problems between, whether it is Health or Family Services or Northern Affairs or whoever may have responsibility, and indeed there can be co-operation and should be co-operation between provincial Governments and federal Governments when it comes to sharing responsibilities of the kind that the Member points out.

Mrs. Yeo: I believe that the Minister established two Education Finance committees. One was the Advisory Committee that was established, and another one was also an advisory committee. The committees were composed of two different groups of individuals. I am wondering if these committees are meeting quite frequently and when the Minister might expect some responses from his advisory committees.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I just wonder if I could get a clarification from the Member. Is she referring to the Advisory Committee on Education Finance in her question?

Mrs. Yeo: Sorry, two news releases: one dated June 2, 1989, in which the Minister announces an Education Finance Advisory Committee; and one on July 28, 1989, in which the Minister announces an Education Finance Committee. I am wondering if these are one and the same, or if it is these committees, or if it is this committee.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, there is only one Ed Finance Advisory Committee. It is chaired by Mr.

Buchholz, Mr. George Buchholz, and this committee advises the department on ed finance matters. It has met a number of times on the funding question for schools, and I think, in total, the committee has met eight times.

Mrs. Yeo: When does the Minister anticipate that this committee will be finished with its task? In the news release of July 28, 1989, in which the Minister reiterates his June 2, 1989, news release, is there any representation from the municipalities who may be asked to collect the taxes that this committee may put in place?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I could indicate to the Member that the task of the committee is an ongoing task. It is not one that has a sunset clause to it; it will be meeting on an ongoing basis.

* (1630)

Secondly, with regard to representation on the committee, we have the major education groups represented on the committee. We have individuals who are represented on the committee and I could read them out. We have Mr. George Buchholz, who is Chairperson; a Mr. Glenn Dressel, who is Vice Chairperson; we have Mrs. Donna Goodman, who is with the Manitoba Teachers Society, and who is a teacher herself; Ms. Brenda Leslie, President of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees; Mr. Dave Bell, Secretary-Treasurer for Winnipeg School Division No. 1; Mr. Clarke Burnett, just a resident from Miami, Manitoba; and Ms. Denise Lovatt, the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Department of Education and Training. This makes up the committee.

This committee will meet with organizations when necessary and, from time to time, they may find it necessary to meet with organizations such as MAUM or UMM. It would depend on the nature of the situation since these people do collect their taxes. For that matter, they may even find it necessary to meet with a jurisdiction such as the City of Winnipeg, and they have that flexibility so that they can in fact advise the department and Government on all the important aspects of Ed Finance.

Mrs. Yeo: On September 5, 1989, there was a news release about a grant to Marymound School that is a fairly substantial one, \$363,000.00. It used to be a grant that was funded from the Seven Oaks School Division special needs program. Now it has changed. Can I ask the Minister, why the change? Was it a request made by the Seven Oaks School Division or what prompted that change?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, this particular grant—the Member is right—was funded through Seven Oaks School Division, but it was a very cumbersome way of extending funding to Marymound. I believe it was 1987, there was a decision made to change the funding approach so that the funds would go directly from the Department of Education and Training to Marymound. Since that time there have been quarterly grants given to Marymound and those

quarterly amounts would end up to an annual amount, I guess. For that reason since that time we have been affording Marymound the funds directly.

An Honourable Member: Was that a quarterly amount?

Mr. Derkach: Monthly.

Mrs. Yeo: The thrust towards mainstreaming seems to be one that is very prevalent and I am wondering if the Minister could tell me what his own philosophy—how he is encouraging his own department to move with respect to the aspect of mainstreaming and the funding that would be associated with it.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) is very familiar with the guidelines that were sent out to school divisions respecting special needs. In this procedural guideline book if you like, there is a system that we have developed that we expect will be adhered to by all divisions in terms of addressing the requirements of special needs students.

In some instances that may mean that we can mainstream, if you like, to use that term, students or integrate students into the classroom for all program areas. In some situations there may be a pull-out system where students have to be taken out of a classroom for certain programs and certain activities. In others there may have to be a complete separate education system for the child. It may be within that school setting, but it may have to be in a separate classroom based on the needs of the child.

I think this is a practical approach. It is an approach of integration. It is an approach that says that we will look at the needs of the child and assess those needs and then develop a program so that in fact that child can fit into that setting, and that the setting can be one where the child will learn.

We have also indicated another important area in that whole concept and that was to ensure that parents have the accurate and complete information on the type of programming that is going to be delivered to the child. As the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) knows very well, there have been instances in the past where parents have been disgruntled because they could not get information on the kind of programming that was being given to the child. So what we are trying to do, endeavouring to do, to the best of the abilities of the department, is to create a most enabling, if you like, environment for the child to learn and to grow in each and every situation.

Mrs. Yeo: Is it fair to say that the Minister is in favour of, perhaps, closing down the more segregated settings? I am thinking of Prince Charles School which is no longer there; Kirkfield Park School is now having a review undertaken. Is this the sort of thrust that the Minister is pushing for?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, those are the kinds of decisions that local school divisions have to make. But I have to reiterate what I have said before, and

that is this province cannot afford to go ahead and create the kinds of changes or make the kinds of changes to every single school that would allow any type of student to access that school and access programs in that school. We do not have the resources.

We have to put our money where it is going to meet the needs of the students in the best way possible, and that means that in some instances schools such as Prince Charles may exist and should exist, but we should not be making that decision, that that school has to exist in each and every area of this province. If that school is meeting the needs of those students, and if we can work an integration program into that school, then we should endeavour to do that.

Taxpayers of this province, I think, are fed up with us building facilities and just as we get them built, and as we get the renovations made to them, we close them down. I do not think that is a very responsible way to conduct our affairs, and it is not a very wise use of taxpayer dollars.

So, therefore, when you ask the question, am I in favour of separate schools or segregated schools, in a general sense I would say that we have to try and incorporate these students who have disabilities into our regular stream, into our regular schools. It may not be possible to put them into community schools, but school divisions may have to identify, within their areas, schools that will have the facilities to deal with these students.

It may mean that a student who has a disability will have to travel a little distance within the school division, but nevertheless that student still is within the community, because that student has abilities, that student has something to give to the community, that student is a part of that community. So whenever possible, my feeling is that we have to try and incorporate that child, that student, into the environment that child is growing in and that child is raised in.

Mrs. Yeo: It may, in fact, be difficult to provide some students with a segregated setting and some students with an integrated setting if, in fact, these segregated, if you will, special schools, are closing as fast as they are. If the students are moved into the regular classrooms, the regular community schools, there may in fact be a larger number of teacher aides that are available to help some of these students in a one-on-one situation, or one aide for two students, or whatever. Is the Minister prepared to provide more funds available to school divisions if they in fact should need a greater ratio of student aides, or does this interfere with the autonomy of the school division?

* (1640)

Mr. Derkach: Once again that student would be assessed in terms of the category that student would fall into, whether it is Level 1, 2 or 3, or Level 2 or 3, if you like, and then there would be a program established for that student. That is when, I think, we see the Department of Family Services playing an important role in that if that student is disabled physically or needs supports that require a one-on-one

kind of situation, then that child is assessed and that service will be provided.

Each and every situation is different. If the Member is asking whether we give more support, if you like, or more funding, to a child because that child is within the community school setting, I would say, well, in a sense, yes, because we certainly provide the facilities, the access facilities, the facilities within the school. All of that is done through capital grants that are given to the school. The operating side of it is handled in a different way. If there are teacher aides required, those are supplied, but that decision is really made at the local school level and by the authorities who are in charge of that child.

Mrs. Yeo: There are some individuals throughout the province who are concerned about the transportation of their students to schools within their particular school division, and some parents are saying that they would very much like their child to attend a school that in fact is closer to their homes than the school that is located that the school board says their child should attend in a particular school division. This is one of the reasons why the belief that perhaps there should be a review of school division boundaries is so important.

Has the Minister received any concerns raised from Beautiful Plains School Division, from Turtle Mountain School Division, an area where there seems to be a greater prevalence, a greater number of problems than some of the other areas?

Mr. Derkach: Again this is a matter that is up to the local school divisions. Within school divisions themselves there are catchment areas for various schools. It is up to the school board to define those.

There are times when a parent may wish to have his or her child attend a different school and in some cases it may be outside the school division boundary. In those circumstances it is something between the school divisions and the parent to decide. If a parent decides to take his or her child outside of a school area, they may also apply to the department to have their property taken out of that particular school division and included in another school division boundaries.

We have a board of reference that deals with those issues. As Minister, I do not get involved in determining what the catchment area of a particular school is. That is a matter that has to be worked out between the local school authorities and the parent.

Mrs. Yeo: There is some difficulty in hearing the Minister's responses.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): Order, please. Members wishing to have private conversations, please use the loges.

Mrs. Yeo: The aspect of home schooling is one that the Minister alluded to in a previous response, I believe, to the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill). I know in the proposed amendments to The Public Schools Act that went between the local school authorities and the parent.

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Mrs. Yeo: The aspect of home schooling is one that the Minister alluded to in a previous response, I believe, to the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill). I know in the proposed amendments to The Public Schools Act that when the first draft was put forward home schooling was mentioned. I think it took about two pages, and now it is down to one little clause. Can the Minister tell me, in his opinion, whose responsibility is it for the parents of home school children with regard to curriculum instruction, et cetera?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, once a parent decides to home school a child, that parent has to notify the school division that that child will be home schooled. In those instances, it is really still a matter for the parent to make that decision. We have a consultant who does have jurisdiction over or a co-ordinating responsibility over home-schooled students.

At the present time there is certainly a problem in that we have not a clear set of guidelines with regard to what is expected of students who are being home schooled, what kind of curriculum they should be following. They do write the CTVS tests, and that is basically what the evaluation is for a home schooling student. There are some problems with those students when they leave the home schooling setting and try to get back into the regular school setting or try to get into university. Universities have a tendency or are reluctant to recognize home schooling credits. Indeed we have a challenge ahead of us.

There are those who would like to see home schooling under the jurisdiction of the department. There are also those who would like to have a new level or a new tier of education set up with grants going to those home schooling students. Pretty soon we would have another, if you like, level of education. We are still at the stage of consultation. There was a report that was submitted with regard to home schooling, and it was submitted by the various stakeholders in education. I would submit that some things have changed since that time, some new information has come to light, some positions have changed.

I have indicated that the reason we would like the enabling legislation passed is so that we could then

consult with the players, with the stake holders in education, with the parents who are involved in home schooling, and come up with a reasonable approach whereby we do not create another tier of education, if you like, we do not cost the province another large sum of money for this kind of education, but where there are going to be expectations of those students in terms of programming accountability or testing that has to be written, to ensure that when that student wants to enter back into the public school system at some grade level, we have some record of what their performance has been at home. If that student wishes to go on to university, then we know that student has completed certain programs and has achieved certain levels of accomplishment in those courses. Then the university can base its evaluation of the student on some criteria.

We have a long way to go, but the enabling legislation would simply allow us to consult and then to make regulations that would be able to be evaluated and monitored as we progressed.

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister stated that there was an individual in the department who was responsible for home-schooled children. Can the Minister tell us who this individual is?

Mr. Derkach: The individual that I am referring to is Mr. Ed Woods.

Mrs. Yeo: Can the Minister give us some idea—it may not be, you know 100 percent accurate, and I appreciate the difficulty—as to the number of home schooled children there are in the province today?

Mr. Derkach: As near as we can estimate, we have about 400 students that are being home schooled at this time in the province.

Mrs. Yeo: Has the Minister met with the Manitoba Association of Christian Home Schools to discuss some of his problems and concerns with them?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, I have met with Mr. Terry Lewis on several occasions with regard to home schooling to get their views and to hear their concerns. Certainly we want to hear not only from them, but other home schoolers as well, and also the stakeholders, the divisions, the MTS, MASS, MAST. All of these groups have something to say about home schooling.

* (1650)

Mrs. Yeo: The Minister also alluded to the students using the Manitoba curriculum and the CTBS and the various ways of evaluating these students.

If I am permitted to use a hypothetical situation where a parent has a couple of students in their homes - (interjection)- there certainly is freedom of speech within this Chamber. If there are two students in the home-schooled situation, in say grades two and four, and the parent keeps the children there for two or three years, will the Minister tell me whose responsibility it will be then to assess these students and to place them back

in the local schools when the parents wish to replace the children in the school system?

Mr. Derkach: That is one of the issues that is now before us, the type of testing mechanism that we want to have in place, who will be responsible for conducting that testing of that individual child, and I know that the Member says I asked the question and I want the answer, but I can tell her that you cannot resolve this whole issue by simply dictating to either the home schooling association or to the school divisions, that this is the way it will be.

There has to be a working out of this dilemma, out of this challenge. There has to be some agreement on the way we approach it, because if there is no agreement I can assure the Member that it will fail, that indeed we will have children out there who are not going to adhere to the decisions that are made.

For that reason it is not a simple matter of saying, this is the way it shall be. It is a matter of consultation, deliberation, and then a meeting of minds on this whole very important issue, because the longer we leave it, the more students we have out there who really do not have a program or a set of criteria that they can follow, and the more times we are going to run into situations where a university says, I am sorry we have no basis to evaluate you on.

Mrs. Yeo: One of the concerns I think, that has been raised is—well, one of many, and I mean the Minister has indicated a lot of them in the last few minutes. One of the concerns raised is, who will have the jurisdiction over placement of the child when they return to the schools. Another one is, what appeal mechanism will be in place for the parent should X, whoever X may be, and I agree there has to be some direction given, there have to be some regulations in place, if it is the school division's responsibility and they say the child is at a Grade 6 level and the parent says no, the child is at a Grade 7 level. What appeal mechanism will be in place for those parents of those home schooled children?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, obviously there needs to be an appeal mechanism in place. Whenever we come up with the final decision on who has the ultimate responsibility for monitoring those programs and monitoring the students, whether it is the local school division or whether it is the province, or whether it is a joint responsibility, then that group—or there will have to be a panel or some sort of mechanism put into place where in fact parents can appeal a decision if the child in their opinion is placed in an inappropriate grade level.

We recognize the fact that there needs to be an appeal mechanism. That will be built into the entire structure, but right now there are varying opinions about that as well, as to whether there should be an appeal mechanism, who should be responsible for the appeal mechanism, who should make up the body that hears the appeal. Home schoolers see it one way, school boards perhaps see it another way, teachers see it yet another way, and school superintendents have their

view on it. Some of them are the same, but there are areas where there are differing opinions.

So we have a task ahead of us, to try and resolve this and to come up with a mechanism with a set of guidelines that may have to be changed a year down the road after we monitor it for a while. That is the fear of building it into legislation. You have to have some form of temporary—if you like, an interim measure, and it could be the regulation that is the interim measure, to monitor this, to evaluate it and to see how it is being adapted to. That is precisely why the Bill is before the House right now.

Mr. Yeo: Well it certainly is a dilemma. The Minister left out one area, when he talked about MAST looks at it one way and the teachers society another, he did not say how the department looks at it. That is probably one of the key questions.

He also alluded to the universities, and certainly when it comes to home schooled children, there may well be concerns as they want to move on to some of our post-secondary education settings. There are also problems with those students who come from the non-public funded, if you will, independent schools, a lot of problems. The universities say that they cannot accept students whose credits are not approved by the Department of Education. The Department of Education states that they do not approve credits, that the placement of students is the responsibility of the receiving institutions.

So where the universities are saying it is the Department of Education's fault, the Department of Education is saying it is the university's fault. The person who gets caught in the middle is the student who wants to attend one of these post-secondary education settings. Is there any policy on the part of the department for some sorts of challenging exams to be put in place, or some—the departmental exams are no longer available per se—are there some sorts of examinations that these students could write that would demonstrate that in fact they were or were not capable of entering one of the faculties or one of the community colleges that they wish to attend?

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, there is the GED, or the general education diploma, I think, a course that can be challenged by any student for that matter, with regard to ascertaining whether he or she has a level of Grade 12 or not, but other than that, there is nothing at the moment in place where a student can challenge a set of Grade 12 exams; and, yes, the student is caught in the middle because whether that student is in an accredited school or not he/she is sent there by his/her parents in most instances and, therefore, assuming that the education that he/she is getting will lead to an opportunity to access a post-secondary institution, so it is not the child that is at fault.

But we have got a system in place right now that needs to be overhauled. We have indicated that. Every time I have stood up and spoken on that topic I have indicated that there need to be some significant changes made in the way that we recognize student credentials, in the way that we approach standards of education,

the quality of education. Indeed, having schools in Manitoba that are not registered is a problem in itself because, sure, they are not funded, but then they are under no obligation to carry out the programs that are authorized by the department.

So, yes, there are students in this province that are being caught by that and we have to ensure that we address that problem and, as the Member knows, it is not just one issue, there are many issues in this regard that have to be addressed, and we are doing that. The legislation that is before the House specifically speaks to those kinds of issues so that it would allow us to make those kinds of changes that are so badly needed at this time.

* (1700)

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Roch): The hour being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings for Private Members' hour. The committee will return at 8 p.m. this evening. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

COMMITTEE CHANGE

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Swan River (Mr. Burrell), with a committee change.

Mr. Parker Burrell (Swan River): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz), that we make some changes to the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments: Burrell for Ducharme.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

RES. 32—CFB SHUTDOWNS

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), Resolution No. 32, CFB Shutdowns, the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch),

WHEREAS there are 580 military and 186 civilian personnel at CFB Portage la Prairie who make a significant contribution to the social, professional and economic life of the area; and

WHEREAS the withdrawal of military personnel will result in direct losses to Portage la Prairie of \$20 million, with additional lost property taxes and school revenues; and

WHEREAS Portage la Prairie employers will not be able to absorb easily the 200 civilian employees who

will lose their jobs as a consequence of the CFB Portage closure; and

WHEREAS the community of Portage la Prairie is already under attack as a result of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement; and

WHEREAS there are 800 military personnel at CFB Winnipeg (Kapyong Barracks) who will be transferred to Edmonton, and this will result in a \$20 million direct loss to the local economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the Government of Canada to consider cancelling its plans to close CFB Portage la Prairie and the Kapyong Barracks of Winnipeg; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk be directed to forward copies of this Resolution to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Defense.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, it is with no pleasure or joy that I rise today to talk about a very serious issue, an issue really which strikes at the very heart of federal-provincial relations in Canada today.

We can harken back to that day of December in 1984 when the recently elected Prime Minister of Canada said: this is the dawning of a new age of federal-provincial relations in Canada. This, the Prime Minister said at the time, is going to be the Government of national reconciliation.

Only a few years later, we examine the state of federal-provincial relations in Canada, and they are nothing short of disastrous. The era of national reconciliation that was trumpeted so ceremoniously by the Prime Minister in September of 1984 has become the era of division, of recrimination and of the kind of turmoil we have not seen in Canada in generations.

Let us take a few examples to make the case. The Prime Minister said that he was going to reconcile the constitutional differences in this country, yet we have an impasse so serious that there are those who predict that if the Meech Lake Accord does not pass all Legislatures of this country, Canada will be on the road toward disintegration.

At the same time we have others who say that if it does pass, we will be on the road to disintegration. Either way, the choice for us as Canadians is an unhappy one, and this, stimulated and generated by a Prime Minister who came to office and who spirited a new age of reconciliation and of federal-provincial co-operation.

We could look at what is going on in the Atlantic fishery and the regional tensions which are more acute and more severe now than they were in the days of—may I use his name, Mr. Speaker—Pierre Trudeau. I expect hoots, cries and hollers from Members across the way who like to symbolize the name Trudeau with division, recrimination and tension, but they are wrong. It is the era of Mulroney which is the era of tension, recrimination and regional aggravations in this country.

Let us look at the Premier of this province when he became the First Minister who said this is going to be a new age of federal-provincial co-operation. Gone, he said, are the days when the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Manitoba were at loggerheads. He talked about the era of Howard Pawley, the former Premier, and how relations with Ottawa were so difficult that, now that a Conservative Government was in office in Manitoba, all that would change and the federal and provincial Governments would behave as if they were in partnership to build the country.

Well, where are we only two years later? Where are we? The mayor of the City of Winnipeg, in a public speech called the state of the city, said the relations between the federal and provincial Governments were poisonous. Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about a Liberal Government and a Progressive Conservative Government, or an NDP Government and a Conservative Government, we are talking about two Tory Governments and a mayor, whose politics are I do not know what—dare I should speculate, says that the relationship is poisonous, that in his experience there is not even consultation and conversation anymore between those two levels of Government.

This not from a Liberal, not from someone who has a particular axe to grind, but from the mayor of the City of Winnipeg. Then, Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will remember that, when the federal Minister came to town to talk about a new arena, it provoked this kind of response from the provincial Minister. I am quoting now from a Winnipeg Sun piece back in November 16, 1989: The sour behind-the-scenes relationship between federal Energy Minister, Jake Epp, and provincial Tories flared openly yesterday. "This meeting might last only five minutes if I punch him in the nose," Sport Minister Jim Ernst said, only half-jokingly before meeting with Epp. Epp did not inform Ernst of federal plans to assist in building an arena at The Forks, revealed yesterday in a newspaper article. "It's news to me, I have no idea what's going on," Ernst shrugged. Here is a quote from Mr. Epp, "Why would I inform him?"

Mr. Speaker, this is the new age of federal-provincial relations. The federal Minister makes an announcement that affects his provincial cousins. He does not tell him. The provincial Minister is so angry that, only half-jokingly, he threatens to punch the federal Minister in the nose. This is the dawning of a new age of federal-provincial relations.

It is not difficult to argue that Manitoba has been singled out for rough treatment by the federal Government of Brian Mulroney, and this just is not the partisan opinion of a Liberal, Mr. Speaker. This is the view of any observer who brings any degree of detached analysis to how Manitoba has been treated by this federal Government.

* (1710)

The best example, and an example that we legislators ought to heed very carefully, because we are, after all, on the verge of yet another federal budget announcement expected some time next month—the last time the federal Government tabled a budget, 38

percent of the cuts to defence spending were absorbed by the Province of Manitoba. A province that has a population of—what?—4 percent of the national total was administered a severe body blow by the Prime Minister of this country and his Finance Minister, who singled out our province for bad treatment.

I do not think it is worthwhile to speculate why. There are those who think it has something to do with Meech Lake, that if only Manitoba would pass the Meech Lake Accord, then the Prime Minister would throw out goodies our way, and the Manitoba economy would be the beneficiary of federal largess.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not think any of us in this Chamber, any person who earned their living as a politician, would want to ascribe that kind of a motive to a Prime Minister, who would think so poorly of a politician: that he would hold a region of the country to ransom, and through a Government or through its politicians, the people of Portage la Prairie or of Winnipeg, because of some constitutional issue that hangs over the head of the Prime Minister, which is not of our making, but which is of his making.

What exactly did Michael Wilson and the federal Conservative Party do? I think it bears some review. Well, what they did is they chose to cut down and cut out CFB Portage la Prairie. The Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) is in a position to correct me if I am wrong, a loss of at least 766 jobs, military and civilian, which translates into a loss of more than \$30 million annual in disposable income, 11.5 percent of Portage's workforce and 17 percent of the total disposable income.

In 1988 CFB Portage spent \$12 million locally in building and equipment maintenance and operating contracts. This is almost equal to the City of Portage's annual operating costs and double the RM of Portage la Prairie's annual budget. The closure will immediately double the number of houses available, and seriously impact property values. Over the next 15 years the total economic impact on the education community approaches \$38.5 million including \$12 million in lost teachers' wages.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you were to take the effect, the direct and indirect economic impact on the community of Portage la Prairie, and extrapolate, apply what the impact would be if there was a similar job loss in the City of Toronto or the City of Montreal, it becomes mind-boggling. Let me tell you what it would be. Montreal, it would translate into 182,000 jobs lost and over \$4.7 billion in disposable income. If it were Toronto, it would be 237,000 jobs and nearly \$6.1 billion in disposable income.

Well, what politician, what political Party, would allow itself to be vulnerable to those kinds of numbers, to that economic impact on a city? Well, that is exactly what the Mulroney Tories did to the Community of Portage la Prairie. At the same time, as if to compound the economic misery that it was administering to the people of Manitoba, they did the same thing to the Kapyong Barracks in Winnipeg, with a transfer of 800 jobs out of the City of Winnipeg to Edmonton. Why to Edmonton? I suppose a cynic may say that the home

riding of the Deputy Prime Minister, and the decision to send so much of federal operation out of Manitoba to Alberta, had something to do with that.

An Honourable Member: Just like CN jobs.

Mr. Carr: Or CN, as was pointed out to me by my colleague from Assiniboia. Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is much use, at this stage of the game, to try to interpret the motivations of this Conservative Government, because in many respects they are beyond reason. Is it reasonable to administer that kind of economic blow to the community of Portage la Prairie? No, it is not reasonable.

Over the last number of days or weeks, we have heard rumblings that there is going to be some kind of compensation to Prince Edward Island for the closure of CFB Summerside. Is it because Premier Ghiz, a Liberal I might add, is more adept at negotiating with the federal Government than the Premier of this province is? That could well be. Does it have anything to do with the strength with which the position of the Premier of Prince Edward Island has taken to the federal Government? It could be. Could it be that the Premier of Manitoba, for whatever reason, cannot summon the will, the strength, the voice, to convince the Prime Minister of Canada that the decisions taken in the last budget are going to impact Portage la Prairie in a way it has not been impacted in years?

Well, I think that we have to ask these tough questions, Mr. Speaker, because if we do not, and if we do not try to find a way to bolster and buttress and give some encouragement to the Premier of Manitoba, these economic decisions are going to prevail, like they are not prevailing in Prince Edward Island where the strength of the Premier of that province has been able to provide some kind of compensation.

Interestingly enough the compensation itself that is proposed for Prince Edward Island could in turn hurt the people of Portage la Prairie and I think the Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) knows that. What we hear is that the compensation is going to take the form of potato processing, but potato processing which is countervailable under the free trade agreement with the Americans could well impact adversely those very people of Portage la Prairie who were so hurt by the budgetary decision taken by the Mulroney Government last year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is time that the Government of Manitoba stop pretending that there is a new era of federal-provincial relations, the era of Mulroney and the era of the Premier of this province because we have evidence. We do not have to judge the rhetoric, we judge the action. We judge how Manitoba has benefitted from federal-provincial relations since 1984 and 1988.

We ask questions about the renegotiation of the Economic Regional Development Agreement, a subject that was brought up in this House today. There is no renegotiation; some \$250 million waiting somewhere in limbo. We have the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) threatening to punch the nose of the federal Minister.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we have two Tory Governments, one in Ottawa and one in Manitoba, which have collectively reduced federal-provincial relations to an all-time low in this country. The people who are paying the price are the people of Portage la Prairie and all Manitobans who have witnessed a deterioration of their economic status in part because of the bickering and the narrow parochialism of the Government in Ottawa and the inability of a Government of Manitoba to stand up to them and speak on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a controversial resolution. It speaks on behalf of the people of this province, and I am confident that Members opposite and Members of the New Democratic Party will see fit in their wisdom to support this resolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that we fully support any condemnation of the federal Government's attitude and actions in regard to this province including the base closure.

While I realize that the wording of this resolution has been adopted in terms of the normal protocols of this House, I would, if anything, have preferred a stronger wording because I know this resolution talks about asking the Government to consider cancelling its plans to close CFB Portage and the Kapyong Barracks. I would have preferred a resolution that says, we want them to cancel that action. I suspect it was because of the protocol, not because of any attempt to withdraw from that kind of statement, and I want to indicate right from the start that we, in the New Democratic Party, fully support particularly the City of Portage in its actions, its repeated actions in trying to get fairness from the federal Government. We fully support the City of Winnipeg which is also impacted because of the Kapyong Barracks.

* (1720)

We will continue to fight alongside Manitobans wherever they are, whichever part of the province they reside in, in their fights against what I believe is an increasingly unfair, petty and vindictive federal Government that has singled out Manitoba for some of the most despicable treatment in recent years that I have seen any province had to face. I think it is important when we start this debate to recognize that the closure of these two bases is nothing more than a continuation of what has been happening in this province as a result of the actions of the Mulroney Government.

Let us talk about CF-18 for a moment. This was the Government, the current federal Government, that came into power, swept into power in 1984 and was critical, I remember at the time in the West, about the way in which the previous Liberal Government had treated western Canada.

I must say that I did have a number of criticisms myself about the way the Liberal Government treated western Canada. One only has to look at the Air Canada overhaul base, the fact that even in terms of VIA Rail

for example, CN maintenance, in terms of jobs in the transportation industry in general, in terms of the impact of deregulation. A lot of those policies were started by the previous federal Liberal Government.

I think it is ironic that in 1984 we had this Conservative Government elected that said they would somehow give the West a fair deal in confederation. How much of a fair deal did we get from that Government? I mentioned the CF-18. Who can forget the impact of that on this province? We had a better bid than a firm in Montreal, we had everything going for us in terms of the technology being available here, the skilled staff being available here, the industrial base, and we were denied it.

We were denied it, I think in the most insulting way, because the Prime Minister of Canada had the nerve to say that it was in the national interest, the national interest, to award that contract to Montreal. The only interest that it was in, was in the Prime Minister's own political interest in the Province of Quebec, and I believe that, more than anything, was an indicator of exactly what type of policies we can expect from the current Government in Ottawa, the Conservative Government in Ottawa.

I believe that the CF-18 unfortunately, as significant as it was, was the tip of the iceberg. I believe that what we are seeing here as we debate this particular set of actions that once again hit our province, and hit our province disproportionately, is once again the fact that we have a Government that is completely lacking in any national vision, in particular any vision that reflects the importance of this province, and indeed I would say western Canada as a whole in terms of confederation.

Let us not forget there are other communities in Manitoba that are affected by this type of policy. I mention Churchill because we have had to fight continuously the last number of years to keep the Port of Churchill, to keep the employment in that port, to keep the grain shipped to that port, to maintain the rail service to that port, to maintain passenger rail service even now. We are fighting a rearguard action against the Government of Canada that once again lacks the national vision to see how important the Port of Churchill is.

I had the opportunity to go down to Ottawa, as part of the delegation on the Port of Churchill, and I want to indicate that I was very, very concerned. I will say to this House very concerned about the completely negative attitude of the federal Government toward the Port of Churchill. I believe what we are seeing is tokenism in the current situation. There is some token commitment to the maintenance of the port, but it is not a long-term commitment, it is not a commitment that lives up to the port's potential.

I say that because it is very much in the same vein of what we are seeing in this particular case. I can really identify with the people of Portage la Prairie, because my constituency, my home community of Thompson is 15,000 in terms of population, we are the third largest city in Manitoba, Portage la Prairie is very close to that population, I believe it is around 12,000,

13,000, well it may be closer to 12,000 or less once the federal Government has its impact with the axing of the base at Portage. I can just imagine what kind of impact this type of layoff would have in my community. It would have a devastating impact. I want to indicate that we have some experience with these types of major layoffs in the sense that we are a community that is dependent on the mining industry. It has been through boom and bust periods. Right now it has been doing fairly well, though the nickel prices have dropped fairly substantially the last week or two.

We recognize in Thompson that we could once again—and I am sure that the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) is aware of this—we could once again be in the situation where a number of years ago, where Inco actually shut down the plant, Mr. Speaker, for a period of three months, totally shut down operations in the City of Thompson as part of a measure that they saw as being necessary because of the market condition for nickel. That was a three-month shutdown, it affected a couple of thousand workers, it affected many families in our community, but it was a temporary shutdown.

What we are talking about here are cuts that are going to have a permanent and lasting impact on the community of Portage. I can identify with that, just the anguish, just the frustration that people in Portage must be feeling from this federal Government that said it was going to stand up for western Canada, was going to talk supposedly for Manitoba in the House of Commons.

I know they must be frustrated because—where is their Conservative Member of Parliament? Was he listened to on this? No. Nowhere to be found. Where are those high-profile Cabinet Ministers from Manitoba, the Conservative Cabinet Ministers? Where are they on this important issue, Charlie Mayer or Jake Epp? You ask Manitobans, I think they will be asking the same question, where are they, and where were they when this closure was announced. Nowhere to be heard. Where were the other Conservative Members of Parliament, whether it be Dorothy Dobbie, whether it be the other rear guards of the Conservative Party in Manitoba? Where were they when these vicious cuts were announced? They were nowhere, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that fundamentally in the next election in those constituencies, people will be asking the question, why they should vote for Conservative Members of Parliament who have done nothing to stop this type of brutal attack on those constituencies. I believe that will be the case in Portage. I believe that will be the case in Winnipeg. I am sure that the other two parties in those constituencies will be asking that very same question: where were those Members of Parliament?

But you know it goes beyond that, Mr. Speaker. As I said, it is not a question of Members of Parliament not doing their job or Members of the Cabinet not doing their job. What is fundamentally at stake here I believe is the issue of fairness. There has been a lot of talk recently in terms of national unity.

There has been a lot of talk of national unity in the context of the Meech Lake Accord. I do not want to

be a cynic and suggest that for some reason we might have been singled out on this and perhaps Prince Edward Island is receiving more favoured treatment because their Premier supports Meech Lake and in this province, all three Parties have said that changes have to be made to Meech Lake. I do not want to be a cynic, Mr. Speaker, although I could very well be, given the backdrop to these particular cuts.

Whether we are being singled out because we are opposed to Meech Lake or not, the very real question that I think has to be asked in terms of national unity is, how can we in Manitoba have much faith in fairness? How much commitment to national unity can Manitobans—who traditionally I believe have had a strong commitment to national unity, probably greater than any province.

We have always been a bridge in many ways between eastern Canada and the rest of western Canada. Part of the West, yes, but always strongly committed to a major role for the federal Government. We have always been committed to the development of new national social programs. We have had a tradition in this province, Mr. Speaker, of being involved in terms of statesmanship, if you like, as a province in terms of constitutional issues, in terms of issues generally of national unity. But I ask, how long can the people of Manitoba continue with this, I would say, unequivocal commitment to national unity when we are seeing before us just how little this Conservative Government that preaches it on Meech Lake actually follows it in practice?

I am not just talking about base closures, I am not just talking about CF-18, Mr. Speaker. Let us talk about the cuts to VIA Rail, which I believe rip apart the very fabric of this country. I believe that, once again, is really going to make people ask, and I do not want to see a growing sense of western alienation, but I believe it is there, and I believe it is being represented in various different forms, whether it be in terms of new political parties, whether it be in terms of existing political parties. I know in term of the New Democratic Party, where our roots are in the West, you are hearing more and more from the New Democrats just how frustrated they are about what is happening in Ottawa.

I believe that is the bottom line, Mr. Speaker. That is probably the concern that was on people's minds, and I remember the reaction of the people from Portage when these cuts were announced. They felt betrayed, they felt absolutely betrayed, and I believe more and more Manitobans are feeling betrayed by this Government.

* (1730)

I want to say to them to have faith in this country because I believe, in the next election, that the current Prime Minister is going to pay for ripping apart this country as he has. I believe he will pay for that politically at the polls. I do not believe there is any accident that the current Government is in third place at the current time in terms of any sampling of public opinion.

Public opinion polls are not the important thing. The Prime Minister is not the important thing in this

particular case. I am concerned about the long-term future of this country, and I believe that if we are going to have that real commitment to national unity, we are going to have to start to come together. We have to fundamentally deal with these types of grievances that are developing day in and day out because it is on the economic issues, as well as the constitutional, that I believe we are seeing that.

In fact more fundamentally on the economic issue are we seeing the fact that we in Manitoba are not getting a fair deal, Mr. Speaker, from the current Government. I believe that has to change, and it has to change by us in this Legislature starting the process of saying, whether it be federal-provincial agreements, whether it be these particular closures, whether it was the CF-18, whether it is VIA Rail, whether it is the continuing announcements out of Ottawa that have hurt this province, that we are going to fight back.

I am pleased on this issue that there is three-Party agreement. I will state quite categorically I do not believe this is an issue where you will see anyone in this Legislature doing anything other than condemn the base closure.

The Conservatives are probably in the most difficult position and I am sure the Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) realizes that, being a Conservative in Portage, Mr. Speaker, being connected with the same Party that was responsible for these closures.

I do not know what the Member for Portage did in the last election, whether he supported the federal Conservatives, I assume he did. I realize they are in a more difficult position, but I do not question the fact that they are angry too. I really do not question the fact the Conservatives are angry too. In fact, they are angry probably for the very fact that they have continued to commit themselves to support the Mulroney Government and they are getting very little in return.

I am sure the Member for Portage, who I am sure will be contributing in this debate the next period of time, will explain his views of the Conservative Government. I would actually hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Portage would take this opportunity to stand up and totally disassociate himself with the federal Conservative Party, totally disassociate himself with the Members of Parliament who have supported this decision, totally disassociate himself with a Party that has clearly ignored the interests of Manitobans, and I look forward to that contribution.

I just want to say in conclusion that I want to indicate our Party's complete support for the fight of the people of Portage, and the fight of the people from Winnipeg. I will personally actually be in Portage tomorrow and I look forward to communicating to the residents of Portage, as I am sure the MLA for Portage will, as I am sure all Members will in their visits to that community that we in particular are focusing on their fight, because, yes, it hurts the City of Winnipeg in terms of the Kapyong Barracks, but to rip apart a community like the community of Portage, the way this decision is doing, I think is absolutely reprehensible.

In fact I look forward to the day when Brian Mulroney will personally go to the City of Portage and see what

damage he has done to that community, because I know he will not do that, just like he will not go to northern Manitoba and explain why he is trying to take away the northern tax laws, or to the Port of Churchill to explain why the Government is not fully committed. He will not do that, Mr. Speaker, but if there was any fairness out of the current federal Government, any fairness whatsoever, they would have the guts to go down to communities like Portage and face the people of those communities. I believe if they did, if they just took the time to listen to them, they would find that those people in those communities would be able to change their mind. I think that is the problem. They have become too isolated in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. They do not know what is going on in Canada generally. They do not know what is going on in western Canada, in Manitoba in particular, and that is why we have to send a very strong message.

I would like it to have been a bit stronger than this and I realize it is because of the protocols of this House, but the message to the federal Government should be, stop the closure and stop it now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Co-operative Consumer & Corporate Affairs): It is indeed a pleasure for me to say a few words on the resolution that was presented by the Liberal Opposition. I guess, outside of the fourth "whereas," I can support that resolution. Of course, the fourth "whereas" is dealing with free trade. The Liberal Opposition is not able to deal with trade and not able to deal with business, so I can recognize why they are opposed to it.

Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed today in the presentation of the Member of the Liberal Party in his attack. The resolution was a fairly good resolution as it was worded, except for the fourth "whereas," but then his comment on the resolution did not deal with the issues of Portage and the shutdown of the bases. He did not address the real serious issues that are facing the people of Portage la Prairie with the potential shutdown of the Canadian Forces Base of Portage.

Our Premier, the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon), and I still prefer the first option to keep that base open. That is the most desirable thing that we think can happen economically for the people of Portage la Prairie, and for those people who are working there. The Member did not address really the concerns of the people of Portage la Prairie; he rather used the resolution to attack the federal Government and then to try to link a thread through from that federal Government to the provincial Government here in Portage.

Mr. Speaker, I do not hear from the Liberal Party any condemnation. I think it was Lester Pearson, was he the Prime Minister when they moved the Air Canada overhaul base out of Winnipeg? I believe that was the first move, under Lester Pearson, and that was the beginning of the decline of the aero industry in Manitoba. Manitoba should have, because of its location, a very strong aerospace industry here. We are in the centre of Canada; we need some economic activity; we need that sort of thing. It does not have

to be placed in Quebec where the Liberals did under Pearson put that facility in Quebec. Nevertheless, we had it.

Under the current Prime Minister, and I am no more proud of his action on not putting the Canadian Forces Base right here in Manitoba where it should be, once again sent it to Quebec. As a Government, as a Party, we opposed that when that happened. We opposed it vigorously and we condemned the Government for that. As the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) stands up and is very proud of his comments, what did Ed Broadbent say about the CF-18? He said, we are for Quebec, we are for—he was not even silent—Quebec, because he wanted those votes and he was very strong on that.

We did not hear any comment out of the Liberal Leader at that time. Did John Turner make one condemnation comment on the activities of the Government of Canada in putting that? No, he did not. Not one comment. So we see the hypocrisy of Members opposite and how they attack this concern.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Portage la Prairie rallied very hard when they first heard of the closing of CFB Portage. They held rallies, they had a function at the park. Even Mrs. Carstairs, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plochman) came to Portage in a support for the stopping of the closing of the CFB Portage. The Member for Dauphin—and I must appreciate it. I spoke at that rally. I spoke very condemning of the federal Government for the action they took and how it was treating Portage la Prairie and Manitoba in the whole. I must say at the end of that attack, and my position on it, I had a standing ovation. Even the Member for Dauphin had the courtesy to stand, not because of me but because of the position that was required. Unfortunately, the Liberal Leader and some of her Members did not see fit to do that, but that is fine.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Portage la Prairie organized a delegation and went to Ottawa. The Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon) led that delegation on behalf of the people of Portage la Prairie and on behalf of Winnipeg with Kapyong and on behalf of all of the people of Manitoba. The Premier led that delegation—

* (1740)

An Honourable Member: What were the results?

Mr. Connery: The Member said, what were the results. Well, we had a good hearing with the committee. I will say once again the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) went along as did the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer). I will say—and I will give the Leader of the Second Opposition Party his due—I think he came in all honesty to assist in that particular issue, because he admitted there is no way they will ever take Portage la Prairie.

I must say the Leader of the official Opposition took a different approach when she was there. Her ambition was headlines. She ran around looking for the cameras and said, where are they, where are they, where are

the news people? That was her goal in going to Ottawa, as a self-seeking, self-serving trip for her own edification and the Liberal—

An Honourable Member: You are a liar.

Mr. Connery: Would the Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) withdraw the comment when he said, I am a liar? The Member for Springfield said, "you are a liar." I would ask the Member to stand up and be a gentleman and withdraw that remark.-(interjection)- Obviously the Member for Springfield is not a man of integrity to stand up and apologize for a comment he made. I will accept that.

Mr. Speaker—

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: I realize that we get comments back and forth. Certainly I have been in exchanges with the Minister, but it is not in order for the Minister, regardless of what the Member opposite said, to refer to an individual as not being a person of integrity. We are all Honourable Members. We are all Members with integrity, and I would ask the Minister to withdraw that comment.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please On a point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), we do refer to Members in this Chamber as Honourable Members.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, the tragedy of what took place with the announcing of the closure of CFB is a tragedy on people. I think that is the issue that we have before us today.

In 1985, the provincial Governments of Canada and the federal Government signed a regional development agreement that said all decisions of any kind that the federal Government would take should keep into account regional activity and regional parity for all regions of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, this closing of CFB did not take into account regional activities and the need for regional activity such as Portage la Prairie and at P.E.I. in Summerside, which was very tragic.

The effect of the number of jobs lost in Portage la Prairie is significant because of the size of Portage la Prairie, as said by Members opposite, and quite correct. The figures that the Liberal Critic mentioned were correct. Those numbers are in the ballpark of what was happening. About 20 percent of the economic activity of a city the size of Portage is disastrous. The jobs, it is not just the direct jobs but it is the spinoff jobs that take place.

We see the real estate values did take a dip. Now we are very fortunate. Those real estate values, because of the other good news announcements that this province has worked diligently with the federal Government on, are starting to turn Portage around, and I hope I will have time to make some comment on the turnaround that Portage is having.

It also has an effect on schools when we lose students out of the classroom. You do not lose one classroom of students, you lose a few in each classroom. Therefore the schools really cannot cut back on their budgets, and the cost to the taxpayers is increased.

The small businesses in town who service that base -(interjection)- I wonder if the Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) would like to follow my words and put a few words, instead of sitting from his seat bantering away and -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Springfield will have an opportunity to address -(interjection)- Order, please. Order. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, the community of Portage la Prairie I must commend very strongly. They rallied around at a time when they were being battered and they looked to be down. They got together. There was a group called Portage in Motion. They collected hundreds, in fact thousands of dollars toward their efforts. They sent letters, they had petitions, they spoke to the federal people, they spoke to the provincial people.

Mr. Speaker, I think the integrity, the stamina, the backbone of the people of Portage la Prairie is evident in how they rallied when they were at a downturn in time. This is not the first time that the people of Portage have rallied in the face of a crisis. This was a crisis and still is a crisis, but they have rallied around now to turn that crisis into something good. We have several committees working in Portage la Prairie and Central Plains is the catalyst. There are three committees there, and also Mr. Mason from the University of Manitoba is working on economic reports. They have done analyses of what the facility has, what it contains, so we can go out if the federal Government still intends to proceed with their closing, that we have other alternatives.

I do not think it is the concern of the people of Manitoba and the people of Portage la Prairie that it has to be a military base, but it is the economic activity, the jobs, the people who are in Portage, the people who are at the base. Those are the people that we are concerned with as a Government. I think also the Members of the Opposition, although their debate on the resolution did not quite show that, I believe that they are honourable people and support the people of Portage la Prairie.

So it is the individual that we have to be concerned about, the individual who loses his job, the individual who has home payments and so forth to make, those are the people that we are concerned with.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province has committed himself and the Government has committed

themselves to work with the community of Portage la Prairie, as is evidenced in the combines plant, Western Combines, where there was a \$3 million federal loan and a \$2 million provincial loan to bring some 92 jobs to Portage la Prairie, and we expect another 120 spinoff jobs to come from that. The federal Government, on their own initiative, with the work of Central Plains, which is Community Futures, got Can Oats to Portage la Prairie, which will also contribute some 40 jobs, and I think it is in the area of \$20 million in capital activity.

So these are just a couple of little indications of the work that the provincial and the federal Government are doing to ameliorate the potential problems that could be created by the CFB closing. The federal Government is also working very strongly with the co-operation of the provincial Government and the people of Portage, that if it does close—it is not our first option—but if it does close, that other activities will take place. They are looking at helicopter training at that base. We know there is a shortage of pilots throughout the world, not only in the military but also in the passenger trade, that there is a tremendous need for pilots. Portage is an excellent base to have as a pilot training.

The reason the base was established at Portage la Prairie some 50 years ago, and this summer will be their 50th anniversary, was because of the site, the open air traffic, the lack of mountains and hills to be hazardous to the training pilots. There is an open air space and they have the sunlight hours, so the Portage base was there because of its ideal location. For that reason I think that somebody will now establish a training base for military and for commercial pilots at Portage la Prairie.

If some of these other things happen, we think very quickly that Portage people will look back on 1989 and '90 and say: what was the concern? So the concern that we have, that I have as the Member for Portage la Prairie, is that we work with the community, we work with the provincial Government and we work with the federal Government. The Minister of Regional Development, I can tell you, has been an ally, as is the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst), working with us to bring these additional jobs and industry to Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) would accept a very short question.

Mr. Connery: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge? (Agreed)

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we are very encouraged by the remarks of the Member for Portage la Prairie. Would he be prepared to propose a friendly amendment to the resolution that would subtract the clause with which he does not agree, Clause 4, I believe it is, the fourth WHEREAS? Would the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) be prepared to introduce an amendment that would take out the fourth WHEREAS so we could have speedy, all-Party agreement on this resolution?

* (1750)

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, while I am very sympathetic toward the resolution, before I would say yes, I think that would have to be caucused with my colleagues, to get that sort of approval. I would not feel that I had the ability to make that decision on my own, to commit other people.

So until I ask those other Members of our caucus, I would defer that.

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, well, it seems that the Member for Portage was not sincere then, because here he had an opportunity to stand up for the people he represents—

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. McCrae: While I realize there has been some lack of harmony this afternoon between the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) and the Minister for Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery) for whatever reasons, I do not think it is appropriate to put on the record the language just used by the Member for Springfield. Earlier the Honourable Minister was spoken to about some of the language that he used, and I suggest the Honourable Member for Springfield reconsider his expression about a lack of sincerity on the part of the Honourable Minister because I do not think anything in what the Minister has said would lead one to believe that, and besides that I suggest with as much friendliness as I can, to the Honourable Member for Springfield that even if he were to rethink the expression with respect to lack of sincerity, he would also want to reminded about what the Rules say about language like that in the House.

So I would ask the Honourable Member for Springfield to search his conscience and hopefully come out with something that would be a little more parliamentary in debate in this House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, it has been consistently ruled that language used in the House should be tempered and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No language is by virtue of any list acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore it would be unparliamentary.

I would caution the Honourable Member for Springfield. The Honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Roch: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) made a very reasonable request. He said that if the Member for Portage is sincere in his remarks, no, I know he went beyond that, he said, I believe that the Member for Portage is sincere in his remarks, would he consider proposing a friendly amendment which would remove the fourth WHEREAS so we could vote on this resolution today and hopefully have it passed unanimously. By virtue of the fact that the Member for Portage, the Member representing the area in question refused to do that, and he did, he refused, he said we would have to caucus it. What is there to caucus? This is a simple resolution condemning the federal Conservative Government action which should be supported by all Members of this Legislature, but he does not want to take a stand on behalf of his constituents.

So the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) takes offense to my saying that he is not sincere. All I have to say to the Government House Leader is that he should talk to his colleague from Portage and maybe he should reconsider and repropose that amendment, because, Mr. Speaker, when I said a while ago that the Member has run out of fire, he accused me of calling him a liar. I certainly will not withdraw saying he has run out of fire. I was talking to him about his colleague the M.P. He says, I did not support him in the last federal election. Well, it seems to me that the day after the federal election, he came in here along with all his colleagues sporting a blue carnation, which indicates to me that they were all supportive of the Conservative victory in 1988.

Mr. Speaker, as much -(interjection)- That is right, too. That is right, too, and as a matter of fact, the Member over there said that he would rather betray his constituents and support his Party. He said that. He said that his first priority was to support his Party. It was more important than supporting his constituents.

An Honourable Member: Did he say that?

Mr. Roch: He said that.

An Honourable Member: When was that?

Mr. Roch: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, on a point of order.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, let it be very clear that the Member not mislead this House and mislead Hansard, that I said stand first and foremost for the constituency of Portage la Prairie and the people of Manitoba. It is not appropriate for one person to put on the record for other people.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Roch: Well, Mr. Speaker, is the Member for Portage ready, will he convince his colleagues to support his resolution today? We are willing, we on this side are willing to take away the fourth WHEREAS in this resolution in order to get unanimous passage of this resolution today. It was asked by the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), it was asked by myself, several Members around this House are wondering, is he for or is he against. Do you have to caucus it? They do not know or else they are defending their federal colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, not hearing any response from the other side, not hearing any response from the Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) one can only assume that they are not even willing to consider bringing this resolution to a vote.

I believe that this closure of the Portage base is part of a much larger problem, if the Members in Government were true to their constituents would look at seriously. Part of the overall agenda is to shut down rural Manitoba, indeed rural Canada. I think we have to show them that we out in the west, we out in rural areas and in the cities which support the rural areas, would like to show our solidarity. Maybe show this federal Government that we, of all political strengths in Manitoba, are not willing to put up with this nonsense anymore. Therefore, I would like to move an amendment to this resolution, an amendment that the Member for Portage refused to make.

I move, seconded by the Member for Fort Rouge that the resolution be amended as follows: THAT the fourth WHEREAS be deleted from this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that we have removed the fourth WHEREAS which was the only part of the resolution that the Member for Portage objected to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Roch: Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch), seconded by the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), that as the fourth "WHEREAS" be deleted from the resolution, the amendment is in order. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment? The Honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in the discussion on the resolution and on the amendment moved just now by the Honourable Member for Springfield. Normally, I like to keep a positive outlook for things that go on around here -(interjection)- I hear some Honourable Members opposite reacting to that particular comment. The fact is that I do like to keep a positive outlook about my duties around here.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can see that the clock is rapidly reaching six o'clock. If there was an intention brought on behalf of the Government to pass this resolution, I believe we in the Opposition, certainly in the New Democratic Party, will accommodate it by not seeing the clock and allowing the debate to continue until this matter is decided.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. McCrae: Well, I am just going to continue my comments, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

Mr. McCrae: I understand I still have a minute remaining and I appreciate that. I just wanted to say, because I generally approach this place with what I think at least

is a positive outlook, I was a little dismayed this afternoon to hear the tone of this debate on a matter of such fundamental importance to all Manitobans, but certainly to the people in and around Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

I would like to let Honourable Members know that indeed our Caucus will look at the amendment proposed by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch). We will indeed make decisions about where we stand on this particular amendment. I can tell you as one who has been to Portage la Prairie with regard to the proposed closing of the Canadian Forces Base, as one who has taken part in some of the demonstrations of displeasure at the decision taken by the federal Government, I indeed take an interest in this and I know for a fact the Honourable Minister of Co-operative Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery) who is the Member for Portage la Prairie, is deeply concerned and troubled by the events in Portage la Prairie. So Honourable Members can expect to hear from the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Minister will have 13 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply.