

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 27, 1989.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent and, therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker (Mr. William Chornopyski) to take the Chair.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Gary Derksen, Barry Mayba, Dwight Weeks and others calling upon the provincial Government to implement a number of safety measures at the intersection of Waverley and the Perimeter Highway before a serious accident takes place. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): I am pleased to present the Civil Service Commission 1988-89 Annual Report.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker (William Chornopyski): Before we go to Oral Questions, I want to draw all Members' attention to the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from Garden City Collegiate, twenty-five Grade 11 students under the direction of Roberta Cairns. That is in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema).

We welcome you.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that I join all Members in wishing the Speaker a quick recovery. I know that the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) diagnosed him and sent him off to bed, so hopefully he will have a speedy recovery.

Goods and Services Tax Liberal Minority Report

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, from a note of levity to a very serious issue facing all Canadians.

It is hard to believe that the GST proposed by Michael Wilson could have been made worse; however, Don Blenkarn and his fellow Tories have succeeded. Fortunately, for Canadians the federal Liberal Opposition Minority Report has been able to give us some reassurance that there is at least some compassion and fairness in the House of Commons.

The Minority Report concludes that the GST is not revenue neutral, is not visible, is regressive, would cause serious economic damage, would be a nightmare for small business, would force provincial Governments to either raise taxes, cut services or run large deficits, and has proposed and recommended that the goods and services tax as presently proposed be withdrawn and that Governments immediately begin consultations and renegotiations.

Can the Deputy Premier tell this House today if he is prepared to endorse the Liberal Minority Report of the House of Commons?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has said all along the GST was not something that was acceptable to us. We have said consistently that this is not our tax and it is not one that we see as being one we want.

Certainly, there are a number of problems that we have identified with it, ones which we could debate endlessly in this House. We had a debate here which very clearly laid out the concerns we on this side of the House have. We do not intend to roll over and play dead and have a tax imposed that would further cause problems in western Canada.

* (1340)

Housing Exemption

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): The report of Don Blenkarn and his majority Conservatives made a number of recommendations about this GST. It is imperative that this Government totally disassociate themselves from any of those recommendations.

Will the Deputy Premier state clearly in this House today that older housing cannot be taxed in any form of GST proposed by the federal Government and made it acceptable to this provincial Government?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): How clearly do we have to state that this is not the kind of tax we support? We do not need it. We do not want it. We do not support it.

Mrs. Carstairs: This Deputy Premier, representing his colleagues today, has said that some tax in some form would be acceptable. We want commitments from them as to what is unacceptable. Will the Deputy Premier, on behalf of his colleagues, state clearly in this House today that any GST imposed by their federal cousins would not be allowed to place tax on older housing in Canada?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition would attempt to, in some unclear way, draw the conclusion that this province, in any way, is going to support the type of recommendations that we saw in the Blenkarn Report.

We do not have a hard copy of the report, but the preliminary reviews of what I have seen amount to nothing more than tinkering, and it is unacceptable to this Government.

Impact Small Business

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we get our views from are the very conflicting messages which come from this Government. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has said on the record that many of the issues in the GST are acceptable to him. He has also indicated clearly that by 1994-1995, there will be some benefits of the GST to the Province of Manitoba. Those are the Finance Minister's words.

Will the Deputy Premier today clearly state that it is unacceptable for small business to have to bear alone any form of GST imposed by the federal Government?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take more time than what I am sure is available during Question Period to tell the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) to fasten her seat belt, and we will tell her what we do not like about it because we have consistently said what is wrong with this type of taxation. We have consistently said that if the federal Government insists on this type of an approach, they are going it on their own.

Rebate Indexing

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have consistently over and over and over again asked a question in this House as to the position of this Government on tax rebates to low income families. The Blenkarn Report suggests they should be eliminated. We have asked this Government for a commitment that should they at any time approve the GST, that GST would have to have its rebates fully indexed to low income Manitobans. Will they give that commitment today?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have consistently said we do not want this tax, we will not support it. I do not know how much more clearly it can be stated to the people of this province. The only one who is not listening is the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs).

Mrs. Carstairs: They do not believe them. They do not believe them because they give different messages. They give unclear, muddled messages with the Finance Minister saying one thing and the Premier of the province saying another.

* (1345)

Government Position

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have in my possession—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Leader of the official Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: I have in my possession 2,549 signatures from my constituency alone opposing the goods and services tax for Canada. Those residents, in letters to me, have consistently asked this Government to speak more clearly on the issue of GST.

Can the Deputy Premier tell the House today what strategies his Government has to clearly represent the views of Manitobans to Michael Wilson and his Tory cousins that this GST is absolutely unacceptable?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the interest of clarity, let me repeat. We said we do not want this tax, we do not support this tax, and if the federal Government is going to bring it forward they will have to impose it.

In the interest of clarity, I think the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) should also explain how it is she proposed another \$700,000 worth of expenditures in this province when we were, for the first time in the last decade, starting to achieve something close to a balanced budget?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Goods and Services Tax Corporate Tax Alternative

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the results in the Blenkarn Commission's report today about very, very ineffective opposition, in part, with this provincial Government in opposing this tax.

I have a copy of the submission made to the Blenkarn Commission by this Government. It is weak, it is indecisive, and it does not provide for any viable alternatives to the proposed GST. We also have seen the Premier of this province present to the Prime Minister some weak objections to the GST, but we did not see him fight the Prime Minister when the Prime Minister came back and said this would be good for Canada. We did not see a rebuttal from the Premier of the province on behalf of Manitobans the same way that Clyde Wells came back on Meech Lake. If that would have happened, maybe we would believe this Government is truly sincere about stopping this tax.

My question is to the Deputy Premier of the province. Will he now change the Government's position and endorse an alternative to the GST in our opposition to the GST and endorse a minimum corporate tax in this country? So that rather than houses being taxed, we can get the 93,000 corporations that made \$27 billion worth of profits last year and did not pay one cent in taxes. We can get those people to pay, not people trying to buy a home in this province in terms of devastating our economy.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the third Party (Mr. Doer) wants to talk about devastation to the economy. Another five years of their type of Government, and we will become a Third World province.

The Leader of both Opposition Parties were at the First Ministers' Conference.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Mr. Cummings: Perhaps they do not really want to hear the answer. I suspect that what we have is a lot of posturing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If they would have listened carefully to the presentation that the Premier of this province made at the First Ministers' meeting, they would know clearly the position of this province with regard to the GST. They would know clearly that what this Government is in favour of is fair and reasonable taxation, not the kind of concentrated rip-off perpetuated by that Party.

Mr. Doer: I not only listened but I heard the sound of silence when the Prime Minister rebutted the Premier's economic proposal at the First Ministers' meeting. There was no response. We have collected over 35,000 signatures against this tax. We have had nine public meetings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and people do not want this unfair tax. They are talking about a minimum

corporate tax and a fairer federal tax system rather than this gouge tax that Mulroney has proposed.

* (1350)

Housing Impact Analysis

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Has he had an opportunity to analyze the effect of this tax on the housing market in this province? A housing market that has gone down since they have been in office, a housing market that is the only one of 20 major cities where the price of houses has gone down rather than up in this province, and the construction industry which is down 5.8 percent in Manitoba as opposed to the rest of the country. Has he had an opportunity to evaluate the Blenkarn's brilliant solution to the housing problem that is levying taxes on the resale of houses and levying taxes on new housing starts in this province? How many thousands of jobs will we lose, and how many consumers will be affected by that proposal?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, apparently the NDP Opposition, in this House, supports higher housing costs for the people of this province. I am very sorry to hear that because one of the things that helps attract people to this province is reasonable housing costs as compared to many of the other areas of this country.

He asked if I had an opportunity to analyze the Blenkarn Report. I have not yet had the hard copy in my hands, but let me very clearly tell you anything that works against the ability of Manitobans to acquire reasonable cost housing in this province, I am opposed to.

Mr. Doer: The Minister does not realize you have to have housing before you can purchase housing. There were 7,000 less people working in this province in October than there was a year ago under so-called Tory good times. People know that Tory times are bad times, and they are starting to slowly find it out again in this province.

Non-Profit Organizations

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Deputy Premier is: the Blenkarn Commission—and it is something that has not been raised again by his own Minister of Finance in front of Don Blenkarn—is recommending that non-profit organizations such as child care, such as all the many social welfare agencies, the many non-profit organizations in this province get a 50 percent rebate of the GST costs.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: why did they not mention that issue of non-profit organizations in their brief to the Prime Minister and the federal task force on finances dealing with the GST? Will they now strongly object to the fact that non-profit organizations will only get half the money back in terms of the GST rather than (a) stopping the tax totally, (b) replacing it with a minimum corporate tax, and (c) eliminating all non-profit organizations from this tax?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Member of a Government, a former Government that did not have the foresight to deal with the problems of day care taxation, I am afraid that he is in a very poor position to press for taxation reform as it refers to those types of operations. We are very clear in the fact that we do not support this type of a tax. If you do not support that particular type of a tax, then why should one enter into the debates about the particulars of it?

Opposition Documentation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): The Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised to table in this Chamber the effect on the economy of this tax. It has been leaking out in other areas of the province. Will the Deputy Premier (a) table the effect of this tax on our economy, not just the good scenario that the Minister of Finance gave to the media, but the negative scenario as well which does not even include the effect of interests rates? Secondly, will the Deputy Premier today table what they have sent to Ottawa to oppose again a totally unbelievable proposal, particularly when it comes to housing that has been tabled in the House of Commons by the Finance committee chaired by the Tory majority on that committee?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): I said a moment ago that I had not yet received a hard copy of the recommendations from the Blenkarn report. I will take the specifics of what the Member raises as notice.

We have a wide variety of impacts that we know the GST would have relationship to. Quite frankly, I think that the position that we have taken, along with all of the other provinces in this country I might indicate, we said very clearly to the Minister of Finance, to the Prime Minister, that this was an unfair, unreasonable approach to the correction of the fiscal problems of this country. God knows, this country has tremendous fiscal problems, but we have stated that this is not the manner in which to correct them.

* (1355)

Ken Podolsky MPIC Compensation Denial

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): My question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (Mr. Cummings). The Minister has known for some time now about the tragic circumstances surrounding a traffic collision near Moosehorn some 13 years ago. The accident involving a truck and a car left five people dead. As the Minister knows, the only survivor of the crash, the truckdriver, was cleared of any and all wrongdoing by the RCMP. However, MPIC has denied Mr. Ken Podolsky compensation and claims for injuries sustained in the accident on the basis of a confidential study conducted by Transport Canada. This report, a document intended for purpose of research into traffic safety only, has been wrongly used by the MPIC to deny Mr. Podolsky's legitimate claim.

My question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is: why has this Minister ignored Mr. Podolsky's pleas for help? Why has he shown no concern for the individual who has been victimized by MPIC, and why has he not done anything to correct the injustice such as ensuring that Mr. Podolsky's claim is approved after 13 years of waiting?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): First of all, let me put something very clearly on the record. During the election campaign leading up to this Legislature, Liberal policy very clearly stated there must be no interference by Government in the day-to-day management of the corporation or in individual cases. "The corporation must be free from political interference" was the policy statement of the Liberal Party as they ran for election to this House.

The Member knows full well that this case was dismissed from the courts not very long ago because it had gone through a very long period of inaction. There had been nothing brought forward. He is trying to say that the corporation is somehow interfering with Mr. Podolsky's right to claim damages from the other parties. That is not the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) does a disservice to himself and to Mr. Podolsky when he puts forward the accusation that somehow the corporation has interfered.

This report that he refers to as a confidential report, I suggest to him, could very easily have been acquired by simply writing to the authorities and asking for it.

Mr. Rose: I would have expected better than that from a Government that is supposed to be caring and cares for the people.

To the same Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister knows of this confidential report. He has known about it for some time and has indeed referenced to it in his correspondence with myself indicating that it was the large part of the determination for cause.

Can he therefore explain why he would allow MPIC to ignore the findings of a police report, an RCMP report, and instead rely on the findings of a subsequent document, a confidential sanitized research document, amounting to a study on traffic safety, a report that was never intended for MPIC's use? Why would he go along with MPIC? Why has he continued along on this instead of doing the right thing and defending the rights of Mr. Podolsky? Why has he become a slave to Autopac?

Mr. Cummings: The day I become a slave to anybody will be a long way off, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member continues to refer to this as a secret document. He is wrong. The other thing that needs to be very clear is that MPIC has an obligation to all parties to make sure that it avails itself of all information relevant to the accident. It would be negligent of the corporation, quite frankly, if they had not examined all of the information that was available to them. They have an obligation to the families of the people who were killed in this accident as well.

I indicated some 10 days ago when I was first approached by the Member opposite that I would have senior management of the corporation review this. They were at that time in front of the Public Utilities Board. He also indicated that there were two routes which could be taken and the other one was to allow the present lawyer, I believe the sixth lawyer that this gentleman has now engaged, who is presently appealing the last court ruling.

I suggest that the Member take his own advice when last week on public radio he kept saying that I should not comment on this because it is going before the courts. He has ceased to take his own advice and perhaps now I will give him a little advice free.

Mr. Rose: It is quite obvious from this questioning that this is not the proper Minister to be in charge of this department. He says 10 days ago when he knows full well that it was 75 days ago when I approached him. He knows full well that it was only available now through access of information after 13 years and not available at the time of the inquiry.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. Accident Report Policy

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the Honourable Member now put his question, please?

* (1400)

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): This Minister should inform himself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and apologize. Is it the policy of this Government, I ask the Minister, the same Minister in charge of MPIC, that MPIC should obtain secret accident reports whenever possible, and at their own will, and rely on them instead of police reports to thwart the legitimate claims of all Manitobans?

An Honourable Member: That is a policy question, Glen.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): One of the bright lights for the Liberal bench says this is a policy matter. Perhaps he should advise the backbencher from the Liberal Party as well that debating individual claims in this Legislature without just cause seems to me to be a real breach—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that Member suggests in some way—(interjection)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Minister of Environment.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) should in some way suggest the fact that I took my entire file and presented it to him so he would be apprised of the same information I

have, if he somehow implies that constitutes a cover-up on my part, then I would suggest that he is severely mistaken. We have spent considerable amount of time with this file.

The Member also charged that I did not respond to Mr. Podolsky's request when he brought it to my office. I can tell you that the manner in which he brought that request to my office, some 13 years after the accident, caused some considerable grief for my staff considering the manner in which he approached them. He neither wrote them, nor called me, but made one phone call, which that Member took considerable umbrage at the fact that my secretary had some concern about the type of call I received.

I will go to the wall for someone that I feel has been done wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not seen proof of that here.

Ken Podolsky MPIC Compensation Denial

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): Let us make the record very clear.—(interjection)— Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a new question to the same Minister. Let us make it completely clear to the Minister, to this House and to the people of Manitoba—(interjection)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I must inform the Honourable Member that he has had one question and two supplementaries.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Reg Alcock (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Osborne.

Mr. Alcock: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member clearly stated this was a new question. He was standing on a new question.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Honourable Member has been recognized for a total of three questions. I suggest that is enough.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the same point of order. It is not up to the Government House Leader to determine who asks what questions on this side of the House.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, we seem to be having a little bit of confusion here. I do not believe the Member indicated, at the beginning of his question, that it was a second question. In his later comments he did indicate that. I do believe he is in order in giving a brief preamble on what would be a different question.

I would suggest that rather than going back and forth on the debate that we allow the Member to proceed, not waste Question Period time with any further points of order.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could not agree more with the Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) when he said it is not my role as Government House Leader to decide who should be asking questions and who should not. I just think it is interesting that the Honourable Opposition House Leader would be questioning your initial ruling that the Honourable Member for St. Vital is finished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been advised that the Honourable Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) can, in fact, have another question and two more supplementaries. I would recognize him if he so wishes.

Mr. Rose: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a new question to the same Minister. I am pleased that this Minister of MPIC has put his foot in his mouth by admitting a call from a person who has been suppressed in this province. His department and he did absolutely nothing on the same day. On June 29, this gentleman spoke directly to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) and got the same sort of treatment.

In my preamble let me say that it is the policy of this Government—and when we would become Government—not to interfere with the rates of Autopac, unlike the NDP. So do not misunderstand our position, and that is we still believe that Government should manage their Crowns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say this—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the Honourable Member now put his question please? -(interjection)- Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for St. Vital, would he please put his question now.

Mr. Rose: My question is: given that this confidential report's author is outraged that MPIC would use this report to frustrate Mr. Podolsky, and given that he has called the report—the author of this report—called it baseless and worthless, why does the Minister see fit to support MPIC's position against Mr. Podolsky?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on the record the fact that the confidentiality aspect of this report was referred to the Chief of Accident Investigations for Transport Canada, and he confirmed in his view that these reports are public information and are freely available to anyone who wishes to obtain copies. According to Mr. Clark, the reports are not prepared specifically for court use, but there is no reason that anyone cannot obtain a copy.

I would refer the Honourable Member to the fact that I believe I have gone a long way toward providing him with information to make sure Mr. Podolsky's situation was clarified, inasmuch as was within my capability during the time frame that he suggested I should respond. If he take umbrage at that, I think he should also consider the fact that the matter is presently going before the courts as an appeal. I would suggest, if that is the case, perhaps public debate of the specifics of that appeal is probably not appropriate.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. Investigation

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question to the same Minister is: how can it get before the courts when Autopac refused to give documents he is entitled to? Is this Minister now in a position to complete a thorough investigation of MPIC, their misuse of this report which has been the source of anguish and pain to Mr. Podolsky for so many years? Is he now going to institute a complete investigation of the matter?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): The request to go before the courts for an appeal of the original decision in no way means that the Corporation has not co-operated over the years in preparing to deal with the matter for Examination of Discovery. They are still quite prepared to continue with that and co-operate under the venue of the court if and when this case is opened again.

* (1410)

Northern Tax Allowance First Ministers' Conference

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the outrage of Northerners is growing over the pending cutback of the Northern Tax Allowance that would affect close to 90 percent of the northern communities that are currently receiving it in Manitoba and a similar number throughout the country. In fact, just a few days ago there was a meeting in Thompson with more than 250 residents who were mad as hell at the insensitivity -(interjection)- I use that term, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that is exactly the way Northerners feel about this. It is the same as the response in Flin Flon and The Pas. People are amazed to learn that this so-called task force that was appointed by the federal Government basically had its mind made up from the start. The commissioner who came up indicated he was opposed to the Northern Tax Allowance more than 18 months ago when he started the report.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: what has the provincial Government done to ask for this task force recommendation to be rejected? In particular, I would like to ask the Deputy Premier why this issue was not raised in the more than 21-page document that was issued as notes for the opening statement at the First Ministers' Conference just a couple of weeks ago? Is this not an important enough issue for the First Minister of the province (Mr. Filmon) to be raising this directly with the Prime Minister?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me first of all compliment you in your very capable way of handling Question Period today.

Let me say that not only is this Government opposed to the removal of the tax benefit and northern allowances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have in fact put that opposition forward not only as a province but co-

operatively with all the other Northern Affairs Ministers who joined together in a meeting some week and a half ago to express very vehemently our opposition to any change. It will be as well on the agenda of Ministers of Finance in Ottawa the 1st of December. I say that we cannot afford to have those people lose that benefit as we want to encourage more people professionally and otherwise in the northern communities to provide the most essential services.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all due respect, I am asking why this has not been raised between First Ministers, because it is a very important—no disrespect to the Northern Affairs Minister (Mr. Downey).

Northern Tax Allowance Prime Minister Discussion

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to ask again to the Deputy Premier, will the Deputy Premier undertake to have this issue raised directly with the Prime Minister because of the fact that this task force is nothing more than a farce and a fraud? Will he raise it directly with the Prime Minister and have that task force recommendation thrown out?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Deputy Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can reaffirm the concerns of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). I want to tell you that they need not worry about the vehemence of this Government, and the concerned relationship to this issue. I would suggest that the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that on the 7th of December when the Finance Ministers convene that there will be very serious discussion regarding this matter.

Removal Impact

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My final supplementary is to the Deputy Premier as well.

Will the Deputy Premier undertake on behalf of this Government to provide full information on the impact of these major cuts to the grass roots movement that is growing in northern Manitoba to mount a nationwide campaign against this absolutely unacceptable treatment of our northern communities? Will they provide that information to the communities affected?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure him that any available information that is currently in the possession of Governments will be made available to the federal Government. As well, it is planned to further enhance the case of the provinces by jointly working together to make the case even more strongly in opposition to this removal of the tax benefit.

Triman Industries Ltd. Closure

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the free trade negotiations, the parliamentary library in Ottawa identified the wood products industry in Canada as an industry that would be hurt by the Free Trade Agreement. Not only would this industry suffer a trade deficit with the U.S., but the report stated there would be an anticipated 12 percent decrease in employment.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their predictions appear to be true. There has been a 29 percent increase of U.S.-made furniture coming into Canada, and 50 people have recently lost their jobs in Morden.

My question is to the Rural Development Minister (Mr. Penner). The administrative managers said that a few people from Government had said that there might be some Government help coming to them but nothing happened. What assistance was discussed with Triman Industries, and what were the results of these discussions?

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the loss and the closure of the industry in Morden is certainly something that is of concern to me as well as most people in rural Manitoba. As you know, the lumber industry, the pulp industry, has faced a dramatic turnaround in its financial situation. There is, however, also a similar type of an economic impact that has been incurred, not only in this country but in many other countries as far as the lumber industry is concerned. Therefore, the impacts that are currently being felt by the industry in areas such as the furniture industry are somewhat detrimental to employment.

However, the largest impact that has occurred and that is currently being felt by manufacturers such as the Morden firm are simply because of the economic downturn in many parts of rural Manitoba due to the drought that was experienced in that part of the province, due to in large part, the other economic downturns that have been incurred by the farming and communities dependent on the agricultural economy. Therefore, it is important to note that when smaller communities face economic hardships that are currently being felt by such firms as Triman, we do everything in our power to discuss the possibilities of retaining those industries as well as others during this period of time.

Rural Economic Development Strategy

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is evident that the Minister is not even sure that the sales have gone up with this industry and this company as reported certainly in the paper. If he would have read it over, he might be a little more familiar with that industry.— (interjection)—

Well, the Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the actions of the federal Government continue to

ravage both urban and rural Manitoba. We see this Government is prepared to stand by and watch.

My supplementary question to the same Minister is: how much longer must Manitobans wait for a rural economic development strategy because it was evident from the Minister's comments in Estimates that no plan is in place right now. How long have we to wait?

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is evident that the Liberal Party does not read the newspapers very well, nor do they pay much attention to what their own Leader said in Brandon during the UMM Convention. I want to say that we did in fact move rather expeditiously on decentralization in this province, maybe much too quickly and much too soon because the Liberal Leader (Mrs. Carstairs)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Dauphin, on a point of order?

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): No, a question.

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

* (1420)

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Downey: —to make a non-political statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave? (Agreed) The Honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs.

Mr. Downey: I would ask the Members of the House to join with me today in congratulating the Saskatchewan Roughriders in winning the Grey Cup yesterday. As a Member representing southwest Manitoba bordering on Saskatchewan, I have many friends and relatives just across the border who I am sure are extremely pleased today as we are in the victory for the western Canadian team, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I thank Members for providing me leave to extend those wishes to the Saskatchewan Roughriders and look forward to the Grey Cup when it comes to Winnipeg.

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): May I have leave for a non-political statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave—the Honourable Member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to join with the Member from the other side in extending our

congratulations to the Saskatchewan Roughriders. As an ex-Saskatchewanite, I feel I have waited many years for that opportunity and was pleased that they were able to provide one of the most exciting games that we have seen for years. It is my hope that we will not have to wait as long again to see Saskatchewan in that particular position.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): May I have leave to make a non-political announcement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave—the Honourable Member for Dauphin.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to also add our words of congratulations to the Saskatchewan Roughriders. I am sure this announcement is going to be going directly to the Saskatchewan Roughriders, and of course all of us would want to be a part of it. I only hope that the Premier was cheering for the West at the Grey Cup Game and not of course, since Winnipeg is now in the eastern division, pulling for the East. I think we should have that clarified by the Deputy Premier just to ensure that we are all on the same side here. I would like to think that the Saskatchewan Roughriders have waited some 23 years for this Grey Cup, and I was very pleased to see them in the Grey Cup and win it for the West.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I am sure we all supported them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

HANSARD REPRINT REQUEST

Mr. Reg Alcock (Opposition House Leader): I have a Hansard correction to make. I would just like to draw your attention to Friday's Hansard, November 24. Right after the Orders of the Day there seems to be a major error. It is not simply the correction of a word or two, but there is a whole section inserted in the Hansard that appears to be from a committee meeting and perhaps should be reviewed and a new Hansard published.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Mr. Deputy 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. Gilleshammer) in the Chair for the Department of Health; and the Honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Chornopyski) in the Chair for the Department of Environment.

* (1430)

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—HEALTH

Mr. Chairman (Harold Gillehammer): I call this Committee of Supply to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health. When we last met, the committee had been considering item 6., Manitoba Health Services Commission, Administration \$19,990,800—the Member for Wolseley.

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Chairperson, I have questions that do relate to the Health Services Commission. It is not specifically to the Administration, and I would ask the indulgence of the committee in that I am in Environment Estimates myself and I have slipped out for about 15 minutes so that I might ask the Minister some pertinent questions that relate to my own riding.

Mr. Chairman: We have been addressing these Estimates line by line. Is there leave to deviate from that? The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, we have been going line by line and if the staff are not here who can provide us with the detailed answers, we may not be able to answer the question. That is the only caution that I give to my honourable friend.

Mr. Chairman: Is there leave to do so? The Member for Wolseley.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, I have questions on the Health Commission capital budget that relate to two facilities within my own riding, the first one being Klinik.

As the Minister is well aware, I have been concerned for some time that this organization be properly housed and in fact talked to him on a number of occasions, both on the grounds of the facility at a certain very cold winter public meeting and again a number of times in the House.

Now we had an interesting announcement not very long ago that there would be the conversion of what was originally the CMHC offices at the southwest corner of Home and Portage Avenue, which is now a two-storey vacant office building and that may very well serve the organization imminently.

The specific concern I have there is the time frames that were announced, given my experience in conversion of buildings, et cetera, from one very different purpose to another. As we are talking really only six months or so, does the Minister feel that the time line of the 1st of June 1990, can be met and that it is a realistic projection?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I am informed that as of last week they were looking at May 1 as a potential day.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, music to my ears. I am very pleased to hear that optimistic position. One of

the big concerns that has been from both businesses and institutional activities in the Wolseley area has been the fact that we have a neighbourhood, rather shallow geographically speaking, squashed between the Assiniboine River and Portage Avenue and when there has been large-scale commercial or institutional activities along the Portage Avenue strip, there has been at times very severe impact from a parking viewpoint.

What I would look to is the Minister to make a statement, and I assume the building was purchased and not leased, and in so doing, did they also acquire permanent rights to the parking lot south of the Portage Avenue lane?

Mr. Orchard: That is my understanding, that the parking was part of the package.

Mr. Taylor: So there will be ownership of both the building and the parking lot, which means the parking lot will be there.

Mr. Orchard: My understanding is that the parking lot is under a lease agreement for 15 years and the building is purchased.

Mr. Taylor: All right. Mr. Chairperson, the parking is—how should I say it—something that is a cause celebre in the Wolseley area now and has been for some 20-odd years. What sort of an undertaking, and I leave this open-ended deliberately, would the Minister be prepared to make on behalf of the Health Services Commission in the having of a permanent parking solution?

Are they prepared to look at a longer term lease, are you prepared to look at first right-of-refusal on the property or what sort of mechanism would the Minister be prepared to put on the table to look at assuring a permanent parking solution?

Mr. Orchard: Well, yes, certainly, that is why we have secured this for 15 years because we recognize that parking is an issue, but bear in mind that is, well, close to the length of time that Klinik has been in existence to date, and we have secured almost the next lifetime, if you will, of Klinik complete with—how many small stalls?—27 stalls. It is a substantial improvement over the current facility in terms of parking spaces. Of course, that is what made the option to proceed at the Portage Avenue location as attractive as anything, was that not only did we save a fairly substantial amount of money but we were able to offer more space in two regards.

* (1440)

First, in the absolute area, was more than what the original new construction plan had envisioned, and second, the parking was significantly larger than what the new facility on the location would have been proposed.

As well, we are taking a look at yet another piece of property that we may attach to assure secured parking in the longer term as well.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, the Minister is quite correct in saying that this building does answer the needs, not only much

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more so than the present facility, but maybe even goes a little beyond that and offers, what I have heard from staff, a capability for expansion while within existing walls. I think, in securing a facility of that nature, I think that is a very positive step and I am quite prepared to put that into the record.

It looks like there will be a long life on that site. My worry is, is that on a lease basis? There is no assurance and if the request would be, not necessarily to purchase at this time, but if the Minister would undertake for there to be a first right-of-refusal option available to the Government at small cost, that would then at least give a trip wire to the situation, is that if at the end of the lease or, and there may be provisions of the lease for sale during the term, and that is not uncommon in commercial leases, you could end up being without parking space.

Mr. Orchard: I accept my honourable friend's cautions on this because it was one of the strengths of the location to go there and it is built in for 15 years and anything we can do to enhance that economically, certainly is being investigated.

As I said, we are looking at yet another piece of property that can be made available for parking adjacent or juxtaposed to, so that I accept my honourable friend's cautions. They are valid cautions.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister has made reference about some potential additional parking that might be available. Could I ask the Minister if that property today is commercial property or if it is residential?

Mr. Orchard: Staff is indicating that they think it is residential.

Mr. Taylor: I would ask the Minister then to request his staff, when entering into any potential negotiations for the acquisition of residential land in that area and its conversion to commercial, in particular parking, to deal with the local councillor and to deal with the local Residents Association, which is a long-standing multi-interest group called the Wolseley Residents Association, because there is a policy in the area that they do not wish any further parking lots, any new ones, in other words, south of the lane, south of Portage Avenue and that policy has been there for 12 years.

While the goal may be commendable, I am putting it out as a cautionary note, a warning if you will, do your front-end public relations work before you get into the acquisitions and approvals. I put that on the record hoping things will move smoothly ahead.

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend's advice is well noted and we did not arrive at our decision at 870 Portage lightly. We had substantial discussions to make sure that it fit a number of agendas. We likewise intend to do the same in anything we do which might enhance the parking capacity.

Mr. Taylor: I appreciate the Minister's candour and co-operation. It is very good.

I would like to ask a question that does relate to the Klinik operation, but not Klinik itself. Land was acquired

some time ago and I was originally a party to this. This was the land on Sherbrook Street and I was involved in helping secure approvals for Klinik at what was then the proposed site on Sherbrook.

My question is, has the Health Services Commission made a determination of what to do with the large commercial site on the east side of Sherbrook between Broadway and Portage and the smaller, what is largely residential site right behind it on Furby Street?

Mr. Orchard: We have not made any decision, but my honourable friend is striking upon yet another advantage of this current arrangement of 870 Portage because we own and have acquired that land at the commission level and there are—needless to say, we cannot envision plans for redevelopment. We may well consider the sale of that land so that we can free up the capital dollars for use elsewhere in the system. No decision has been made in that regard to date though.

Mr. Taylor: I am not at all surprised by that answer. That is just about what I thought might happen, has yet to be determined and may be revenue generation to the commission. I would ask that the commission, through the Minister, when it determines that it wishes to use it for public purpose or if it determines it wishes to turn it over to sale and has a specific buyer in mind and therefore a specific function, if it would again involve the local councillor and the two residents associations that are involved, then the West Broadway Residents Association, whose boundary is just within and it is on the boundary of the Wolseley Residents Association, in aid of there being a public, if you will, residents' input to the final determination of what might happen to that land?

Mr. Orchard: We have I believe all of the approvals in place to put in a community clinic. I believe all of those steps have been taken in consultation with the community committee and the local council, not only that but I mean receiving the approval of, is it Works and Operations with the City of Winnipeg, so that any decision to sell will, of necessity, have to be going through a compliance with what we have that property zoned for right now or we would not be able to—and I am only using this as an example because I do not know what the capabilities are, but we probably could not sell it knowingly to a buyer who was going to throw up a 30-storey whatever, if it did not meet with the zonings and the compliance with the city by-laws. Certainly that would be a prohibition on sale. It is zoned for rather specific uses right now and any purchaser would be cognizant of that fact.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, if I might, Mr. Chairperson, just for the Minister's information, there are variances that were gained on that site specifically for a clinic, but the actual zoning is a commercial zoning, a C-2 if I recall. The C-2 zoning is one of the more common commercial zonings in the city and does permit a myriad of uses.

If it were C-1 that is another story, but C-2 means it is not a local commercial, it is a general commercial and because of that there are certain businesses that are more desirable than others. For example, an office

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building would probably be more desirable than a car dealership, just as an example. So if the commission has in mind the sale, first of all, but secondly a sale to a specific buyer as opposed to putting it on the general market, all I was suggesting is that it could be advantageous to smoothing the way for the final purchase and the final approvals of whatever should come on the site and therefore hasten the sale.

* (1450)

So I threw that out to the Minister in the sense of trying to grease the skids, if you will, because I know sometimes these things can get caught up in local community politics, whereas if they are front-ended and there is dealing with the local community and the local representatives beforehand usually it will go through faster and usually with the support of the local people. I put that out in that the local neighbourhood is quite politicized toward this type of thing.

Mr. Orchard: Again, Mr. Chairman, fair advice. There is a rather fixed procedure for disposal of any Government property. First of all, a circulation through Government Services to ensure no one else within the service of Government has a need, Crown corporations, and then if decision is to dispose, sale and compliance with zoning, et cetera, et cetera. So I accept my honourable friend's advice, because he is providing us with an opportunity to avoid potential difficulties.

Mr. Taylor: On another matter entirely, I would like to talk about the multiyear expansion plans for the Misericordia Hospital. I personally have been involved as the councillor originally for Memorial Ward who helped put in place a public participation exercise for that project. I was instrumental in there being a traffic study for impacts from the relocated entranceway to the hospital and the new parking structure which now exists on the east side of Sherbrook. This project is very, very important to the whole west end of the city and in fact to the River Heights area.

There has been, as the Minister is probably well aware, a worry that the Misery would not get a high enough priority, would get any priority. In fact, there is the unfortunate track record that there was a proposal to actually take down that hospital, pull it out of service some years back, under the former Lyon administration.

In the announcement that came out from the Health Services Commission, there was in one announcement I saw no mention of a Misericordia but in a second one I saw there was an actual listing of what I thought was to be the program for this year, and it talks about new dietetics and storage area as part of the redevelopment plan and it has a gross number of \$5 million. I am aware of some of the detail of that project, and I was glad to see that in there.

My question then is, to confirm through the Minister himself, that the multiyear redevelopment plan of the Misericordia Hospital is in no way in question, that it is still on the books even though we have not had as many announcements about the "Misery" as we may have had about certain other facilities.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, in that first news bulletin there was so much good news they could not put all

the good news in it and through oversight Misericordia's project of course was not part of the first news story. Had I had the opportunity to explain the capital program on more relaxed circumstances, not meeting an eleven o'clock deadline Monday night after we left committee at 10, Misericordia would have been part of that but that was the part of the redevelopment for which architectural design was completed and could be fit into this year's construction project.

I just want to refer my honourable friend to Schedule III, Projects Approved for Architectural Planning. The major redevelopment, which is in the \$30-plus million range, is found as the second-last item, and that is ongoing in terms of architectural plans which are not completed. The three major redevelopments that we announced at Grace, Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface—the plans were complete so we could put them to tender.

I know the habit has been, in the past, to put a lot of projects into construction, when there is no intent of ever proceeding with the sort of—I suppose make everybody happy and be more things to more people.

I made a commitment in the last two capital budgets I tabled, that only those we expect to be able to put to tender within the next 12 months are going to be in the Approved for Construction. So when they are on this list it is not to make anybody feel good and feel happy that they are in the capital budget, it is because we intend to undertake them.

We simply were not able to do that at Misericordia on the larger redevelopment phase, we were in terms of the dietetics and the stores area—a very essential area of the hospital. It is a very crowded area, I have been down in there. It is a very constrained area of operation of the hospital.

Those plans were ready to go, so that achieved capital approval this year. We should have tenders out, depending on the phasing and whatnot, within the next number of months.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I appreciate that answer from the Minister. He can imagine my concern when last year I did not see any major capital dollars. It was basically the architectural dollars that ended up will be leading to this \$5 million, or roughly \$5 million capital, plus a little bit of clean up for the last tail off of construction of an earlier phase, and then not to have seen that first announcement in the newspaper, and my gosh, what is happening to Misericordia Hospital.

I understand the make-up of the \$5 million, actually the architectural money, is included in that. Is that correct, and that the actual dollars of capital construction will be a little under the five, say four and a half and some hundred thousands in the actual architectural final design? Is that the way it is going to break out?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, there is always a danger in putting rough figures in terms of project costs in place. There is the concern expressed by members of the commission that becomes a target for the competitive

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bid process, although, we have had ball-park figures float around before, and the construction industry of late has been very, very competitive.

If we could get a \$4 million bid, we would take that.

Mr. Taylor: The important part is to say there are two elements within that money. I do not need the exact breakdown. I have a fairly good idea of what it is. I want to make certain that the long-term final phase architectural planning is included in that. That is all I am looking for.

Mr. Orchard: In the \$5 million?

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Orchard: No. The long-term architectural planning is budgeted for under Schedule III.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. So that Schedule III, that I was shown, which does not have a monetary figure beside it, is a separate budgeting item. That money then is—we are going to be looking at final design in this fiscal year for the last phases of the hospital, or are you saying we are committed to it and it will progress over a number of years?

Mr. Orchard: The inclusion in Schedule III indicates that the architectural design is approved for the reconstruction phases involved there, and if that is achieved within 12 months and plans are developed in 12 months, then the money flows in 12 months.

If it happens to take, because of glitzes or delays, 15-18 months the approval is there to pay for it as completed.

* (1600)

Mr. Taylor: I understand what the Minister is saying. If the final design work straddles more than one fiscal year that is not a problem, the dollars are assured. All right, that leads to the—I see the Minister nodding his head—that leads to the next question. When I got involved in this thing, in the whole expansion in revamping that hospital, must have been back in '84-'85, and in any case, what happened was that the board of the hospital was looking at a five, maybe six-year process to do the whole thing. I am talking about actual years of construction, not the front-end planning of the hospital end before the commission was involved. Then it became seven and now we have been talking nine, and I remember a sod turning in '86, so my question to the Minister is, where we are at today, how many additional years are we looking at until the whole project is completed, as now contemplated without any additions?

Mr. Orchard: There are two things that are going to impact on it, but let me deal with the architectural planning aspect of it first. You are not going to commit anything to construction until you have the plans so you can get a handle on estimate construction cost, et cetera. As listed in Schedule III, it could be up to 18 months for completion of that and it is after that,

that one could presumably include Misericordia, that redevelopment in the Capital Program.

Now again, I think that is a decision that can be made, but of course it is dependant upon what the overall priorities in the system are. But it can be made as soon as the plans are made and the second criterion, which will impact on whether the decision can be made, is the phase that was announced in this capital budget for construction, has to be completed before you can commence with the second stage.

Those two factors will mitigate against when construction can begin and then once construction is in that last phase, you are probably looking at a two-year construction program because that is a major commitment of reconstruction.

Mr. Taylor: My understanding is that the monies set aside for the new dietetic stores receiving area, et cetera, it is contemplated probably a year's construction, and your official can probably contemplate it, but that is what I had heard through the hospital, about a year or so. The hope would be that that work would be done while the last of the design work is going on and the design work may exceed by a little bit, the construction.

The Minister is quite right in pointing out the need of following one phase after another, because it is a very complex refurbishing and improvement that is going on. You have to keep the facility operating at the same time, and having been involved with projects virtually as complex as this over the years in my former life, I am well aware that is not always easy to achieve. On an optimistic note then, we could look at something in the four- to five-year range to being complete. Would that be a fair assessment?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, on the two phases we are talking about, but then apparently there are further renovations after that, that may well—but for those two phases that we have been discussing this afternoon, four to five years would be a reasonable—because it appears as if construction announced last week and architectural planning have about the same time frame so that they can be close to complete at the same time, that given availability of resource, would allow Government then to commit construction about 18 months out it would appear.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, the original plans for the redevelopment of the Misericordia Hospital counted on, if I recall, about nine distinct phases over seven years. I may not be exactly on, but that is my recollection. Now that was for a complete refurbishing of the hospital, bringing all elements that were very old and not standard up to standards. It involved little true expansion, but it meant a facility that was functioning better, that was accessed better, that had its parking solved and had its own new physical plant over on the east side and connected by an overhead crossover.

The plans as they were laid out, for example—and I think the same officials might have been there in the 1986 sod turning which was the sod turning for the

initial phase—the physical plant. When would we likely see all those phases as they were contemplated then, and I am not talking about anything that might have been added on subsequently, can we could pick a target year that is reasonable?

Mr. Orchard: Apparently there were seven phases, three of which have been completed, there are four to go, one of them, of course, announced. Probably the fastest they could be done would be six years and of course that—again, not that I am throwing cold water on the prospects of the hospital. Any construction that moves to construction or any project as it moves to construction requires a pretty substantial commitment and that of course is made dependent on other requirements in the system and availability of operating funds two years down the road. Yes, if everything went according to schedule, probably six years would complete that redevelopment.

Mr. Taylor: My last question: within the Wolseley riding is the last standing part of the original Grace Hospital and it is between Arlington and Evanson, south of Preston Street. It was the most modern part and is the piece that is left. The original hospital is gone. That building is today occupied, it was hospital space converted to offices. It is occupied by Community Services and Economic Security.

My question is, does the Health Services Commission have any interest in using that building for health purposes? Has it contemplated anything along that line?

Mr. Orchard: We have office space, and I cannot give you the number, but on Evanson Street.

Mr. Taylor: Well, that is it.

Mr. Orchard: We are in there. As far as I know some of the Mental Health people are in there. I toured the place back 15 months, 18 months or 16 months ago. We are part of the staff complement on Evanson Street.

Mr. Taylor: Are there any plans to change the functions of that building as it now exists?

Mr. Orchard: None that I am aware of.

Mr. Taylor: The only question I have then is for the open space involved. That building had a substantial amount of space immediately north of it which was a parking lot followed by more land against Preston which was originally green space. In addition, kitty-corner to it is a substantial parking lot also publicly owned by the province. A few years back the green space that I mentioned adjacent to the first parking lot was paved over and the parking increased substantially.

In that there are virtually no housing lots available in there for either private or public housing, and at times it appears—and I am talking daytime now—that those parking lots when combined, the two of them together, are grossly underutilized. The question would be, in that a small piece of green space was taken from community use, because it was used as a little playing field for the local children, and turned into

parking, and yet there seems to be a surplus of parking, has any contemplation been given to the turning back of that land to be put into housing?

Mr. Orchard: No. My honourable friend is coming up with a rather interesting suggestion here. It may be the policy of my colleague of Government Services of charging for parking has greatly reduced the demand so that maybe we can get back into some green space, but look I cannot answer my honourable friend here.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, I put something on the table that is decidedly contemplative. It is not put there to trip up the Minister in any way, it is put forward strictly for consideration, planting a seed if you will with the officials. If there can be a review done of those two pieces of land, if the now enlarged parking lot against the old hospital is sufficient, then possibly the land to the northwest across the corner of Evanson and Preston could be considered a turning over for housing. I would ask if that consideration could be given.

Mr. Orchard: It is the right seed with the wrong people. The department would be the ones who occupy and part the building I think on that one, I am not certain but I think Government Services is the Government department most appropriate. I will raise the issue with my honourable friend because I sit next to him in Question Period and some days we have to have something to talk about.

* (1510)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Chairperson, there are a number of issues I would like to raise under the Health Services Commission. I unfortunately will not be here tonight. I will be raising a number of these and I would appreciate—I realize the Minister is wanting to go strictly line by line—perhaps in some cases if the answers cannot be provided at this point in time that they be provided at a later date. I do think actually in discussions with my colleague the Member for Kildonan that we should be dealing with MHSC today in its entirety if at all possible. Of course that will depend on the length of any questions and the length of any answers. I am just trying to give the Minister some indication of our intention.

I have a number of issues I would like to raise in this very important area, one of the obviously most important areas in Government generally. We have had a considerable amount of discussion up to this point in time about the capital project and I will not be getting into any further questions on that, although I am sure those would be continuing questions. One thing I think has been raised to some extent already has been the question of medical shortages particularly in terms of physicians. I just want to indicate and reference the fact that it is a major concern and we have spent a considerable period of time on that and I therefore will not be raising that at this point in time.

One thing I would like to ask though and I have perhaps indicated my intention in this area before and that is in regard to the nursing situation in Manitoba. A lot of concern has been expressed by nurses about

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working conditions, funding, and also the major turnover in terms of nurses. I know in my own local hospital, I was stunned to find out just recently that there has been a turnover of 50 percent in terms of nurses in that particular facility—50 percent, Mr. Chairperson, and that is in a one-year period. That is because nurses are leaving the province, and nurses are becoming burnt out and are leaving the profession. It is at all levels, people are going from full time to casual, and people who worked formerly part time or casual are no longer employed in the profession.

What I would like to ask the Minister is, first of all, what is the current situation in terms of nursing in this province and, in particular, in what areas is there a shortage of nursing? I realize that it varies across specialty and I am wondering if the Minister will provide any information on the current nursing situation in Manitoba.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, some specialties are experiencing recruitment difficulties but in general there is reasonable recruitment success across the system.

Mr. Ashton: Is it perhaps that recruitment is a greater problem in rural and northern areas rather than across the system itself? I know that has been expressed, not only in my only hospital in Thompson, but in terms of contact with other northern hospitals. Thus far, the situation has become almost manageable. Those are the words that were used by the person I was talking to just recently. There is a real concern that the turnover rate is increasing even though there does not appear to be a shortage. In fact, I am wondering if there is any information on the turnover rate, either from rural northern facilities or generally across the system.

Mr. Orchard: In terms of the nursing staff turnover, the facilities maintain those records for their information and we do not have them on file. Some of the specific disciplines, as I have said earlier, are experiencing recruitment difficulties.

Northern recruitment, from time to time, has been difficult although we have not been doing too badly there in comparison. I put this to my honourable friend in terms of relativity. One always has to be cautious when doing that because it does not really matter whether you are better than everybody else if you are short of nurses; that does not answer the problem. Our recruitment challenges are much easier to resolve than some of the other provinces, even Ontario is having a much more severe problem than we are. That, in part, in Manitoba, is because of I think our leadership, nationally, in terms of our training program. We have some very, very excellent nursing schools in the province that make our graduate nurses highly sought after, not only across Canada but indeed from time to time by U.S. recruitment drives. It is that excellence in training program and the desire to maintain a level of excellence and importance in nursing in the Province of Manitoba that I think is maybe giving us a somewhat easier task in recruitment than other jurisdictions are currently facing.

Mr. Ashton: I do feel there is going to be an increasing problem and I thought the recent report on nurse abuse

pinpointed a significant part of the problem. This is something that has been expressed to me by many people, many nurses, many people in the field itself, and that is the growing level of stress facing front line nurses—it is leading to a large number of people leaving the profession altogether.

I think there is also going to be a problem in terms of salaries. I know in talking to, once again, people in various different hospitals that we have lost a number of nurses, for example, to B.C. where wages are significantly higher following the most recent contract and that is over and above the loss to the United States. It has been a factor in the past and continues to be somewhat of a factor in terms of loss of particular nurses.

What I would like to ask in that vein is what action the department will be taking in response to the report on nurse abuse. A report I thought was an excellent report that documented what anyone who has any knowledge in the health care system probably has already known for many years. The figures were staggering, as many as 50 percent or more of nurses have faced some sort of verbal or indeed, physical abuse.

In fact, just this past week I talked to a number of nurses at the Health Sciences Centre and some of the stories they had to tell about the physical violence they were subjected to by patients was incredible. I know one of the concerns in the case of the emergency facilities was that there are really no adequate facilities for detention of disturbed patients and dangerous patients, and a significant portion of the emergency patient load is in that category. I would like to ask what action the department will be taking with regard to the whole issue of nurse abuse.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, let us deal with several of my honourable friend's issues inclusive of nurse abuse. The outmigration of nurses from Manitoba that my honourable friend refers to, to B.C. and to the southern states—I was pleased to listen to CBC Radio at 6:30 one morning last week I believe it was; there was a recruitment fair that came into Manitoba. My honourable friend might have heard the news article. The recruitment fair came in to fill vacancies and offer career opportunities out-of-province and into the U.S. and the organizers of that recruitment fair were disappointed in the turnout of Manitoba nurses who came to discuss out-of-province opportunities. It was something like 170 nurses came through. I should order the transcript of the news report because it was a very positive one in my estimation because we keep talking about how bad things are and how there is stress and there is abuse.

All of those issues are there, but the majority opinion from the nurses as expressed on that CBC Radio news article by the reporter interviewing those nurses was that there was a fair degree of satisfaction. They were there out of curiosity, and the level of follow-up from that recruitment fair was so low that the organizers were, I believe, contemplating not coming back to Manitoba because they did not think the effort was worthwhile. They were unenthused as recruiters at the

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satisfaction they found in the nurses who came to the recruitment fair.

* (1520)

I had the opportunity—and I should dig it up from my files and give it to my honourable friend—but there was a letter to the editor back about six or seven months ago that I recall from a Manitoba nurse who had taken up the opportunity of recruitment as offered by one of these recruitment fairs and ended up in Florida. She went down with the lure of sun and sand and surf and big dollars because that is what the recruitment effort made. The salary package, if my memory serves me correctly, was almost double what the hourly wage was in Manitoba, but the individual spent not quite a year down there and very soon returned to Winnipeg where we complain about the weather, where the salaries were lower, and where the surf is only good for July in Grand Beach, but we do have lots of sun.

The reason she came back is that, yes, the salaries were substantially higher, but there were no hours of work and she was on call virtually twenty-four hours a day, and you show up or you do not have a job and you could get a call with as little as a half day's notice that you have to be there, and it may only be for a four hour shift and not an eight hour shift. Working conditions were certainly not as promised and envisioned. The upshot of the letter to the editor was, thank goodness for a stable system in Manitoba that one can plan a career and plan a little bit of a family life around. She returned to Manitoba because the lure of the sun, the surf, the sand, and the dollar simply was not there.

I think that is something that is not said often enough because we can, whether it is a bargaining tactic or whether it is a management tool or whatever, talk ourselves into terribly adverse thoughts about how well it is that the opportunities are available in Manitoba, and in Canada for that matter.

I put those two things on the record for my honourable friend's knowledge because it was just last week that the trade fair found that their recruitment efforts may not be worth coming back to Manitoba in the future. There was not the interest in moving to the sun, the surf, and the sand.

In terms of the nurse abuse report, we have met with MARN and they have raised a number of issues, some of which are already in process and some of which we will be investigating process. To do what is do-able is the way we left it today at the meeting.

Mr. Chairman, there are again some concerns that have been around a long time in terms of any legislated solution. Of course the definition of abuse is rather difficult to come by. Physical aspects, no—there is the opportunity for physically violent individuals who are unable to control their activities, there is a process by which individuals can pursue charges if so abused. Some of the other aspects of the abuse as mentioned in the survey are more difficult to formulate into legislation. The legislated aspect of it is very much open to further discussion and investigation.

We believe there are some steps that administration and the commission can assist and co-operate with

MARN and the nursing profession in establishing protocols within management to support nurses who have been subject to abuse, and indeed to formalize and have a more uniform system within facilities of handling complaints about abuse that surface from time to time. As I indicated to my honourable friend those issues are very much ones which we have a desire to work with the professional association and nurses in Manitoba to do what is do-able. We are commencing that process in conjunction as I said with commission staff, Workplace Safety and Health representation, and the nursing profession.

Mr. Ashton: I am glad to see there will be some action taken. I think there is a real burnout in the system that is only going to grow worse, and that is one of the major contributors. What I would also like to ask the Minister, and I am not suggesting the information is available at this point in time, but I would also like to ask the Minister for some updated information in terms of nursing-patient ratios across the system and if he has a breakdown at individual hospitals.

I know one of the concerns has been an increased acuity of care being provided in our hospitals. There is a very real feeling, particularly in some of our northern and rural hospitals, that the level of acuity is not reflected in the nursing-patient ratio. That is also a concern in the city hospitals, as well, in terms of the general pressures. If the minister could provide that information, perhaps in written form, it would certainly be appreciated.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, the average of community hospitals paid a nursing-paid-hours-per-patient-day, I believe is the statistic, in '85-86 was eight; in '86-87 was 8.3; in '87-88 was 8.5; and continues at 8.5 in '88-89.

Mr. Ashton: If there is any detailed information by hospital perhaps the Minister could provide it. I am not suggesting we take the time of the committee at this point. I have some other questions. Before leaving the question in terms of nursing, I would also just like to flag a concern in terms of the progress of pay equity. I think that is going to be a very significant factor in terms of the working relationship with nurses in this province. I think it has been very important in terms of rectifying inequities in the wage system, and I am concerned about the apparent impasse currently in terms of the health care system in terms of pay equity. While there had appeared to be hope of an agreement between management and the staff involved, in this case dealing with a lot of nurses, there now seems to be something of a roadblock in the way of that proceeding. I am quite concerned about that because I think that is an important issue. I reference nurses, but it is an important issue for the health care system because 84 percent of the health care work force is female, so the progress on pay equity is absolutely vital in this regard.

The Minister may have some comments. I am sure the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) has questions in this area. I just wanted to identify that as a concern. Perhaps if the Member for Kildonan wishes to pursue

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that further I am sure the Minister will have a statement on the Government's position, but I did not want to deal with that.

I wanted to move in terms of issues though into a couple of other areas, first of all in terms of the bed situation, what I guess in the field is called "situation block beds." I realize the Minister has indicated that a number of decisions will be made by the Health Advisory Network which will impact on this, but I would like to ask the Minister specifically how many patients are currently in the system in hospitals awaiting personal care home replacements.

* (1530)

Mr. Orchard: We will get that last piece of information for my honourable friend.

Mr. Chairman, on the issue of pay equity, The Pay Equity Act requires in the 23 facilities a 1 percent annualized commitment to pay equity. That equates to \$18 million in the 23 health care facilities that are identified in The Pay Equity Act which I believe was passed unanimously in the House four years ago. The Government has budgeted and set aside last year and has funds budgeted this year for the implementation of the pay equity, according to the Act, to the target of the \$18 million. The first and a subsequent proposal on the table has involved the commitment of \$24 million.

That is above the legislative requirement set as a target for those facilities, which all other groups who have complied with pay equity have been able to achieve. In the interests of pay equity, we have made the decision and I am sure my honourable friend would concur that the legislation and the guidelines of the legislation ought to be followed. To exceed the guidelines for a group would in fact make a mockery of pay equity for those who have complied with the legislation and the 1 percent guideline. They could rightfully come back to Government and say, well, we would like to renegotiate ours now that you have in fact used a 1.4 percent figure to implement The Pay Equity Act and exceeded your own legislation.

That would be a very nice thing to do, a very generous thing to do, but my honourable friend would not moderate his daily requests for programs in northern Manitoba that cost money. My honourable friend would not moderate his requests for all other demands in the system that he thinks are appropriate.

Therefore, I and Government thought it prudent that when every other organization has implemented pay equity following the 1 percent guideline as legislated—and I might remind my honourable friend that the legislation was posed by a Government of which he was a backbencher and I presume he supported that legislation, as did his 11 colleagues currently in the House. I do not know of any intention that my honourable friends had that the guideline would be 1 percent for some as the legislation stated, and more for others. I think they put it down, the House passed it and accepted it as a guideline that would be used for the implementation of pay equity, and that certainly is what we intend to do. As I have indicated, we have

money budgeted in this year's Estimates and we have retroactive funds budgeted and in place for payment when a decision and an agreement is reached.

Mr. Chairman, we have 385 individuals panelled and awaiting placement in Winnipeg hospitals as of March 31, 1989. I believe we have got some other figures that are more current, but that is as of March 31, 1989.

Mr. Ashton: As I said I am sure the matter of pay equity will be discussed. I do not think we generally as a committee have the time to really discuss the length that we would like to. I do know that the whole question of whether the proposals were within the guidelines is in dispute. There have been a number of proposals in terms of settlement that have been made, the latest of which would be within the guidelines. I would like to stress again the importance in this area of attempting to reach a decision on this that will move pay equity forward. I mean it is a very important sector, as I said, very important to women.

In terms of the hospital bed situation, I would once again point to the impacts that this is having on the system, and this has been raised in the context of various capital decisions. It is something that is clogging the arteries of the health care system in the Province of Manitoba in terms of personal care homes, placements, in terms of the whole extended care question, which we raised in the context of the capital budget, and it is certainly an area that I think we in this committee will be discussing next year. Hopefully, there will be some improvements in the general area of rationalizing that system. Hopefully, we will have a Health Advisory Network report by then. I like to be optimistic on that and hopefully we will have some decisions made by the Minister, because it is a major concern in terms of the hospital system.

Moving to another area I just wanted to ask the Minister, in terms of the Pharmacare Program, what the status is in terms of the card proposal and in particular some modelling along the lines of Saskatchewan, that has been one suggested model for it? I would like to ask if there has been any progress on this.

I do know that when the resolution came up in the Legislature, the Minister was somewhat skeptical about this particular proposal, but I do not believe he has ever rejected it. I would like to ask if there has been any further developments, and has the Minister made a decision not to proceed with the card. If not, when does he anticipate a decision on whether to proceed or not?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend, first of all let me just provide another piece of information in terms of the panelled patients occupying Winnipeg hospital beds. Yes, that is causing some difficulties, but there are a number of areas of opportunity inclusive of new personal care home beds to be opened in the near future, as well as commissioning of the 85 beds at Deer Lodge Hospital. There is a great deal of opportunity to relieve the system within the next number of months and that will be very beneficial given the 385 beds that are being occupied within the Winnipeg hospital system.

I just want to indicate to my honourable friend that in 1985 there were 458 beds occupied by panelled patients in the Winnipeg hospitals, 455 in 1986, of the same date and time. Now naturally they fluctuate up and down, but since 1986 there has been a steady decline in those numbers. My honourable friend might recall in 1985-86 there was, needless to say, substantially more concern about direction. That spurred some of the announcements that are currently outstanding on construction of extended treatment beds, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend ought to carefully read my remarks on the Pharmacard debate in Private Members' Hour. I did not indicate any apprehension about plastic card technology and its utility in the Manitoba health care system. My honourable friend might recall that resolution was twofold: it was suggesting a plastic card type technology, but more importantly it was suggesting that seniors receive absolutely free drugs and that was a significant cost to the system, if my memory serves me correctly, upwards of \$8 million to \$9 million.

I posed then and I pose again to my honourable friend the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I believe whose Party proposed the resolution, if you have a spare \$8 million to \$9 million in the health care system, is it most effectively used providing absolutely free pharmaceuticals to senior citizens in the Province of Manitoba? In trying to come to a decision of that—because I will tell you that our provincial Party's position is no, that is not the most effective use of \$8 million or \$9 million.

* (1540)

The reason we say that is not that we do not want to assist senior citizens; that is in no way affecting the decision. What is affecting the decision is attending conferences of Ministers of Health from across Canada who have those kinds of free programs and find that those free pharmaceutical programs are one of the most abusive programs on their seniors that there is. Seniors are, because they are free, receiving far too many prescription drugs, an issue that has been identified as a health issue across Canada. My honourable friend's proposal was twofold: plastic card technology, free pharmaceuticals.

The free pharmaceuticals aspect is not one that we concur with as a sound health policy for seniors in Manitoba, and I am willing to take my honourable friend's position if they were to do that into the election and argue very effectively that would not be the best place to put \$8 million of new resource to assist seniors in Manitoba, there are far more effective places we can use that \$8 million.

So when my honourable friend says I had some apprehension—the apprehension on the plastic card technology was because of its countering proposal, to make pharmaceuticals free to senior citizens, that is where I am extremely apprehensive because I do not believe it would increase the health status of seniors in Manitoba. In fact every indication, and every piece of advice we get from other jurisdictions, is that it has

exactly the opposite as an effect on health status among seniors.

Second, in terms of the plastic health card technology, we established a working group in January of this year and they have undertaken some discussions with Saskatchewan to find out what was good, bad or what would be changed, in terms of the implementation program of their program. We are in discussion as to how we might implement the program in Manitoba, but there are a number of steps that we are going through prior to making that kind of a decision.

First and foremost of course is what will be the cost of implementation of that system. Once establishing the cost we want to have some assurance that the increased efficiency that the plastic card technology can have in the system is in fact achieved and realized, because all too often we brought in new technologies, which supposedly were to, quote: save the system money, and we have never achieved those savings. We have merely had a simple add on and cost to the system, which is driving the costs up. If it continues, it will deny individual service in health care down the road.

So costs first, benefits second, and in that regard early next year the province is hosting a Plastic Card Technology Conference in Manitoba, where we will have access to actually the very state of the art systems in Manitoba, which we believe will be most instrumental and most helpful in achieving us to come to the decision-making path that we are currently working on.

Mr. Ashton: In terms of panelled patients, I am just wondering if the Minister could indicate the breakdown between those in the community waiting for personal care home placement and those in hospitals. The Minister is quite correct that from 1985 on there was a major drop, particularly in the community in terms of the number of patients awaiting a placement. I would just like to ask the latest information that there is.

Mr. Orchard: As of March 31 again, and those are the numbers I will give to my honourable friend, there were 1,234 individuals panelled for and awaiting placement in personal care homes. That is up slightly from the same time in 1988, where it was 1,185, but, 1988 was a culmination of five years of successive declines in the number of panelled patients.

For instance, and all of these figures are point in time numbers as of March 31 in each year, in 1984 the number was 1,690 in the province; 1985, 1,670; 1986, 1,510; 1987, 1,336; and a low in 1988 of 1,185; and then up slightly again in 1989.

I say to my honourable friend that this is what is indeed of interest to us because the criterion for placement in personal care homes has remained consistent throughout that five-year time span. The same panels, the same make-up, the same process, is involved, not the same individuals, because each panelling group is made up of course of different individuals.

The criterion they use has remained the same. The decline—there are two schools of thought and this is important to planning capital decisions. There are two

schools of thought in the personal care home field, one being that we need to build substantially more beds to relieve all of the pressures, and that is a school of thought held by a number of individuals.

The second school of thought, and I have to admit it is a minority school of thought by professionals who are involved in the system, is that they are saying, no, we have modest additional requirements for personal care home beds, but there are several mitigating factors at work in the system.

First of all is demographics and when they will peak and how our bed supply will be able to handle them.

Second is that other programs, other than personal care homes, appear to be having a positive effect on the health status of senior Manitobans; for instance, home care; for instance, the support services for seniors; and hopefully, and this is really the hopeful one, that our health promotion efforts in some of the enhanced encouragement of activity amongst seniors, the walking, the fitness clubs, and the senior citizens activities in the various centres throughout the province may just be providing us with a healthier status amongst our seniors.

If that is the case, and that is explaining the five-year decline in panelling and a levelling off of application for home care, then I think we can all take a great deal of comfort and really joy if that in fact is part of the reason that health promotion is finally having some impact on the health status of Manitobans, particularly senior Manitobans.

We simply do not have a sophisticated enough analysis system to do that, to make that analysis. That is, I tell my honourable friend, one of the greatest selling points of plastic card technology, its ability, if we can craft the system properly, to deliver that kind of health statistic outcome. We already have one of the most sophisticated systems in Canada through 20-plus years of commission statistics, but plastic card technology has the opportunity to make it even better for us.

Mr. Ashton: Certainly in the committee we will be watching this area fairly closely. I think it is an area of major concern and we will be watching this not just in terms of upcoming Estimates, next year's Estimates, but in terms of throughout the year.

I have a number of other questions. First of all, I would like to ask the Minister as to the Government's exact policy in terms of both layoffs and in terms of contracting out?

The Minister has talked about attempting to establish a partnership with the providers of health care in this province. I can tell the Minister that there is a great deal of concern amongst many of those providers about the apparent shift in policy of this Government towards allowing first of all, contracting out and second of all, allowing layoffs. There already have been a number of examples I know in terms of layoffs in terms of the Brandon situation in particular. There is a great deal of concern in the health care system from individuals about this particular policy. I know it is something that is of a particular concern of course of the unions, but also it is a grass-roots concern that comes up.

One of the questions that has been raised is the impact this will have on that partnership that the Minister wants to establish, and I think the partnership is important. I think the grass-roots providers of medical care are the key players in the system or should be the key players in the system. I would like to ask the Minister for exactly what the policy is in regard to contracting out and layoffs?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend uses a very, very bad example when he talks about layoffs in terms of the Rideau Park circumstance in Brandon. He uses a bad example because we did everything possible over approximately a year of Government to try to come to an equitable solution to the fiasco of Rideau Park that we inherited, and I stress "inherited" to my honourable friend, because what had happened is that, and we go can go through it line-by-docket, and I can take the rest of this afternoon to point out how many times my honourable friends in Government prior to May of 1988 were warned by the unions that what they were doing in staffing Rideau Park was going to cause them problems. My honourable friends in the NDP blundered ahead without proper consultation, without the proper partnership that he just talked about with the union movement.

* (1550)

When the issue came to a head was when the certification between the two facilities ground to a halt as the unions predicted to the Government would happen, and a Labour Board decision confirmed the union's position. We had part of the staff from Brandon Mental Health Centre moving with the patients, as was the original concept and design. All of the patients moved. Part of the staff moved. The other part of the staff would not move, pending settlement of the union dispute that the Labour Board confirmed the union was correct when they warned the NDP Government what was going to happen. So as a result you have got a facility with patients in it and not enough staff. The Government was forced, the NDP was forced to hire staff to carry out the patients while they settled the issue and they never did settle the issue.

Now the NDP was prepared to carry on at a time when dollars are one of the scarcest commodities in the health care field paying staff in two different locations, double staff. Brandon Mental Health Centre staff that were to transfer down were being paid at Brandon Mental Health Centre; staff positions that were not filled by the transfer from Brandon Mental Health Centre were hired and paid. We had two staff for every position that was open. We tried through attrition, we tried through any number of methods over a full year to come to a reasoned solution of that and were unable to, and hence had to issue layoff notices. The Rideau Park issued layoff notices to a number of staff. Subsequent to that, it is my understanding that only one individual is still without a permanent job.

Now that issue of layoffs is not a good issue for my honourable friend the NDP Health Critic, because there was no layoff of any individual permanently in a job for which there was funding provided. What the layoff was for was because my honourable friends in the NDP

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did not take the advice of the union leaders who told them they were going to get into a fiasco over Rideau Park the way they were going. They would not listen, the Labour Board concurred with the union leadership, the fiasco was visited upon those staff who were double-hired and we had to clean up an unfortunate situation that we inherited from the NDP. My honourable friend might want to get into Pine Falls because that is a similar type of circumstance.

So, Mr. Chairman, the issue of layoffs is not an issue other than when facilities have changed and there have been errors in overstaffing as a result of those errors. That has been the unfortunate circumstance twice now.

Now in terms of contracting out, yes, there is the opportunity for facilities to contract out services, an opportunity that did not exist for a number of years. Let me indicate to my honourable friend that when facilities contract out, the new provider of service is encouraged and often does take on the staff who were currently performing that job, so there is no loss of employment in a majority of cases, but the reason for allowing the contracting out is to increase the flexibility within the system.

We ask and we continue to ask the major facilities to operate within a budget, no deficits, a policy that was put in place I believe in late 1986 or early 1987, a policy that we happen to believe brings some semblance of management systems to bear on the health care system. If we say on the one hand that you must manage within budget and not have a deficit, I found it a little ironic to also say to them that when facilities are identified, alternate ways to deliver services guaranteeing quality of care and allowing those services to be delivered more economically, that we were speaking out of both sides of our mouths if we said, you had to be within budget but you could not manage the budget.

So we have allowed that management flexibility with constant work with the facilities to assure that present employees are treated equitably by the new provider of service. In the majority of cases that has been the case.

Mr. Ashton: I will be more than glad to debate the policies in terms of layoffs, in terms of contracting out, but the fact is there has been a change in the policy and the Minister knows that. The change has been that there is no longer a no-layoff policy and there is no longer a no-contracting-out policy. We can get into discussion of specific cases which the Minister referred to, as I said. Unfortunately, we do not have the time to during the sitting of this committee, but I am very concerned in that area and I would like to flag it because I think it is a very important matter.

I want to move on to another area though and I want to ask a couple of questions—

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Orchard: No, I am answering some of your allegations. You indicate that there is a layoff policy in place.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Orchard: There is no layoff policy that can be made—

Mr. Chairman: Order. Order, please. On a point of order?

Mr. Ashton: No. I am just wondering if this is a point of order because I would like—

Mr. Chairman: No. I recognized the Honourable Minister to respond to your question.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Chairperson, I was recognized—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: I do not think it is in order for the Chairperson to interrupt if the Member has the floor to allow a Minister to—and he did not say he was replying to a question, he said he was replying to an allegation.

I stated an opinion, I did not ask him a question. I asked him previously; the Minister had more than ample opportunity to put the views of this Government on the record. I do not think it is in order for me to be prevented from continuing into another area.

Mr. Chairman: I apologize if I interrupted you. I assumed you had finished your questioning and I was going to let the Minister respond.

Mr. Ashton: I had indicated there was no question, I indicated we would be more than happy to discuss this at a later point in time. We are short of—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Thompson, with his question.

Mr. Ashton: I did want to move it down. I am not trying to frustrate this committee's function, but we have indicated to the Minister we are going to try and deal with MHSC today. I think the Minister realizes we are short of time in this area. I did not want to move into another area.

An important area, and that is in terms of—

Mr. Chairman: Excuse me then, have we passed administration? No? We are still on administration? The Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: I think I have indicated that I would not be here tonight and rather than hold up various items I would ask basically that if there was no problem with the Members of the committee that I could ask a number of questions in different areas. If the Minister does not have the staff resources present to deal with it, I am quite willing to have answers provided at a later point in time. This is to allow for the committee to deal with MHSC as expeditiously and thoroughly as possible. I had a question in terms of the Northern Patient Transportation Program next if I might, Mr. Chairperson.

* (1600)

I wanted to ask the Minister in terms of the NPTP, as it is known in the North, I notice that the budget as I take it has essentially been drafted on the assumption of a similar number of referrals as last year.

A number of concerns have been expressed about particular criteria which date back I guess to the original date of the program in 1977. I will give you an example of a case that I became aware of recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Buck are residents of Thompson, are a Native couple, Mrs. Buck does not speak any English, Mr. Buck speaks a limited amount of English. He was referred to Winnipeg—this is part of the Air Ambulance I am talking about in this case, I am dealing with the two jointly. He is referred to Winnipeg, his wife was not allowed to accompany him unless she paid her own way. He ended up in Winnipeg, they sent actually the mother of the family and his wife down, and ended up being in the facility for about ten days and then being discharged without any way of getting back to Thompson. In fact he was—as I said he spoke a limited amount of English—we ended up with a situation where it created a great deal of trauma for the family. I will be writing to the Minister on the specifics of this case. I do not expect the Minister to be aware of the specifics at this point in time, I realize that.

(Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

What I would like to ask the Minister is whether he would consider reviewing the current criteria in terms of escorts, because in this case I think it was a highly reasonable request that Mrs. Buck be allowed to accompany Mr. Buck. Mr. Buck by the way had never been in a hospital in his life and by reports from the family it was a very traumatic experience, especially with the prospect of not being accompanied by his wife, especially compounded by the language problems.

I raise this because it has been raised in a number of other cases in terms of escorts. I would like to ask if there would be any consideration for a more flexible policy in that regard.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I am informed that where an interpreter is essential that cost of transportation is covered. We will need the details on this particular case because maybe that is Northern Medical Services, I do not know the genesis behind it. So we are prepared to investigate that for my honourable friend.

I want to go back a moment to the layoffs that my honourable friend says there is a layoff policy, et cetera,

et cetera. This layoff policy has always been in place in conjunction with the negotiated contracts that are in place.

My honourable friend mentioned Rideau Park as one of the layoffs that have occurred, but my honourable friend wants to continue not to tell Manitobans the facts on the reason for the layoffs at Rideau Park. There were two people being paid to do one job. The NDP policy would be to double-staff every position in the health care system. We cannot afford that. We worked diligently to avoid layoffs, and my honourable friend's policy would then have it to pay two people to do one job. That is not reasonable public policy.

Mr. Ashton: As I said earlier, I would love to debate this with the Minister. It is just a question of time. I would raise a concern generally in terms of the Northern Patient Transportation Program about the need for a review of the program. As I said, it is an excellent program that was established in 1977. I think we have seen a need in terms of both the Air Ambulance and the Northern Patient Transportation Program, the fact that you have a developing need in northern Manitoba.

One of the concerns for example that has been expressed is the impact of the budget on individual decisions. The concern has been expressed by both physicians and patients to myself that what happens is fiscal pressures have led to people who on previous occasions have been sent by air, for example, are being sent by bus, the basic policy being ground transportation unless there are medical complications. There has been a fair amount of confusion on this I might add because doctors in particular have indicated differing stories to patients. I think it is something that needs to be clarified even in terms of communication.

I do think that the program is in need of review. There are other areas for example, and I have written to the Minister in a case involving a teenager in my constituency who is being sent to Winnipeg for what is essentially jaw reconstruction surgery. Because it is not classified as being an insurable service, even though to my mind it has major medical implications, she is having to be sent for both the procedure and also for checkups at the expense of her parents. I might add that right now with all the fuss about the Northern Tax Allowance being taken away by the federal Government, it is a matter of some sensitivity to say the least.

I do believe there are a number of borderline cases that are worthy of review in the same way for example that a review took place of the policy of transportation by air ambulance of individuals outside of the province. I remember that very well, because one of the key factors in having that policy changed just over a year and a half, two years ago, was a case in my own constituency where an individual had to be sent to Ontario for a heart transplant that was not available in Manitoba. Initially the family was told they would have to foot the entire \$8,000 bill. There was a review of that policy and it was changed by the previous Government.

It is in that spirit that I would like to ask if the Minister would be willing to look at an overall review of the

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Northern Patient Transportation Program and to a lesser extent the Air Ambulance Program, which seems to be functioning far more smoothly, to ensure that the criteria are in keeping with the current circumstances in northern Manitoba. As I said, this is based I assume on a budget of the same number of referrals. I am not sure if that is going to be an actual reflection of the need. It may be a reflection of whether people pass the criteria, but I do believe there is additional need out there both in terms of the existing criteria and in terms of some changes that I think are probably necessary.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Air Ambulance Program has been in existence for a number of years and there have been successive improvements to that service. For instance when we came into Government in 1977 there was a Mitsubishi MU-2 used for the medical evacuation aircraft. That aircraft, the vernacular was that it experienced a heavy landing. It crashed and broke a wing off in other words, for the layman. Fortunately nobody was injured, but that plane was out of service and as a consequence in 1980 I purchased the Cessna Citation on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba to provide faster, safer patient transportation. Subsequently, that was upgraded to Citation 2 by the next administration with full medical capability in the Air Ambulance. That is a very, very expensive service. Any air transportation, any air evacuation or medical evacuation is very expensive compared to ground transportation.

I sense from my honourable friend's question that he questions why people would be put on a bus or another form of ground transportation when the Air Ambulance is available. Those never were for every patient, and the criteria for use of those have not changed. Where a person can be transported safely by ground without medical problems by ground transportation, that is what is provided under the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Only emergency cases, and there are some fairly stringent criteria to make sure that you are only using the medical evacuation aircraft in times of genuine medical need.

I think if my honourable friend reflects on the reason for that policy he will concur. You cannot have your most sophisticated air ambulance out of service for what could be accomplished through ground transportation, because you never know when you are going to need it for the evacuation of a very sick child.

That was a subject of a controversy that his colleague, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), brought up in the House, where he made the accusation that we refused a woman air transportation when the circumstance was quite adequate to provide Canadian's regular scheduled flight out of Flin Flon, and the Medivac was used for two other patients, one of them a critically ill child out of Churchill and the other an urgently ill individual out of Thompson, both of whom required the Air Ambulance.

The Air Ambulance is simply not for every patient. That is why there is a \$3 million commitment to Northern Patient Transportation Program to provide support for transportation to needed medical services, primarily in

Winnipeg, but more importantly to do it economically, so that we can afford to continue the Air Ambulance Program which, if one looks at the funding, you will see that it was budgeted at 2.3 million last year, and has increased to 5.4 million for this year currently. It soon will have increases annually equivalent to the entire Northern Patient Transportation Program. That is because of use and utilization.

The criteria are not unfairly administered. Those are very, very difficult decisions often to make, but I am confident from the investigation I have done that the staff involved do a very professional and competent job of making those decisions for the provision of safe and effective patient evacuation and transportation.

Mr. Ashton: Actually, I think the Minister was referring to the ambulance program there, not the Air Ambulance in terms of the figures that were quoted, but I am not talking about so much the criteria between ground and the Air Ambulance. I am not suggesting that the Air Ambulance be used for sending patients or anything other than in a critical situation. However, the program, the Northern Patient Transportation Program, sends people either by bus, by other form of ground transportation or by air, by regular scheduled carrier, and the concern has been expressed in terms of people who on other occasions have been sent by air because of medical complications, who are then sent by bus.

The other concern is in terms of people who are not eligible whatsoever. I have correspondence to the Minister of the one case, and I will be pursuing that, because I believe in that case there are medical reasons why this should be covered under the Northern Patient Transportation Program. I am talking about the criteria within the Northern Patient Transportation Program, both in terms of who is eligible, who goes by bus and who goes by air.

* (1610)

One other question related to Northern Patient Transportation that I would like to raise is—it is more of a point actually—one of the factors of concern to hospitals in northern Manitoba is the fact that, by providing an increased number of services here in our communities, we would be in a situation where we can actually reduce the burden on the Northern Patient Transportation Program. I know, for example, the Thompson hospital recently submitted a proposal on a new ultrasound machine because the current machine is very heavily booked. I know a number of the applications to the Health Services Commission have not been accepted and I would raise this because I think there is the concern among local hospitals, the very real feeling that more services could be provided on a regional basis rather than strictly out of Winnipeg which would have a couple of advantages.

First of all, it would make it far more convenient for people to attend to that medical treatment. They will not have to go through the transportation factor. They also do not lose time off, work which is the current situation, and in many cases too it is quite an upheaval in terms of the family situation. Also in terms of the medical system there are very good suggestions that

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an overall saving can be brought together by the medical system and I would raise that concern.

I also just want to very briefly—and if the Minister wants to respond to it, I just have a couple of other brief points, then I know the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) will be asking a number of questions, and say that there are a number of other issues that I think need to be looked at obviously in terms of the bed closures, whether it be the holiday bed closures or temporary bed closures to determine what the current situation is, what the current policy is.

A concern has been expressed about the impact on the system I know by many people in the hospitals involved with the holiday bed closures, for example. I am not suggesting they did not occur before. I want to make that clear. What I am suggesting is—and this is what people are saying in the system—there is very real concern that there are going to be problems related to those holiday bed closures because of the waiting lists, because of the general pressure on the system.

There is another area I think that also has to be raised and that is the current situation in terms of waiting lists for certain specialized procedures, and I know this is one area where information has been limited in the past. The Minister talked about a better information base. I believe there is quite a great deal of inconsistency between various hospitals in terms of measuring the waiting lists for various different procedures making it very difficult for the system to make logical decisions, and I would raise that concern both in terms of the waiting lists for specific procedures and just the general informational question.

There are other areas I know that are continuing to be raised. In my discussions with people there has been talk of a number of new surgical procedures, new drugs that are available. These are items that I will be pursuing with the Minister in terms of direct correspondence because I realize in many cases very difficult decisions are involved in terms of assessing the value of those procedures.

Specific concerns have been related to overcrowding in various hospitals. I know St. Boniface has been particularly vocal in this regard in Winnipeg. I know a number of rural and northern facilities have expressed concerns about peak patient loads being very high and the effect that has on patient care.

A number of other issues too certainly need to be raised. One thing I am fairly pleased with is that at least for the year and a half this Minister has been in Government there has been a rejection of user fees. I think that is something that is fairly positive and we will certainly be looking for a continuance of that policy. I think that is something that, though it will continue to be raised, I do not want to get into debate with the Liberals about user fees, we can continue that at some other point in time, but I did want to indicate that we will be watching that area.

So if the Minister does have any information on the points that I raised I certainly would appreciate it, but I do want to put a number of these items on the record. If the committee proceeds fairly well this afternoon and

tonight we may actually be able to wrap up MHSC by tonight and perhaps with closing comments tomorrow, so that being the case I want to put some of these items on the record as being concerns and perhaps the Member for Kildonan will have detailed questions in a number of these areas, but I did want to raise these items.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, first of all, in terms of air ambulance versus Northern Patient Transportation services, those are local decisions made by health care professionals as to which mode of patient transportation is used. I should have kept a little list of my honourable friend's questions, but I am intrigued with the NDP's new-found concern over Christmas bed closings, a phenomenon that has been going on in the system since 1972 in some of the facilities.

An Honourable Member: 1972?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, 1972, and a minimum four years to five years in the other facilities, but of course either through lack of knowledge in the system or the knowledge that maybe they might get a headline in the media for which there is some desperation exuding from time to time in the Members of the Opposition that the issue was brought up, it was with some embarrassment I think that the Leader of the Second Party found out that this was a rather routine matter and not the kind of crisis issue they are trying to paint it into being.

I appreciate my honourable friend's concern that he expressed about waiting lists and the impact it will have on the system. I know my honourable friend expressed those concerns in all the years he was in Government and Christmas bed closures were there. He just indicated to me that, yes, he did, that he had those kinds of concerns when he was Government and there were Christmas bed closures.

I find the issue to be an interesting one that there, all of a sudden now in 1989, is going to be with temporary closures over Christmas because of management patient flow decisions—in other words, fewer people with elective surgeries, et cetera, people on holidays, that all of a sudden now in 1989 that is a subject or an indication of something wrong in the health care system but yet it was not, since 1972 when my honourable friends had the opportunity to be Government.

I simply say to my honourable friend that there has been no basic change in the approach to Christmas bed closures. They cannot close for budgetary reasons, it must be for operational reasons and we have received some report back that is in fact the case. In fact, at Victoria where the closures have been ongoing apparently since 1972, three of five anesthetists are going to be on vacation over the Christmas season. There is some difficulty in performing elective surgery if you do not have your full complement of anesthetists, so that is apparently a rather normal Christmas season closing there.

Concordia's closings are for, in effect, three working days. Out of the nine that they are proposing to close,

two of the nine days are Saturdays, two are Sundays, one is Christmas and one is Boxing Day, so that in effect they are closing for three working days. Again I would suspect that surgery slates decrease according to patient desire and staff availability but in discussions with the executive director there is no budgetary desire to close those beds. It is not for budgetary reason.

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): I would like to ask the Minister a number of questions following up on our discussion of a few weeks ago dealing with numbers of Americans using Canadian, or Manitoba specifically, facilities. I understand from our previous discussion on this issue the Minister advised me that there is an agreement dealing with facilities near the border.

* (1620)

I am just wondering if perhaps the Minister could provide me with some information on that and perhaps dealing with the number of Americans using the services, how often they are used, how often Canadians use the American services and any costing arrangements for that. If the Minister feels that he would be able to provide me with a written text or a photocopy of some material on that, I would be prepared to accept that material instead of taking valuable time during Estimates.

Mr. Orchard: The arrangement we have is actually not the arrangement that I thought my honourable friend was referring to. We have an arrangement for our Manitobans in the southeast corner to access the Minnesota hospital at Roseau for which we budget in terms of—

An Honourable Member: The Sprague area and all that.

Mr. Orchard: Yes. We do have apparently some American patients coming into Vita, but not that many.

Mr. Minenko: Perhaps this is all pursuing to some sort of an agreement between the Americans and ourselves. I am just wondering if the Minister or his staff could undertake to provide me with some specifics on that within a week or so. I would be pleased to receive that information at that time.

The other questions I would ask the Minister is, outside of the arrangements that have been made, dealing with towns and villages close to the border on both sides of the border, how often do hospital facilities and other medical service facilities in Manitoba, specifically Winnipeg and some of the larger centres, see American patients for other than emergency services?

Mr. Orchard: We can get those figures and give my honourable friend some idea. I am not familiar with the extent.

Mr. Minenko: If the Minister could advise about what time frame I may expect some of that information? Would it be a week or 10 days?

Mr. Orchard: We should be able to get it within then. We may have it now.

Mr. Minenko: Well, I can just get a photocopy of it.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

Mr. Orchard: Maybe you may.

Mr. Minenko: Okay.

Mr. Orchard: We have, in a six-month period, April 1 to September 30, of this year, 48 cases from the United States—I cannot tell you where from this, these are just global cases—involving 202 days in in-patient services for which we billed \$91,406.95. We charged the Manitoba rate, plus 30 percent or more depending on the procedure. So the assurance is by doing that we are not having Manitoba or Canadian taxpayers subsidizing medical services to Americans or anybody else from out of country.

Mr. Minenko: What percent of those incidents—and I presume 202 is the number of days spent in hospital—how many are as a result of an emergency?

Mr. Orchard: I do not know whether we can easily pull that figure. You mean accident victim, for instance. I do not know whether we can easily pull that out, but certainly it would be a part of it.

Mr. Minenko: The reason why I am asking is: I have heard from other provinces that Americans have sometimes looked at elective surgery, matters that perhaps are not necessarily covered under their own plans, whatever State they may be under or private plans, and have come to use Canadian facilities for very much elective surgery or cosmetic surgery, things of that nature, which cost them much less than it would cost the American to have the same type of surgeries or services performed in the States.

Has the Minister's office or staff tracked that kind of information and if they could provide me with some information about that, how many people are coming to Canada from various states in the U.S. for elective surgery?

Mr. Orchard: The only information that I have that is readily available is the 48 cases, 48 individuals with 200 hospital beds and the charging out accordingly. We do have in Manitoba for instance out-patient plastic surgery capabilities that do offer services even to Manitobans of non-insured cosmetic surgical procedures. Those individuals could quite easily provide those services to Americans, but again they are non-insured services, so the taxpayer, the individual, the patient is picking up whatever the charges are, and we do not even have any record of that. That may be—

An Honourable Member: So that would be a private contract?

Mr. Orchard: Right. Indeed they offer that service to Manitobans for something that is not covered as an insured service like cosmetic surgery for beautification purposes if you will. We simply have no way of knowing what is being done in terms of Manitoban or Canadian demand in Manitoba for that or any potential American

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patients that come up to have that done because they are not insured services.

Mr. Minenko: Perhaps then if I could just sum up, to end this discussion, that the Minister will provide within seven or ten days a breakdown of some of this information dealing with elective or possibly emergency services, if that information is readily available, and that any Americans using hospital facilities or other diagnostic facilities in Manitoba are charged the Manitoba rate plus 30 percent. That is correct then?

Mr. Orchard: Yes. They are charged Manitoba rates plus a 30 percent surcharge and the cost of any prosthesis that they may need as a result of their visit to a Manitoba hospital.

Mr. Minenko: I bring this to the Minister's attention as a constituent of mine that I had met at the door several months ago had mentioned this to me as he was wondering about this.

The other area I would like to ask the Minister some questions on is, since the Free Trade Agreement has been in place for a number of months there are provisions dealing with free trade and businesspersons visiting Canada. Pursuant to Schedule 2 of the Free Trade Agreement, we see that in fact there is a section dealing with medical and allied professionals being able to come into Canada and being able to work here. I am just wondering if the Minister could provide me with any information as to whether the Health Department keeps track of information along this line, and if they do, whether they could advise me of what numbers of people have applied pursuant to this Schedule 2 of Chapter 15 of the Free Trade Agreement?

Mr. Orchard: No, we do not keep track of that information and simply do not have it.

Mr. Minenko: Does the Minister's department intend to keep track of that information in the future?

* (1630)

Mr. Orchard: There has been no burning issue here that I am aware of. Professionals have to meet professional certification requirements to practise in Manitoba. That is for doctors; that is for nurses, because they have to be accepted into the professional certification by MARN or by the LPN Association or the RPN Association, and technologists the same way. All the professional disciplines in health care must meet Manitoba standards and prove that they can meet Manitoba standards before they are allowed to work within the system. From time to time we have an American physician, we are currently certifying an American psychiatrist who is practising and will continue to practise in the Brandon Mental Health Centre, but they have to meet our certification qualifications.

Mr. Minenko: The Government then is not really looking at any contact with Employment and Immigration Canada to provide him with regular information on people who have applied to come to Manitoba pursuant to that section.

Mr. Orchard: No.

Mr. Minenko: The final area I would like to ask the Minister some questions on is the health industry initiative of the Department of Industry and Trade. I would just like to ask the Minister then, if he can provide in the succinct way that he always provides answers to questions, have there been discussions between his department staff, himself personally, the Minister of Industry and Trade and the staff of that department with respect to this issue or this initiative. What directions if any has the Department of Health proposed with respect to this health initiative?

Mr. Orchard: Yes, in many.

Mr. Minenko: I congratulate the Minister in providing us with an extremely succinct answer to a very detailed question. Perhaps the Minister has taken some recent classes on how to perform under cross-examination—

Mr. Orchard: Daily.

Mr. Minenko: Then perhaps if the Minister could highlight as to some of the initiatives that his department would like to see and have approached the Industry and Trade Department about.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, my colleague the Honourable Jim Ernst and I have had a number of discussions, and this has been subject to a number of discussions at senior Government level, officials level. The HIDI initiative is one that we believe is right for the time. Let me talk about several initiatives we have undertaken that I think are extremely beneficial to the Manitoba economic climate.

Here is the basic philosophy that I bring to the table when we talk about Health Industry Development Initiatives. Health is going to be one of the more rapidly growing industries in North America and the Free World, and indeed if you want to go to the world in general, because improvement of health status is a goal that immediately follows with increase in economic status. Any country that has increased significant to its economic status improves its diet and consumer goods demands first, and second its health care demands.

There is a significant opportunity for Manitoba, because we have within the environs of Manitoba a significant manufacturing activity in terms of health products, health care products and aids to health care like canes and a number of different prosthesis devices.

Second, we have a very, very active research community. What I have been involved with with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism is a several-fold initiative. First of all, we put together in co-operation with the federal Government quite a pro-active board for the Centre for Products on Aging and Rehabilitation, a board comprised of service deliverers, of the academic community in terms of research in the University of Manitoba, and the business community in terms of their involvement with investment in Manitoba, be it Otto Bock Industries in the northwest corner of St. James Industrial Park and others, to identify, through the

Centre for Products on Aging and Rehabilitation, research and manufacturing opportunities for Manitoba business. I think that will build upon a base of strength we have here now.

Third, we took the opportunity to do two things in the last year. Yes, more than doubled. The base line funding of the Manitoba Health Research Council was just around the \$800,000 a year mark. It was supplemented one time. We have put them on a firm annualized funding almost equating to \$2 million, because the research industry is very much a part of product development and hopefully market reality. That is supportive of research efforts that are going on at Children's, Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Research Foundations, all of which have a growing component and an attempt to tie in to the HIDI initiative and to the international potential market that is there for health care products and devices.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology and I announced just recently annualized funding for the next four years of \$1 million, which is part of Bill C— is it C—32?—you know the one I mean, the drug patent legislation in Ottawa. Each province received over a four-year period a per-capita share of research funding.

We have channelled that through a separate agreement through the Manitoba Research Council in conjunction with HIDI to undertake a more product oriented research, I guess maybe would be the way to put it, with the goal that we enhance Economic Development at the end of that four-year flowing of new research dollars into the Manitoba community. Some of the target companies are the pharmaceutical companies, generic and otherwise.

For instance, I had the opportunity to participate just a short while ago on a ribbon cutting in the Inkster Industrial Park of a facility involved in three endeavours of supply, one of them being generic drugs, one of them being laboratory instruments, and my memory slips me of what the third branch enterprise was, but very clearly we are trying to build upon some natural strengths in Manitoba and there is an opportunity for international markets in here.

The Free Trade Agreement has virtually nothing to do with medical products because they were always exempt. They crossed the border, to my knowledge, free of any tariffs or duties, so that the Free Trade Agreement did not have any impact in that regard. It is a matter of harnessing what I think is a natural opportunity for Manitoba to build upon the professional and academic strengths and the business strengths that we have in this province.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, after two and a half hours of patience and listening, it is my turn for at least the next two and a half hours then. Certainly, I thank all the Members that my patience was a little bit ending and I needed somebody to rehabilitate me.

I would just want to ask the Minister a question that the Member for Seven Oaks was asking. The Minister has said that a few people may be coming either for cosmetic surgery or other surgical procedure and they

are paying from either their own insurance services or from their personal pockets.

Are they still occupying our acute care beds, which are badly needed? I just wanted the Minister to clarify this situation.

Mr. Orchard: No. The reference I made was that there are out-patient cosmetic surgery clinics. There is one just almost due north of here about four blocks away that is not involved with a health care institution; there are no beds involved.

The bed involvement in the six-month period that I indicated was 202 patient days for whatever reasons, and we are going to try to provide to your colleague the number of days that were involved in accident so that we get a distinction of that or individuals who were in Manitoba visiting and may have had cardiac arrest or stroke and needed hospitalization.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, some of the acute emergency situations of the bordering towns do need these services and there is no question about that. What the Member for Seven Oaks was concerned, some of his constituents are concerned that the Americans are coming in and occupying our acute-care beds, which could be used for other purposes; as long as the Minister and his department are clear on that, that no acute care beds are used which could be used for other purposes for residents of Manitoba and they should be given No. 1 priority over and above anyone else.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, clearly there are 202 patient days in the Manitoba system somewhere which were occupied by citizens of the United States. They no doubt may have occupied those beds and delayed an elective surgical procedure of a Manitoban, but they are not there—well they are there because there was not obviously any other alternative. If you have a heart attack or a stroke in front of the Health Sciences Centre you do not say, "take me to Grand Forks."

* (1640)

Mr. Cheema: Certainly, we are not talking about acute situations where the services are required. Any individuals who are coming to take advantage of the, so to speak, less costly services in Manitoba, and if they are occupying the acute care beds, I think this is a serious problem.

If we do not have a policy right now to look at that, I think we should look at it very seriously and have an evaluation done over a period of one year or so. I think that is important.

Mr. Orchard: Well no, my honourable friend—I do not know how to put this genteelly—but my honourable friend is in that wonderful land of Liberal "if," because it is not happening.

Mr. Cheema: I think before we end this, we want to end in a very cordial relationship. It is not a question of Liberal "if," if the statistics are clear, 202 days. We do not have any statistics on these 202 days. They were occupied, who were the patients involved?

In acute situations we have no difficulty. In the bordering towns there is no problem. If someone is visiting from out of Manitoba, or they are from other countries and they are visiting Manitoba we do not have a difficulty. If someone is coming just because our services are less expensive—it is very clear, they are very expensive in the United States. In the United States the medical business is booming. If that is the only reason they are coming here then I think it is a serious problem, and we should look at this.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, there are two things. The way we bill Americans is our costs plus 30 percent plus prosthetic devices. I would think there are not too many clamouring at the doors because of cost. Secondly, there were 48 patients, 202 patient days in bed. For Manitobans during that same six month period there were 306 cases occupying American institutions for 2,490 days.

Mr. Cheema: I want to go back to the policy questions on the administration point of view. Can the Minister of Health tell us what the funding formula is for the allocation of resources for the rural and the urban hospitals, because there was a serious concern raised by the health care providers MONA and MARN, and other professionals who expressed serious concerns that some of the hospitals may see acute care situations more than the chronic ones, and some of the hospitals may have variations? If we have a global formula which is universal how can you meet the demands of each individual hospital, and how can you use your tax dollars more effectively? Can the Minister give me an update on that?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, the budgets are established, in that all negotiated salary rates are agreed to, CPI is applied to other costs, and there is a \$2 million life support fund, which was a new innovation last year and was quite successful. It was accessed to the tune of \$1.8 million by a number of facilities to allow them to recover extraordinary costs beyond the CPI supplies allowance. For instance, in out-patient oncology, there are some pharmaceuticals that do not increase by CPI. The \$2 million life saving fund was there to provide reasonable access for those extraordinary costs and received a lot of accolades by the management of the facilities, and I appreciate the advantage to Government of doing that.

If we budgeted supplies in anything other than CPI according to need, and budgeted that across the board you would have for instance—and I do not pick them out for any reason other than they tend to be higher cost facilities. The two teaching hospitals, for instance, would have a supply cost that would exceed CPI probably. If you provided that rate throughout the system there are some hospitals that that would provide additional funding to.

We have put everybody at CPI and established a \$2 million life support fund so the extraordinary cost can be accessed facility by facility. It is a very workable process involving staff at the commission and the facilities. As I said, \$1.8 million was accessed in that fund last year to cover extraordinary costs, we did not even cash flow the entire \$2 million last year.

Mr. Cheema: I do not think the Minister got my question very clearly. I am asking a simple policy question on the funding formula from the Manitoba Health Services Commission for the allocation of all the hospitals, the urban hospitals and the rural hospitals.

Each and every hospital serves a different population. They see a different kind of patient. They have different kinds of clinics, and they have a different kind of environment. This concern has been raised by different communities. They have a perception that they may not be getting adequate funding.

I am asking the Minister of Health, is there is any possible change that should be considered for the future to look at the type of population the hospital serves, the community they are serving and the type of services they are providing?

Mr. Orchard: No, I did not misunderstand my honourable friend's question. That is what I gave him. In the hospital budgets we fund the negotiated salary rates, CPI on other supplies and then allow access to the life support program. The only exception to that is in non-unionized facilities, which under the previous Government's funding regime were discriminated against.

We are in the second year of a three-year program to have the budgetary process equivalent in the non-unionized facilities to the unionized facilities, less union dues of approximately \$30 per month, so non-unionized facilities are on an even footing budget-wise to unionized facilities. That was an attempt to introduce an element of equity and fairness into the funding system that was not there for reasons unknown under the previous administration.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us what the policy is of this administration in terms of the hospital boards? The funds are allocated by the Health Services Commission. The hospital boards are responsible one way or the other to use those funds, but we do not see any accountability. In public perception the accountability is still on the Manitoba Health Services Commission.

Can the Minister of Health tell us, what are his own views, his Party's views, on the function of hospital boards, specifically their relationship with the Health Services Commission plus, ultimately, accountability for tax dollars?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, every hospital is given budget guidelines based on previous experience or change in program. There are adjustments to that from time to time. Every facility is charged with the responsibility of operating within their budget. That is a very serious responsibility for those boards. Board members, board chairmen across the length and breadth of this province take that obligation very, very seriously, and in the vast majority of cases, with few exception, do operate their facilities within budget.

Now the board has the ability to retain management, the administration within the facilities. Should administrative decisions not comply with the budgetary

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guidelines and a hospital finds itself in extreme financial difficulties, a large deficit, the board has several recourses. They can dismiss or remove from responsibility the administration. They can do that, they have the ability to do that. They are empowered to do that.

In terms of picking up the deficit—and this is where there is an element of significant responsibility involved in hospital funding—should deficits be incurred that are not going to be picked up by the Manitoba Health Services Commission because they are beyond the funding guidelines, the individual facilities must go, eventually, to the municipal taxpayers and ask for those deficits to be picked up by member municipalities within the health district, or the area served by that particular hospital's board.

* (1650)

I say this injects an aura of responsibility, because if my honourable friend has visited with boards throughout rural Manitoba he will find that a substantial membership on rural hospital boards is from municipal council. They recognize the financial obligation that may well be theirs should management of their facilities go awry. I think there is a significant amount of cheque balances in terms of the administration and management of a substantial amount of funds entrusted with the various boards.

In addition to that, all of the boards—or I should not say all—the vast majority of the health care facilities in the Province of Manitoba are members of the Manitoba Health Organization. The Manitoba Health Organization provides a substantial amount of advice on central accounting, purchasing and a number of management-related issues. They are a very active group involved in participation of the various facilities and in helping them with any difficulties. If they are policy, they bring them to Government. If they are internal and can be resolved by MHO and its member organization, they have the ability to provide the advice and the support to resolve any of those problems. There is a fairly substantial amount of management flexibility, yet control, within the current system.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, under the medical programs and under the part of administration, except Quebec, all other provinces have entered into the mutual agreement for honouring the services provided by the residents of each and every province.

Can the Minister of Health tell us what was the reason given by the Quebec Government and how that decision has impacted on the federal and provincial relationship and the future major programs in Canada and Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: I cannot answer that. Apparently they are out of the medical side, but the hospital side is covered, and I do not know why. Can anybody tell me? Is it because Quebec is Quebec? I feel ill at ease answering questions which ought to be posed to the Quebec Minister of Health.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, it is a very serious question. I do not want to put the Minister of Health

in a situation where he has to presume what the Minister of Health in Quebec thinks, but I think it is an important issue, why a single province has opted out of the medical program and every other province is honouring it, especially a program like the Medicare system which is so much publicized.

I think that is why most people are concerned, if the Meech Lake or this agreement was approved as such, if there could be a problem with our program such as Medicare and some other social program. I think this is a very serious question, and I certainly would like the Minister to maybe look into that.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the ACMS is currently negotiating to get an agreement with Quebec on the medical side. It took some time to achieve that on the hospital side, and there are discussions ongoing. If they fail at the ACMS level they move to the Deputy Minister level, and I cannot tell you whether that will be the eventual method of resolution or not. It has not been an issue that has been raised at three Health Ministers' conferences that I have attended to date, so then it must mean that they are talking co-operatively to attempt to resolve the issue.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I am not a constitutional expert and neither do I know too much about this federal-provincial relationship, but this is a serious problem. It was much publicized and it has a lot of reports from the media.

People are concerned about why a single province has opted out for such a program where they are getting the money from the federal Government anyway, and each and every province is honouring their commitment. Why does Quebec have to be given a special sort of privilege here because if our residents from Manitoba are going to go to Quebec and they are going to use the services—can the Minister of Health tell us what procedure they put in place to make sure that the residents who are getting the medical services have their bills looked after?

Mr. Orchard: Manitobans would pay a Quebec physician and we would pay Manitobans.

Mr. Cheema: That is the problem here because every other province—I am not saying that this is this Minister of Health's problem as such, but I think, in one way or the other, he is still responsible to deliver the services. If someone is moving for reasons of their own and for three months, if they cannot find a job, if they do not have enough cash available, and if they cannot pay their physician, then how are they getting all those services?

Mr. Orchard: First of all, I cannot answer for the Quebec Government as to why they do not have a reciprocal arrangement with nine other provinces, Manitoba inclusive, and two Territories, which we have in place with all of those eight other Governments and two Territories. The exception being the Province of Quebec. I cannot answer for that, because I do not pretend to be able to answer for the Quebec Government in that

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regard, but where services are utilized by a Manitoban in the Province of Quebec, and it is physician's services, say an office visit for a sore throat or an earache, one pays that and then with receipt in hand receives reimbursement. The reimbursement is generally less because Quebec has the lowest fee schedule in Canada for their physicians.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is a difficult problem for the Minister, but can the Minister tell us what has he done in the meantime? Has he protested in a written form? What kind of communication has he had with the Minister of Health in Quebec, and also the federal Minister of Health, and express his serious concern that this is something, a first step?

Why do they have to be treated any differently when 10 other Governments are asking for the reciprocal program? I think it should be dealt with as soon as possible so that the people who go from Manitoba do not have to wait for three months if their bills are hundreds of dollars and then write to the Manitoba Health Services Commission and then get their money back. I think it is an extra hassle and I do not think Manitobans deserve it for a moment. I think it should be looked at very seriously.

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend is absolutely correct. It is a serious issue. It is not one of the serious issues that has come before the ministerial meetings that I have been at, but I know my honourable friend will join with me as a Liberal to talk to the Liberal administration in Quebec hopefully to get them off centre on this issue.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us how much time does it take normally for people who move to Quebec as of April 1, 1988, and if they are asking for the reimbursement of their medical bills, how much time is it taking and how much money has been paid to the people of Manitoba who have moved to Quebec?

Mr. Orchard: I do not know, and I do not know whether we can even get that kind of information.

Mr. Cheema: I think it is not difficult to have that information because those individuals still have Manitoba Medical cards and they are asking their money to be reimbursed on those cards. To make his case more effective, I think you need that information.

Mr. Orchard: I accept my honourable friend's advice here.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister of Health tell us—he has also received a letter dated November 21, 1989, from MONA and they have expressed concern for the various bed closures and the question was asked from the Member from Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Can he clarify for the public—and I am giving him five minutes to clear the air—that these decisions are made not only on a financial basis but on the terms of the staff and the holidays? This perception which is out there, whether right or wrong, it has to be clear that the emergencies are going to be full and the patients are going to be further delayed, and can the Minister clarify it?

Mr. Orchard: I did receive that letter November 21, and we are currently searching to see whether MONA expressed similar concerns in 1988 in November, in 1987, in 1986, in 1985 and all the way back to 1972, when these Christmas closures have gone on because I am quite interested to know whether they have expressed those concerns in the past.

Mr. Chairman, the closures are temporary at Christmastime and have been ongoing, because as one of the administrators put it in terms of the management rationale behind it, there is a lower demand over the Christmas period as not only do patients postpone elective surgical procedures but also staff, all medical staff to a certain number and degree take holiday time to spend with their families at this time of the year.

A case in Victoria is, three of five anesthetists are on holidays during the Christmas period, so there is going to be a substantially reduced demand for elective procedures. Every hospital has and may well maintain the capability of emergency response: trauma, accident, stroke, whatever medical illness, they will be able to provide those services. It is the elective portion of the hospital operations that will not be ongoing because the demand softens there. It is very, very analogous to the summer bed closures which have been ongoing for a number of years. There is no question about it.

When they do not staff the beds they save budget dollars, no question about it. Therefore, you can say it is a budgetary move that they are making but it is a smart budgetary move, because I hardly think that any Government would ask hospitals to staff empty beds. I should make an exception because that is exactly a similar thing to what the NDP were doing in Rideau Park where they were having two staff for every position, but normal Governments do not do that sort of thing. Responsible administration throughout the health care system certainly tempers staffing with demand in their facilities.

Let me give you an example that has just been given to me. Swan River has closed 11 beds at Christmastime for the last 18 years. I do not know whether the former MLA for Swan River protested that around the Cabinet Table as a budgetary measure, and made allegations of cutbacks and lineups and all of the verbal diarrhea that we heard the other week from the New Democrats, but it is a budgetary measure. It is a reasonable budgetary measure. It is not a new process. It has been ongoing for a number of years, and those knowledgeable in the House, inclusive of yourself and your Leader, recognize that. I thank you for that recognition of the management skills that are available within our health care facilities, because those individuals recognize your understanding of the system as well.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairman: 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.

* (1430)

SUPPLY—ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Chairman (William Chornopyski): I call this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Environment. When we last met we were on item 1.(b)(1)—the Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): I am wondering if I could ask a few questions of the Minister regarding the proposed environmental impact study that he ordered last week for the proposed Moray Street bridge, Charleswood corridor, whatever it is you wish to call it. It is my understanding, from the Executive Policy Committee meeting that took place last week that the recommendation has been to have an environmental impact study per se. From what I have heard, the impact study will just take place in the actual bridge area. In other words, the area that spans from the north side to the south side, or south to the north, whichever way you are coming or going.

I am wondering if the Minister could verify this or could clarify this for me and in fact for the constituents of Sturgeon Creek who are concerned with this directive.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Yes, the process of preparing for an environmental impact study and doing the work for the Charleswood bridge or any environmental impact assessment that is ordered by the department is that first of all, as the guidelines are developed for scoping the assessment, the public would have an opportunity to express their concerns and the parameters of the study would be established.

It would not necessarily be linked just to the span that goes over the bridge, but it would be scoped to the bridge and its impacts not be of the nature that would require alternative studies and that sort of thing. Although that I suppose is an area, which the commission, depending on how the request is structured, might have some opportunity to comment on, but the structuring of the request for the study would be that it would be strictly on the bridge and bridge-related impacts. It would not be a completely wide-open assessment of transportation.

Mrs. Yeo: So I gather from that sort of roundabout answer that the Minister gave that the study may in fact be wide open, or it is more likely to just be the span of the bridge itself across the river?

Mr. Cummings: I did not mean to misrepresent or mislead the Member when I talked about it being potentially only to the span. I was using that as an example, not as a statement. It could include the approaches, as well. That would probably be normal that they would be included. What I am trying to say is that the scoping of the request for the assessment would not likely be such that it would require studies as to alternate means of dealing with the traffic. That is a planning issue within the city where they plan to have a crossing. What we would be dealing with under The Environment Act are the impacts of the bridge itself and the approaches.

Mrs. Yeo: I understood that response much better than the previous one. When I looked through, "A Guide to Manitoba's Environment Act," there is a statement there, and I quote: Manitoba's Environment Act represents a milestone in the history and development of environmental management in the province.

Then I looked at the goals. There were five goals. In the first goal it said that The Environment Act expands the definition of environment to include physical, biological, social and economic consideration, which when you review this description, you realize that it is more than just strictly: what impact is a chunk of concrete going to have on the river below, or on the houses just directly to the left or right? When you look at physical, biological, social, economic—and in fact there were statements that said, on the impact of the community. Why then are all of these things not taken into consideration when in fact this Minister decided that there was a need for an environmental impact study? Why then were not all of these other areas considered as well?

Mr. Cummings: This is where there are some problems with the application of The Environment Act to be perfectly candid and that is why there can be two correct answers to the same question basically. This is why I say emphatically that it was not necessarily a grave error that a hearing was not called on this bridge previously. I said in my statement, when I called for the environmental impact study and the hearings for this bridge, that there were technical aspects that could cause problems that would lead to jurisdictional and technical questions being asked, and arguments being caused, rather than getting on with the job so that environmental impact assessment could be done. Ultimately the city could make a clear decision on what they propose to go ahead with.

The problem that we have in all this, as well, is respecting the local jurisdiction and decision-making authority within the parameters of The Environment Act. That is also why, when I indicated that the Charleswood bridge and Omands Creek would be two matters, which I felt The Environment Act should deal with in a formal manner, I indicated that there needed to be immediately begun a consultation process and changes so that the city could have its role clarified so that they need not have these problems again.

Frankly when the city requested that Omands Creek be brought under The Environment Act, they were picking and choosing what they thought should come under The Environment Act. That in itself creates another problem inasmuch as it probably again demonstrates the lack of clarity on how people view The Environment Act.

There are a number of people out there who view The Environment Act as an opportunity to stop any development. I think that all Members of this Legislature would agree that would be an abuse of what is probably a pretty good piece of legislation, albeit many of us have referred to it in fact as dangerous legislation because it needs to be handled with respect. If someone chooses to use this type of legislation, and do it in a particular manner, it could be used to abuse all sorts of people and projects within this province.

So we have tried to strike a reasonable approach in relationship to these projects. The city officially requested that Omands Creek be brought under The Environment Act. In fact the developer suggests that it should not be under The Environment Act. The fact is that it becomes a decision of the Minister as to what is a development and it is so open-ended that the Minister can, if he chooses, and this is where I refer to the potential abuse of the use of the Act, the Minister can decide at his own discretion what is a development under the Act. That creates problems not only for the developers but for the Minister and the Government of the Day.

So if I answer this like I am walking on eggs, I am. Frankly, there are an awful lot of things that are brought forward, in relationship to the city, that are put forward as something that should be dealt with under The Environment Act that in my humble opinion should be dealt with under city planning.

What that means is that there eventually will have to be some amendments as to how the city proceeds, and what they consider an environmental assessment. That is really where the question revolved in relationship to the Charleswood bridge, as to whether or not the assessment and the process that the City of Winnipeg had used constituted a correct environmental assessment under our Act.

It is a judgment. It is something that again would have to end up being subject to somebody else's judgment when it goes to court. That is why we chose to move and remove it from prolonged discussion. Let us clear the air and make sure that there is no doubt in anyone's mind that it is compatible with what the provincial regulations are and let us work to make sure the problem does not come up again too often.

* (1440)

Mrs. Yeo: I can certainly appreciate the Minister saying that he feels as though he is treading on eggshells because I think, with all of environmental concerns today, there is that feeling of some question. I think, because of the fact that we are long overdue in looking at our environment, and the damage that has already occurred with the environment and the potential for more damage, I certainly appreciate his particular dilemma.

I have some concern when he says that the city says that there should be an environmental impact study, but the developer says there should not be. I do not question that at all because I think most of the developers want nothing to delay their approach to making a few \$100,000 or a few million dollars. So I think a lot of developers are going to say, the majority would say no, no, no, let us carry on with our business.

I think the people of the community on both sides of the river have felt that in many respects the developer, the city and province have not dealt with them honestly in all cases, and I think that is their concern. When they read a letter from a colleague of the current Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) dated April 12, 1988, in which the current Member for Charleswood

(Mr. Ernst) says, "As a provincial representative, I want to see a full environmental impact study with full public hearings before any provincial funding is considered," I hope that the Minister does not doubt why I am making these questions because we have statements that come from both sides of the House saying yes, we should have a full environmental impact study.

We look at the second point which says, public consultation and participation. The Environment Act strengthens public consultation and participation in environmental decision-making process by increasing public access to environmental assessment information. Will there be, in conjunction with the environmental impact study for the Charleswood corridor/Moray Street bridge, a full public consultation and participation process?

Mr. Cummings: I was just checking on the technicalities of the Act because when I released the information to the public, I did not refer to the calling of public hearings. That was deliberate because it is in the discretion of the Minister to decide if there will be hearings called. I would anticipate in this case, however, that there will be concerns raised and, as a result of those concerns, I will call hearings. But the normal process is that once concerns have been raised, then the decision is made whether or not to call hearings.

I would assume there will be hearings in this case, but I would want to leave it open because the process concerned that the objectors brought to my attention was definition of whether or not the assessment work that was done was "technically" correct given that I have now asked for that to be re-done. I doubt it but whether or not, at that stage, they may say well yes, now the work has been done and it demonstrates how mitigation can be done and so on. I do not anticipate that happening, but I anticipate there will be public hearings.

Mrs. Yeo: For clarification then, I will ask the Minister—I know you will not let me put words in your mouth—what you are anticipating is that there will be a study done by so-called experts that if they in fact find that there are some problems, it will be up to them then to report to you and to say we in fact feel that there should be some public input, and that perhaps sometime in the future you may then call upon the public or notify the public that there will be a date set for public hearings and the people in the community may be able to present some sort of a brief with documentation? That is a question.

Mr. Cummings: All the information is available to the public, the guidelines and then the ultimate assessment work that is done. If the public is not satisfied with the assessment work that is done which would identify problems and suggest mitigating solutions, if they raise concerns at that point, then hearings would be called. It would not be a case of experts advising me on whether or not there should be hearings. It would be a result of whether or not public wanted hearings at that stage, and they will be given every opportunity to request it.

The other thing that I think needs to be put on the record and perhaps helps clarify what is a very murky

situation, or can be, is that in fact a bridge is a normal urban development, if you will. A bridge does not have to go over water, it can be an overpass as well. The environmental aspects and the discussion in environmental concerns more oriented toward it can be mitigated, how the impacts on the local area can be reduced because a bridge does not provide emissions to air or water, and probably can be designed so that it is not going to have an inordinate impact on the flow of the water if it is going over water. So a lot of the assessment work needs to be directed toward how any impact of the construction of a bridge in that area can be reduced on the surrounding area.

Mrs. Yeo: That is precisely why I think there was some concern with the people who heard that the EPC decided that there would only be an impact study just over the river property, because there is potential for impact on the south side of the river and on the north side of the river, and the people living on Assiniboine, on Moray, on Pinewood.

I personally have had calls from people living along Portage Avenue who have said we just cannot have a major corridor, and there are a lot of people, probably the majority of people, who say yes, we need to have some kind of a crossing. That is definite. We need to have perhaps two or three smaller crossings over the river in that particular area because there is not much between the St. James Bridge and the Perimeter. There is nothing between the St. James Bridge and the Perimeter except in the wintertime for those people who want to venture across the river when it is frozen.

There are people who say yes, there should be crossings, but there is concern with people who live down Portage Avenue with the potential impact for—I believe there was a study done that showed there would be use of approximately 27,000 vehicles going across the Moray Street bridge. Where are these vehicles going to go? The only solid east-west corridor is Portage Avenue, and I will tell the Minister, I travel Portage Avenue at least twice daily and have for 22 years because I live behind the Grace Hospital. I have worked for 22 years at the St. Boniface Hospital, the only corridor basically that I can take that moves me fairly swiftly is Portage Avenue. If I get caught on a slippery winter day, I can take upwards of one hour to get to this particular building or to get to my previous position at St. Boniface Hospital.

There are people who were saying, have there been any studies done, have there been any—has anyone really looked into the problems that may well occur if they put in a fairly hefty corridor, and obviously there has not been. Will those things be considered when this environmental impact study takes place? Will the east-west corridors along Portage Avenue and the much, much lesser one along Ness, I do not take Ness unless I absolutely have to, the potential for a Silver Avenue east-west thoroughfare, have these things been looked at, or will they be?

* (1450)

Mr. Cummings: Those would not fall within the environmental impact study that I would see occurring

around this bridge. I think it is a fair question however for the Member to address to the City of Winnipeg as the city where she is resident, as to what are their long-range plans for handling traffic within the city. I think it is an—abuse is too strong a word, I would suppose in this case—but I think it is an abuse of The Environment Act to link what would be a major study of overall traffic flows within the city to the construction of a bridge. I think that there are lots of vehicles, however, that could be used to cause the city to look at how it is going to handle its traffic flow in future years.

Interestingly enough, the Member has just identified when she talks about the additional hour occasionally being required for travel downtown, why there are people who have said to me over the weekend, if the City of Winnipeg is real keen on getting all of Manitoba to feel part and parcel of supporting the Jets, for example, why would they want to put an arena downtown where we have to spend another hour in the city driving after we have already spent two hours on the road to get there?

The Blue Bombers, for example, have a great deal of support all across rural Manitoba. Saskatchewan is a perfect example of where they have the Saskatchewan Roughriders, not the Regina Roughriders, and I do not mind using this soapbox to say that if the support for professional sports, the facilities and the access of those facilities to people who are already on the road for some considerable length of time is something that should possibly be taken into consideration in relationship to The Forks

Mrs. Yeo: I enjoy asking questions of this Minister because he always opens up the door for a further route to go. If he can take a soapbox, perhaps I can stand on mine and say I agree with your particular soapbox. I believe, personally, and a lot of the people in the west end of the city agree that The Forks area or the downtown site for a potential arena or covered football field is the wrong location because of parking, because of exit routes, because of the environment, or the abuse to the environment, and that a far better site would be where there was fairly hasty exit routes.

I would look at somewhere around Assiniboia Downs where you could have a whole sports complex, where you could have a whatever and have the Perimeter, have Highway No. 1, and have the route from places like Portage la Prairie, from Gladstone, Minnedosa, all kinds of current Tory locations that could make it fairly swiftly into the city and make fairly swift exits, as well as for people from the northern communities and the southern communities.

I certainly agree with him. I do not agree with him when he says that it is an abuse to The Environmental Act to talk about places like Portage Avenue and east-west corridors because I think it is really all tied in and there are grave concerns.

I have discussed this with members of our City Council and now that there is a new council I will discuss it even more firmly. I believe very strongly that we have to have vision that goes beyond the end of our noses.

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I think whether we are sitting in this particular House or the house down on Main Street, we have to be looking at something beyond tomorrow and the next day. We must try and look down the road and plan for the future and that is something that I think politicians do very, very poorly. Many people are out looking after the shirts on their backs and the next time they are elected that they forget that there is long-range, and the Virology Lab is one supreme example.

However, back to the environment and the Moray Street bridge impact study. Another statement that is made under project description guidelines that I have, says that alternate methods should be looked at and alternate proposals. I would ask the Minister if, in the environmental impact study that will be undertaken for the Moray Street bridge, there will be any review perhaps of old proposals because this is something that has been on the plate for not quite a hundred years, but a long, long time. There have been alternate proposals that have been in place. Will there be studies or reviews of the alternate proposals and will there in fact be a look at what might be other proposals other than the Moray Street bridge-Charleswood corridor crossing?

Mr. Cummings: No, I believe I indicated that earlier that this would be, as I see it, an examination of the bridge and immediate impacts in that area.

Mrs. Yeo: The previous alternate proposals are not going to be looked at, I gather.

The other statement that is made in many of the environmental papers that I have read, they talk about ambient noise levels for adjoining areas. Will the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas be considered?

Mr. Cummings: I partly missed the question. I assume the Member was asking would the noise levels immediately adjacent to the approaches be considered. Was that your question? I think what the Member is doing is trying to establish the guidelines that will be laid down for the assessment of this bridge prior to us having done that.

While I do not mind answering questions in a philosophical basis, I am afraid I am going to have to start backing off on answering some of the specifics because they will be included or not included, and the Member of course can question them if they are not included when the guidelines for the assessment are laid down.

While I at one point might make a snap decision on what is to be assessed or not, the process for doing this is a very thoughtful one whereby people who are trained in this area would sit down and draw up guidelines for the city to work under that would be relative to the project and relative to what problems would be associated with the project. I could put something on the record regarding emissions related to noise and be totally off the mark technically in how that might be applied and put it on the record, and neither the Member opposite nor I would be satisfied with what happened from that process. So I am going to reluctantly not answer that question right now.

Mrs. Yeo: Part of the reason for asking that question, and I appreciate the Minister being somewhat reluctant to stand here in the House and in the process of Estimates questioning set established guidelines for an impact study. I do not think this is the appropriate place at all to do that. However, I do have honest, sincere concerns that I wanted to ask.

Part of the reason for asking about the ambient noise levels was the inaccuracy at which the impact study was done for the Bishop Grandin thoroughfare. There were noise levels that were placed far below the actual noise levels that are today occurring in that particular area. The people of Moray Street, living along Bruce Avenue, Lodge Avenue, that connect to Moray Street, Pinewood Crescent, Assiniboine Crescent, do have some concerns that because the Bishop Grandin study was not quite accurate, there is some concern that in fact this study will sort of gloss over and pay mere lip service to the real problems that may occur.

* (1500)

I think it would be very difficult to say that one could do a study, and I do not know how they could do it today without an actual traffic flow to the same extent as the traffic flow is going to be once the bridge, the corridor, I do not think anybody really knows what exactly they are going to put in there, is completed. I would like some assurances from the Minister that in fact this study will be a thorough one and, to the best of their knowledge and expertise, the levels will not be subjugated, if you will or downplayed, that they will give the honest facts for the people who are concerned, who will retain their houses in the area.

Mr. Cummings: I am a little troubled at how to answer that question, inasmuch as I believe the guidelines are laid down where the study will eventually have to address that.

The accuracy of studies the Member wishes to question, I suppose that one could use that argument to throw it up against both sides of any environmental assessment, though the proponents could argue against people who suggest there are high levels of emissions or whatever, citing that they will never occur. At the same time standards can be set and then if they are not met can cause problems, because they may be outside of what our predicted traffic flows. That is one of the questions as a matter of fact that those who have been demanding that a full and complete environmental impact study and hearings be done on this project that they want an opportunity to express their concerns on the record about those types of things.

I am going to have to hang my hat, or I will hang my hat on the fact that I believe the process is sound and that people who have those kinds of concerns will have the opportunity to raise them, and then the commission will be able to deal with them in the light of the information that they have there.

Because a particular piece of information is placed in front of the commission, it does not mean the commission might not seek or hear alternate advice from the public or from other experts that the public

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may choose to have there or who have an interest in it. I think the Member has just identified one of the real reasons why this is going into the process in the manner that it is so that those can be aired.

Mrs. Yeo: I am honestly not trying to pin the Minister down to definitive dates, but I am wondering if he could give me the approximate time guidelines that he is looking at. When will the impact study begin or has it in fact already begun? When does he anticipate the report to be submitted, and does he have any idea if the report is accepted, when the people in the community can anticipate the beginning of the work done on that particular project?

Mr. Cummings: The city felt that they had done all of the environmental impact assessment work during the previous process. I would presume that there is going to have to be some additional work done.

The process in Manitoba is such that the proponent can drive the speed of the process somewhat by getting their work done and getting it into the department. Where it can slow down is in the hearing process, the appeal process, and the 90 days for the reporting of the commission. The commission does not often take 90 days but there is a tremendous workload in front of them, and because of the change in thinking that we are getting, the workload just grows and grows.

I am anticipating having it moved forward quite expeditiously, but I am telling you also that the city will have to bring forward their responses to the guidelines expeditiously. The province will attempt to make sure that our side of it is done fairly quickly, because this is not intended to be a process which is—we do not want to be part of a stalling tactic. If the city does or does not build the bridge ultimately is their business.

Mrs. Yeo: Does the Minister have the actual cost or the estimated cost of this particular environmental impact study?

Mr. Cummings: No. I would not anticipate it would be an inordinate amount, however, because as I said I believe the city has had a lot of the work already done.

Mrs. Yeo: Could the Minister be a little more specific in that he would give me a range of anticipated response, of dollar figures?

Mr. Cummings: In this case, I cannot. The proponent will pay their cost, but obviously there are costs to the province as well. The cost of having the assessment work done is paid by the proponent and that will depend to some degree whether it is done by consultants, whether it is done by staff. I suspect this would be done by consultants.

Mrs. Yeo: Just one final note that—an important traffic artery such as this, the one that is contemplated, has a far greater impact on the community than mere transportation aspects and, hopefully, if the Minister can influence the people who are studying to include the areas close by, and that just does not mean the south bank to the north bank, there are a lot of homes

that will be severely impacted by this increased flow of traffic, by the potential for problems within the House.

As I stand here I am jiggling my hands thinking of a three-year period when I lived with my family on the corner of Corydon and Beaverbrook which is a truck route and which has a railroad track running very close by. I can well recall thinking that my four young children were throwing my crystal around, because it was breaking almost on a daily basis until one night when I was up with one of my children in the middle of the night sitting in the living room and a truck went by and one of my crystal fell off the shelf. I realized that with the movement, the severe movement of the semitrailers, and that happened to be a bus route as well, that there can be a lot of disruption in a home, a lot of movement in a home, so there is an impact there all the way around.

I would certainly hope that the Minister would take all of this into consideration with the environmental impact study. I think it is absolutely essential for a project of this severity.

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

Mr. Cummings: I would assume that vibrations and increased traffic flow, of course, where there is no traffic today having dead ends into the river, there is going to be large changes in the community. I suppose also that you could look at long-term plans for the city and know that it was pretty obvious that at some point the city was likely going to put a crossing there. I cannot say that I have sat down and studied that, but I have certainly had that view expressed to me by those who are proponents of the project.

I think, however, that what I said a few minutes ago about the fact that these types of projects, when they go through environmental processes, would largely deal with mitigative measures. Obviously, the type of vibration you are talking about is probably a result of lack of sound barriers and probably an inappropriate roadbed in the first place, or that kind of vibration would not be transferred to the building. I am not an engineer so I am speaking as a layman, but I assume that those are ways in which that would be dealt with.

* (1510)

So I simply would remind you that as it goes through the process that the ultimate result is likely to be mitigative measures that are recommended in order to deal with the problems that are identified.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Following on some of the questions which my colleague has been asking, I want to touch on the Omands Creek development, which is a proposed development, which the Minister well knows, in my constituency just on the north side of Portage Avenue, and there is a proposal for, I believe, a six-storey office tower and a car wash directly west of Ray and Jerry's Restaurant.

The Minister has indicated in the House, in response to a question in Question Period posed by me, that he would undertake to do an environmental impact assessment when a proposal came forward from the

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City of Winnipeg. I am not crystal clear, Mr. Acting Chairman, on the process that this development project will go through, and has gone through. I know that the City of Winnipeg has been of course considering it for some time. I believe there was a Rivers and Streams application and that may still be in the works at the city level. However, what I would like to know from the Minister is, what monitoring is his department doing of the situation and, from their information, what stage is this project at, and when would that environmental impact assessment be done in the course of this project working its way through the system?

Mr. Cummings: This is one of the ones where, as I referenced earlier, the city has requested that this be brought under The Environment Act. I have indicated that if I received a proposal that I would examine it under The Environment Act. One of the factors that is done to examine it under The Environment Act is to decide if it is a development. But, as I said earlier, deciding what is a development becomes a judgment call after awhile. There are not strict guidelines laid down in The Environment Act and this is why I referenced in my announcement I would be working with the city over the next few months, along with the Department of Urban Affairs, to make sure we have this clarified so that there was not a consistent problem between the province and the city, because I can see where this is going to be an ongoing problem if some corrective action is not applied to it because there will be consistently disagreements over what is a development.

In this particular case the developer has rejected the thought that this development should be brought under The Environment Act. Therefore, it would be my responsibility to name it as a development so that it comes under The Environment Act, and I am in the process of doing that.

Mr. Edwards: This is just for clarification. The Minister did indicate at the beginning of his answer, that when a proposal came forward. My first question is, has a proposal come forward, and the Minister seems to confirm that later in his answer when he says that he is in the process of deciding if it is a development. Secondly, do I understand it from the Minister's response, the situation to be that if it is deemed a development, then it will have an environmental impact assessment done on it, but the Minister has in fact not decided whether or not an environmental impact assessment will be done when a proposal comes forward?

Mr. Cummings: The Member is partly right and I will try and clarify again the process, as I understand it and as we are following it. The developer does not agree that it should be under The Environment Act. I do not think that is any secret, I do not believe I am telling tales out of school on the developer. For it to be brought under The Environment Act, therefore, requires that the Minister of Environment name it as a development and I am in the process of doing that. So that means it will require environmental assessment as a development under The Environment Act.

I am giving you the most up-to-the-minute news inasmuch as that letter is on my desk.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairman, I want to thank the Minister for taking that initiative. It is certainly my position that should be reviewed thoroughly and I would ask the Minister to further consider that this be given a review which would include public participation. I am not completely familiar with all of the different types of environmental assessments that can be done, but I would ask the Minister to include the potential for public presentations to be made to whoever is doing the assessment because, frankly, it is the public awareness of the uniqueness and pristine environmental significance of that area that has made this issue a very, very important one for my constituents.

Of course, it is also important to remember that part of the city has less available green space for the residents than any part and, therefore, it is extremely important to preserve whatever green space is available and that part of the Omands Creek Blue Stem Park green belt has become known to me, as I grew up in this city, and others, as an extremely important area for us, as legislators, to preserve.

I want to quickly ask one other question on the Pines development which I am sure the Minister is familiar with, occurring farther west on Portage Avenue on the south side of Portage Avenue. The Minister made an announcement that there would be an environmental impact assessment done on the Charleswood corridor and we certainly congratulate the Minister on that decision, as well as the decision to do one on the Omands Creek development. I think that the Pines development is notable by its exception from that list and I would ask the Minister to comment on whether or not that development does not deserve an environmental impact assessment in that it does propose commercial development in the form of two strip malls on, in effect, the banks of the Assiniboine River, while there is a seniors complex, which is also proposed—the significant portion of the development is commercial. I think that with respect to the availability of the banks of the Assiniboine to the public, it may also qualify for an environmental impact assessment.

Can the Minister comment on what—

An Honourable Member: There will be more access to the river than there is now with homes.

Mr. Edwards: The Minister states there would be more access to the river than there is now with homes. That is precisely my point, Mr. Acting Chairman, the proposed development—(interjection)—The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) chuckles from his seat and perhaps he would be well advised to restrain himself with respect to sensitivity of green space in urban Winnipeg. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture is seeking to run in that part of the city. I suggest he does not do that if he continues that attitude.

An Honourable Member: Are you worried?

Mr. Edwards: The Minister says, am I worried. I have already stated publicly that the Minister is welcome to run against me and I would relish the thought, believe me. It certainly would be an interesting battle and the invitation stands and will stand until the writ is dropped.

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Mr. Acting Chairman, going back to the comment which was made by the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) and I do think it is relevant because she represents that part of the city, as do I, and she says that the development would provide access for the public. What my question was, and perhaps the Minister of Labour missed what I was getting at, was that it is necessary to preserve access to riverbanks whenever riverbank property is opened up, and that is what is proposed, is opening up riverbank property. My question to the Minister is, given that we have a strategy in place which presumably would maintain as much riverbank property for public access as possible, and given that there is less public access at the Pines than there should be by present city policy, but somewhat better than now, as the Minister of Labour states, is the Department of the Environment going to do an environmental impact assessment on this development if and when a proposal comes forward, as they have agreed to with the Omands Creek development?

* (1520)

Mr. Cummings: Well, given the circumstantial situation that the Member just referenced, I think I would be a bit of a fool to indicate a definitive answer. "Will there be, if and when"—I guess I would view this as one of those situations that is even more exemplary of why the City of Winnipeg needs to be seen and be capable of taking responsibility for the actions within the city.

There are people who have referenced the fact that at one time the province put a considerable amount of money into helping the City of Winnipeg acquire some of Omands Creek. I think there are those who would today again wish for the province to start spending money and buying up parts of Omands Creek. I would suggest the city is in quite a good position to do some property swaps if they want to enhance this area, to maintain it as public preserve rather than as a—it is an example of where mistakes have been made in the past, where parts of riverbank or creek bank, an area that could have logically been kept for green space, have been deeded to private owners, if I understand the situation correctly.

I would suggest at this time that the best place to direct the issues and the concerns regarding the long-term development of Omands Creek is to the City of Winnipeg. The province has attempted to provide some assistance in examining the proposed development that is just to the north of Portage Avenue, but would have a great deal of reluctance to even enter into a discussion about the province's role in protecting the whole river when it is well within the city's ability to deal with it if they wish too.

There are land swaps I think that could be readily put forward in this issue. We have lots of examples in other jurisdictions where cities have chosen to keep certain parts as green areas and where some of the land has been privately owned. Where land swaps through long-term planning have been arranged, people have an opportunity to examine alternative expansion, alternative uses, or business projects they want to put forward and find that they are being blocked by zoning that alternate land and then a land swap can be put forward.

Let us make it pretty clear that if the city wants to change the zoning along Omands Creek so something—even if it is privately owned—cannot be developed, all it will require is a majority of the council and a broad agreement that they can then bring together to deal with that issue. It would be most unfair to some of the landowners I submit, but that is a manner in which it could be dealt with. Therefore, I think the Members would agree the integrity of The Environment Act at some point needs to be considered and if there are people out there who use The Environment Act to block development and that is their sole purpose for invoking The Environment Act, this is perhaps not the appropriate type of situation to use those approaches.

Obviously under environmental damage there are projects and proposals of all sorts that eventually may not be able to meet requirements and criteria laid down under The Environment Act. I would encourage the Members Opposite who are particularly close to the situation, rather than appealing to the province that they appeal to the council, many of whom ran this last civic election on very strong environmental platforms. Let us call their bluff. Let them get out there and designate what they want set aside for green within this city. Let us not use The Environment Act to do what they should have done 10 years ago.

An Honourable Member: Like the Member for Logan should have done 10 years ago.

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh!

An Honourable Member: You sound like the little dough boy; oh, oh!

Mr. Edwards: I hope the Minister is not suggesting that Omands Creek and the Pines Development, by my suggesting they should be considered under The Environment Act, are somehow spuriously using The Environment Act. I doubt if that is what he meant and I get his point that he is looking for some co-operation and decent leadership from the City of Winnipeg and I certainly agree with him on that.

He says perhaps we should be looking to the councillors. You can be sure that the same positions I put forward here have been put forward very strenuously to the councillors. Unfortunately, many of them, some who make no secret of their alliance with his Party in that part of the city, have been less than co-operative in preserving the environmentally significant areas in St. James. In particular my own opponent in the last election who is now the councillor, Mr. Eadie, has a less than exemplary record on the protection of the environment both in his speeches and his voting record.

Mr. Acting Chairman, to get back to the specific issue of the Pines. Would the Minister agree that the Pines Development has now, in that it has been passed by City Council, it has been approved, I believe that happened just a few days prior to the last civic election. What is the Minister's department doing now to ensure that project receives an environmental assessment? Is he at this point unwilling to make a commitment that it should receive an environmental review?

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Mr. Cummings: That is correct.

Mr. Edwards: At what point, given that the city has in fact gone through its processes on the Pines Development, if any, might the Minister agree to review this project under The Environment Act?

Mr. Cummings: The Member says that under what circumstances or what reasons would we have to bring it under the Act. I would simply have to say in relationship to this development it has not been demonstrated to me that there are impacts on the Omands Creek itself that would require the imposition of The Environment Act on this development.

The relationship between this and the development north of Portage are somewhat different because the other one had a situation where we were told, and again I have to say we were told, and we are moving as a result of a request from the City of Winnipeg that there were direct impacts on the streambed itself given the type and location of development being proposed.

Mr. Edwards: I am cognizant of my colleagues' desire to—from the New Democratic Party—to put some questions forward. I will not belabour this issue.

I would like to know from the Minister if, and again I say, this project has received sanction from City Hall. There is no inkling to my knowledge that it is going to be rethought by City Hall. At least I have not heard that although I certainly would support that with respect to the commercial development on that property.

Mr. Acting Chairman, the seniors complex is certainly needed in that area and the Rotary Club should be commended for coming forward to propose that aspect of the development. It is -(interjection)- I hear the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) speaking and perhaps if she has comments on this issue, and she seems to have had a few, she would like to stand up at some point and ask the Minister some questions. I welcome her doing that. I am asking the questions at this point, Mr. Acting Chairman, and I would appreciate the attention of the Minister.

An Honourable Member: Which one?

Mr. Edwards: Well, the Minister of the Environment says, which one, and I suspect he is willing to treat this matter lightly because there is a problem with the Pines development put forward by the Chamber of Commerce and the airport, as he well knows. He and his colleagues, where I assume he was involved with his colleague, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme), and the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), in putting forward the committee idea that would come up with strategies for new development in the area which would be consistent with the airport being where it is and continuing to be a hub of activity for the city.

Is the Minister saying the proposed development as it was approved by City Hall, the two strip malls on Portage Avenue, is acceptable to his Government as not requiring any environmental review?

* (1530)

Mr. Cummings: I said a minute ago that I had not had demonstrated to me reasons to invoke The Environment Act. I hate to keep flogging this same problem, but there is a real problem in interpretation of how the province and the city should interact on these issues and it is not unlike the jurisdictional concerns that are raised between the Government of Canada and different provinces.

If we continually refer to the senior Government to deal with these issues, what you do is you put yourself in the position, which I referenced regarding another development a couple of days ago where all of a sudden you are seeking some kind of environmental or jurisdictional preclearance from a senior level of Government before you can even consider whether or not a project can go into the drawing stage.

One of the bases of the Act is that we do, and are required to be mindful of municipal responsibility, responsibilities of junior levels of Government. I am sure the City of Winnipeg might take some umbrage at the word "junior," so perhaps I would withdraw that, but the municipal level of Government does however refer to all of our other Governments in the province. There should be a clarity and they should not have to be looking over their shoulder to see if the province is coming on these issues.

I have to tell you I have not had it demonstrated that The Environment Act should be imposed in this area, but I am telling you that there is a lot of work to be done between the province and the city to make sure that the environmental issues are settled and dealt with so they do not have to be a source of antagonism between the two levels of Government.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairman, getting back to the Omands Creek situation, as the Minister will know, the residents in that area have fought this battle now three times. Once for the Omands Creek development on the south side of Portage Avenue in which there was a proposed development that they resisted successfully; another time for what is now Blue Stem Park in which a land swap was worked out after the residents, with the help I might add of my colleague, the MLA for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor), who was then a city councillor in the area; and now they are fighting this development for the land immediately north of Portage Avenue. In all three circumstances developers wanted to pave over that streambed and its banks. My colleague, the Member of the Legislature for Wolseley, has suggested that it is appropriate for the province to perhaps set out in absolute terms its feeling about paving over streambeds.

Has the Minister given that proposal any thought in that he seeks to clarify the relationship between the province and the city, which is applauded by the Opposition? We think that obviously, as I have said earlier, it is much preferable to have the city taking the leadership on these issues. As the Minister points out, primarily these are within, one would think, its jurisdiction, but given that the city has repeatedly paved over the streambeds which run through this city, and has sought to do that on many occasions since, and is seeking to do it again or at least allowing it—involved

in a relationship of complicity with the developer, does the Government support legislation, whether it be to The City of Winnipeg Act, or another statute which would in effect prevent the construction of commercial projects over existing flowing riverbeds in this city and indeed in the province?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Acting Chairman, it seems to me that is a far too simplistic an approach to the issue. What is the difference between paving over a waterway and draining it so it is no longer the same form that it was before? There may be some differences aesthetically, but the effect is still the same. The water is gone and the impacts—potential water retention and riverbank and so on is gone. It raises a legitimate point, but it is not something that is anything more than a debating point as far as I am concerned at this point because you need to look at a far broader concept.

We are talking about the city in this case rather than the whole provincial environment. I think it needs to be done as part of an overall plan which would respect two things, the desire of people in the city to have comfortable affordable housing in an area that is not necessarily a concrete canyon that is aesthetically pleasing and comfortable and away from some of the impacts of traffic and so on, but in order to do that it has to be addressed in my opinion on a very broad basis and that specific green areas need to be designated and referenced.

We hear a lot of talk about the autonomy of various levels of Government. As a former member of school board and as the Member for Sturgeon Creek as well, I am sure we have all at some point been upset with the other level of Government, the province, coming in and imposing something upon the school boards or upon the municipalities as would be the case here. I am not familiar enough with Plan Winnipeg, and I do not want to put something on the platter of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) that may cause problems for him, but the overall planning process within the city needs to be forced to address these types of problems. To simply say we refuse to allow the paving over—I believe were the words of the Member for St. James—the paving over of a waterway, does not address the problem. You can do lots of things to a waterway that does not pave it over and still destroy it.

There are lots of things that can be done in the name of planning in urban development that would make a tremendous difference, bearing in mind that it has to be done in my opinion as part of a larger plan. There have been larger plans developed for this city but a plan, the same as many other things, can be a growing and changing thing. However, to change it every time there is a request to change it, again in my opinion, is irresponsible and is no different than when we talk about the planning surrounding small communities or large communities. Obviously, the pressures are far greater in larger communities but the long-term plans need to be properly made and amended only within the context of the overall effects that it would have in the larger plan that is being developed.

Mr. Edwards: Well, an overall plan that would stop the construction of commercial projects over rivers and

streams and would stop people from draining rivers and streams in the promotion of commercial development, or whatever, is certainly something that I would like to see. I mean, that is a great thought that the Minister has put forward but the fact is the people in my constituency have fought the paving over of Omands Creek now three times.

My question to the Minister is, when is this grand plan going to come forward that is going to stop commercial development over our rivers and streams? When exactly is this Minister going to take the bull by the horns and deal with reality, which is our environment being desecrated at the hands of developers on a fairly regular basis, not just in this city, as the Minister states, but all over this province? It is all well and good to talk about grand plans, but when is the action going to allow the people of my constituency not to have to fight this fight again, because they are tired of doing it for the preservation of their environment? They would like to see some responsible action on the part of legislators to deal with it ahead of time before the crisis comes to their door.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I am pleased to see the vehemence of the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards). Perhaps he can go back and make presentations to the City Council. He now probably has quite a few friends on there from what the election night reports tell me. He should have more influence than I do with City Council to take responsibility for the damn fool things they have done in the past and in the future that they could have avoided.

As I said before, within the broader context the province can have a great deal of input, but we are on a very, very rocky road if every little bit of construction within a municipality starts to fall under The Environment Act. There has to be reciprocal and correct regulations that will allow them to deal with it.

I am quite prepared as is the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) to get on with it. After all, we announced the initiative about three weeks ago that we had reached a conclusion after discussions with the city that this is the route we are embarked upon. I would look forward to his support in dealing with this issue and would welcome continuing questioning from him in the future because I believe in terms of the urban environment it is particularly very important.

* (1540)

In rural Manitoba we obviously have not had the pressures for development. Most rural communities, when there is something that would have an environmental impact, a significant development, it would naturally fall to the environmental clearances from emissions to air and water or to soil if that was potentially there. When you are talking about the kinds of developments where we are talking about the aesthetics, where we are talking about the preservation of certain unique situations, I believe we need to work very closely with the local planners and they need to be held accountable for some of the decisions they are making. Either that or we are going to end up with municipalities being run under The Environment Act and frankly I think that would be a grave mistake.

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Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Chairman, I believe that would be a mistake as well, but rather than make exceptions and have to have a Minister intervene and make special exceptions and no doubt enemies on projects on a one-by-one basis, it is far better to have a piece of legislation which covers everyone and guidelines set so the province does not have to deal with that on an exceptional basis.

When will the Minister be coming forward with legislation which will prohibit the commercial construction over rivers and streams? Will it be in this Session? As I say, my constituents have now fought this battle three times on Omands Creek. I cannot speak for the rest of the province but I am sure it has been fought many other times. When is this Minister going to be coming forward with the grand plan that he speaks of, because quite frankly as far as I can tell, this city and this province is in dire need right now.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Acting Chairman, the Member speaks of an urgency to get on with this. I can tell him that I feel the urgency as well but I am afraid I see a greater concern if we were to follow the type of suggestions that the Opposition appears to be putting forward where the province would assume an increasing amount of the workload in relationship to environmental assessment of an increasing number and types of developments.

The simple mechanics of it are that it would probably require dramatic increases in the staff and allocations within the provincial level to deal with the dramatic increases. We have really pressured the Environment Department this past year with the amount of work that has been put forward. There is in fact a backlog with the commission. I do not mind saying that when I became Minister or when the previous Minister was in this portfolio as well that the workload started to increase with this Government because of the recognition of the valuable independent comment that is needed from the Clean Environment Commission.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

That is a somewhat cumbersome process for very minor projects. Major projects or ones of significant impact require that much greater degree of work and detail. The smaller projects can be dealt with within the larger plan of how an urban centre wishes to develop. I feel a little uncomfortable debating urban policy if I am relating it only to environmental issues inasmuch as urban development plans can reflect the desires of communities to protect their environment if that is the way the councils propose to move.

The quality of life as reflected by the type of physical environment people live in is very much part of urban planning and urban planners' training. I guess my year in Municipal Affairs is showing because I have a certain predisposition to get on with this type of work. It is rather odd that in fact one of the biggest levers we are going to have to do that with is the environment.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to have the opportunity to get in the Estimates process dealing with the environment.

As you watch media and read the newspapers or any magazine that you pick up nowadays you find there are more and more people becoming concerned about the environment. You wonder where it began. Is it the better coverage, the better coverage of the news media? Is it because of the coverage that people are becoming more concerned, or is the information available to us making people become more concerned?

I know in attending that conference in Barbados we had an example where some of the coastal countries there were being affected because of the global warming trend. There was going to be flooding. When you look at some of the concerns that are being raised the two major concerns are quality of air which we breathe, and I guess that is where the forest plays a big role in the regeneration of oxygen and gathering of carbon dioxide. I think we have to be concerned about what is happening on our own continent because it affects the global climate and quite often people point fingers at the rain forest in South America and say, how devastating; our air supply and the global warming all has an effect.

I guess the other area that people have a great concern is in the quality of our water. I guess that is one of the reasons I am concerned about the Rafferty-Alameda. When you look at some of the reports that have come out from the federal government telling us that under normal circumstances as we chart how much water flow there has been over the years, it would take 40 years to fill the Rafferty-Alameda dam. I wonder if the people there would be allowing pumping of underground water aquifers to fill that dam. If that is so how would that be affecting the underground water right across that province that affects us as well.

If it is water being pumped from underground water, how would that quality of water be affecting the water that is going into the states and eventually coming into Manitoba. I know it becomes an international problem because it is crossing the boundaries into the states and then coming back into Manitoba. The report that was done by the federal department shows the oxygen levels in the reservoirs would be of a quality that there would be fish-kill in the summer months and early fall. I guess it shows that water in the reservoirs would be shallow and stagnant for long periods of time. I guess the high rates of evaporation would cause more nitrogen and phosphorous gathering in those reservoirs, so it would cause a lot more algae to be growing in those reservoirs. You just wonder how the water quality that is the obligation that exists between international boundaries would be affected.

I am wondering if there has been any research carried out or any questions asked by this Government if they are considering diverting the North Saskatchewan River. I know that there was one civil servant in Saskatchewan who was fired because he let out some information that was an area that they were considering putting in a 40 mile channel there which would allow the draining of that water. I am wondering, has the Minister made any inquiries to see if that is a consideration. If that was considered then Manitoba's water would be affected to a great degree. I am wondering if the Minister has asked any questions in that particular area.

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Mr. Cummings: Well, first of all, on the ground water issue there is a specific clause in the agreement that prohibits the transfer of ground water into the Rafferty-Alameda reservoirs. Diversions to supplement this are quite severely restricted. Wetlands are not allowed to be drained to provide the water that is restricted by the licence. The diversions are quite severely limited by the conditions of the licence. Only small amounts of water could be transferred so it would seem that the specific diversion that the Member refers to would probably be impractical or not licenced under the terms of this licence that has been issued. Not allowed is the word.

* (1550)

Mr. Harapiak: The Minister says it would not be allowed. Does that mean it would not be feasible or is it forbidden by international law, and if it is why would that be so seeing as it is a supply of fresh water? There has been engineering studies carried out which show that it could be feasible to transfer the water that way. How is the Minister saying it could not be allowed?

Mr. Cummings: It would be the quantity restrictions under the terms of the Rafferty-Alameda licence that would restrict the type of transfers that the Member is talking about.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, there has been a lot of concern expressed about protecting the water quality that we have supplying the City of Winnipeg, the Shoal Lake area. Last fall there was some people raising the concern that the pond had been spiked by some people in order to show a high level of cyanide in the vicinity of where we were getting our water for the City of Winnipeg. Has the Minister had the department carry out any of our own investigation or are we taking the word of the Ontario Department of the Environment that water was not spiked?

Mr. Cummings: The water quality samples and tests that have been done over the last number of months and actually historically have been jointly conducted between the Province of Manitoba and Ontario, although obviously with the interest that has been generated lately, we have attempted to make a much more concentrated effort to be fully part of the process.

In reference to the pond where there was a lot of discussion about whether or not it had been spiked, there is still in my opinion, no definite conclusion to explain the levels of cyanide.

The thing that we have to keep reminding ourselves, and I am sure that the Member for The Pas does not want to leave the idea on the record that this was anything other than a cyanide pond or a settling pond wherein a mining extraction process was attempted to be done. When we talk about the levels that were in this pond, whether they were at the elevated level that was recorded and caused a lot of excitement, or at other times of the year what are deemed to be acceptable levels and yet still above drinking water quality standards. That in itself is an unfair statement, because this was in fact a settling pond and this is where you would expect to find contamination.

This was a pond that was fully contained and despite the theory that this may have had a high cyanide level in it because of ice formation or because of sediment that was in the bottom and was stirred up again for whatever reason, it is still not accepted in my understanding by a large number of technical people but that is the full and complete explanation of why there was elevated levels in the pond at that time. It remains unexplained. If there is a natural cause, an explanation, we have not found it or accepted it. That does not mean that we are accusing anyone in particular of having spiked it.

It was the owner of the mine site who raised the issue that someone could have spiked it, that was obviously raised the issue of whether or not that was a concern or a real possibility. We are not in a position to make a judgement on that except that I have to constantly remind anyone who wants to talk about it that we are talking about a mining operation that had this as a settling pond and that is where you would expect to find contaminants. The problem that arose was however the unexpected high level of contaminant that was in this water. That has not been properly explained.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, you raised the fact that I was making comments on this and I was certainly not implying that anyone had spiked it. Sue Dobson, the president of Kenora Prospectors and Miners, which as you said, were the owners of the pond said that she believed that someone trespassed the mine site and spiked one of the ponds with cyanide. That is the only reason I was asking the question. I think when the questions were being brought forward somebody may have been implying that Winnipeg Water Protection Group may have had something to do with this in order to raise the concerns of the people who are making the decisions dealing with this water. That was the only reason I was raising it.

I think it is an issue that is of grave concern to the City of Winnipeg, the people of Winnipeg, because that is one of the best sources of drinking water that exists. I think we should all be concerned that it is protected.

I just was wondering if the Minister has given any further consideration to supply intervening funding for a group like the Winnipeg Water Protection Group so they can carry out some of the research that is required in order to continue to have some of the best drinking water in the world.

Mr. Cummings: No. I have answered this question several times on public discussion in the House and the media. Manitoba does not have a provision in its Act for intervenor funding, we put a considerable amount of resources into our environment department. We do believe that in this particular issue that the environment department is quite a ways ahead of the issue, that we have a good grip on what is needed to protect this water. I believe the taxpayers and the public at large have a right to expect that we use the expertise that we have on hand. We are not the proponents, we are in fact the protectors of this water quality. Part of the basin lies on Manitoba's side of the border. We have a responsibility there as well. We believe that all

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of the concerns can be addressed through the department.

There is one part of the previous question that I would like to expand on a little bit and that is regarding the cyanide levels. I do recall that as we took more tests throughout the course of the summer the cyanide level was dropping which would indicate something. There are conclusions that you could draw from that, but I believe it is still too soon to draw conclusions as to what may have caused the sudden elevation of the levels. We will have to continue to do monitoring and testing to see if we can eventually reach a positive conclusion.

One of the concerns regarding Shoal Lake is there are an awful lot of things that have been there for years and suddenly are elevated to the attention of the public through the process that is on right now. I would suggest that the Province of Ontario has come a fair degree towards agreeing with us in the preservation of the quality of the water of that area, but they have not brought forward a final and definitive work plan on how this will be dealt with. Until we have that, we will continue to pressure very hard for the conclusion of joint-basin management knowing full well that there will be impacts on our side of the border as well because we have a lot of people who live in that area who are on part of the watershed that feeds into Shoal Lake and Indian Bay in particular.

* (1600)

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, John Barr, an Ontario Minister of Environment spokesman, makes the comment that he did not believe the cyanide was brought in from an outside source. He felt it was present in the pond and he gave the explanation that it was because of the ice conditions that did not allow the cyanide to be burned off. That is the way that they explained it. Does the Minister accept that as a logical explanation as to why the cyanide could have been higher at that time of the year?

Mr. Cummings: In fact that was the conclusion that I was referring to when I said that some people had reached conclusions, but we had not accepted any definitive answer as to the reason for the elevated levels. Long-term testing may eventually establish whether or not that is a correct theory, but up until now I do not believe that it can be proven that is correct either.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Minister can tell me what the status of the Consolidated Professor proposal on Shoal Lake is at this time.

Mr. Cummings: This whole discussion regarding Consolidated Professor began back when they finally made an application for licence. After a considerable amount of negotiation between ourselves and the Province of Ontario, the Province of Ontario agreed that Consolidated Professor would be brought in under what is known as the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, which is the stiffest process that Ontario has in place. They have a three-tiered application, I believe it is, one would have been only

under The Mines Act and the two, including the one I mentioned, are under The Environment Act. They have tabled preliminary guidelines for the evaluation for this project, but those guidelines are to be reacted to by the public. They have agreed that these are preliminary guidelines and have invited responses from the public to which they will then respond before they ask Consolidated Professor to bring forward their proposal.

Mr. Harapiak: Under those guidelines, which were issued on October 15, there is only a 30-day period where you can respond, and that seems like a fairly short time frame especially when you take into consideration that the people who are making presentations and who are concerned about the quality of Shoal Lake are people who volunteer their time. The Minister has once again said that he would not consider giving even intermittent funding. Would it be possible to extend or ask for an extension of time seeing that it is only a 30-day period? Would the Minister take that under consideration to extend the deadline?

Mr. Cummings: Yes, those deadlines were extended until the 30th of this month, I believe. The fact these were deemed to be somewhat short is however reflective of the Ontario process whereby these were preliminary guidelines. After the initial round of public discussion on these, there will be a second round of public discussion when they issue much more detailed guidelines for an assessment of the proposal.

Mr. Harapiak: Has the Minister had any discussions with the Ontario Environment Department and indicated to them the urgency of having hearings in Winnipeg? Have they given you any indication of when there would be hearings in Winnipeg?

Mr. Cummings: It is our understanding that there will be hearings in Winnipeg. The discussions with Ontario have been ongoing. Any of the concerns that they had about bringing an Ontario assessment process to another jurisdiction, and the requirements for lawyers and so on, we believe we have answered. We are also able to use the fact that we took our own Clean Environment Commission into Saskatchewan on the Name Lake issue as a precedent we felt was important and has allowed us to leverage what we think is quite a positive position regarding having hearings in Winnipeg.

Mr. Harapiak: Is the Minister aware of any other initiatives or proposals that are being discussed for development, either in the land development or mining development or cottage development, which may affect the quality of the Shoal Lake water supply?

Mr. Cummings: I believe the Member probably has a copy of a report that was released from the department last summer. Where there are about 15 or more potential projects in and around the Shoal Lake area there is always the question of whether or not some of the Native landholders in the area might want to proceed with development as well. Although the city, and I forgot the name of the band, but Chief Red Sky, I believe it is, and his band have reached an agreement. There

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are other Native lands there as well. That is something that we consistently have to be on top of because it is quite correct to say there is a lot of potential development if circumstances were to change that would be seeking the opportunity to develop.

Mr. Harapiak: Would the Minister be open to a suggestion supporting a resolution of a water quality Bill which would—when you are dealing with water you seem to be crossing boundaries. Rafferty-Alameda is an example of where you crossed the Saskatchewan-Manitoba boundary, and our own situation, the Shoal Lake, is the Manitoba-Ontario boundary. Would the Minister be supportive of a resolution or a Bill addressing the water quality on a federal basis so that the federal Government would be in charge of all the water quality right across the country?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, on the specifics of whether or not I would support a Bill, I would guess that the Member is referring to a Bill that was introduced in the House of Commons by his compatriots at the federal level. My recollection of that Bill was it was not of a nature that would address some of the concerns we have. At the same time however there is federal legislation right now, the Water Quality Act I believe, that would address a lot of the concerns. It is not, however, being implemented.

There are interjurisdictional problems that are some ways from being fully resolved. That is why the Province of Manitoba has been working rather diligently at the National Council of Environment Ministers' level. Our work was approved at the First Ministers' Conference regarding the delineation of federal-provincial responsibilities in environmental matters.

I would have to suggest that these negotiations have moved along rather well. The First Ministers referred the working paper, endorsed the spirit and the direction of the working paper, and referred it back to the Ministers of Environment it to bring to a conclusion by—I believe it is the 1st of April or at least quite expeditiously. If I could be allowed to blow our own horn a little bit on this issue, it was Manitoba that chaired the committee of Deputy Ministers, and it was myself who introduced it at the Ministers' level, and ultimately received concurrence of all provinces and the federal Government at that meeting. Minister Bouchard has been quite co-operative in order to allow us to move this along as expeditiously as we have.

While the relationship between that and the question the Member asked is not direct, it is however very important that the responsibility for quality, which is part of environmental matters, be seen to be clearly defined at the federal and provincial levels, or we will consistently be in a situation where if we do not like what our neighbouring province is doing. We will have to ultimately turn to the federal jurisdiction every time we have a transboundary problem. Simply, in my opinion, that is not working satisfactorily.

* (1610)

Mr. Harapiak: I am pleased to hear that the Minister has taken the initiative to bring this to the federal

Minister's level and spearhead the discussions because I think this is an area that is extremely important. I think the sooner we come up with one authority that will overlook all of our water supplies and preservation of our water quality I think the better off we will be because this is an extremely important area that concerns many people.

Just getting back to the assessment with the Ontario Environment Department, has the province made a submission to those hearings?

Mr. Cummings: They have not reached that level. We are responding to the preliminary guidelines that they put out however.

Mr. Harapiak: Will you be making joint submissions or proposals along with the City of Winnipeg, or will the City of Winnipeg be making separate—or are you aware of the city making submissions to the hearings?

Mr. Cummings: We are working co-operatively with the city but I would anticipate that in order to emphasize our points that probably even strategically it would be correct for us to make separate submissions, but certainly it is intended as a co-operative working effort. The City of Winnipeg has a fair bit of expertise within their municipal staff that they are making use of, and I believe have delegated some responsibility to get on with the responsibility of dealing with this.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, just moving over to another area still dealing with the water regulations and water quality, the Minister recently put out a press release dealing with tougher regulations dealing with pulp and paper and, I guess as he talks about dumping into the Saskatchewan River. When will this be coming into effect?

I admit that when we were the Government we were exceeding the guidelines at that time, and now with Repap not moving ahead with their construction as soon as they had expected, how will these guidelines affect the operations in The Pas when you say that you will, by bringing all aspects of the pulp and paper mills under a standard set by provincial environment regulations, be able to provide comprehensive control of that industry? Does that mean there will be no more dumping of the quantity of waste that was previously being dumped? How will this affect the present operation of Repap in The Pas?

Mr. Cummings: The impact as of the gazetting of those regulations—there will be no change inasmuch as our guidelines are the same as, or exceed federal regulations. When the new mill begins to operate their levels of discharge will of course be controlled by the licence and by the new regulations.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, Repap recently made the announcement that they would not be proceeding with the development of Phase 1 or any of the phases until they have all of the environmental hearings on all phases of the operation. Now that the Minister knows we have a little bit of time, has the Minister taken the initiative

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to meet with the environmental groups so they can get their concerns on the table so we can make sure all of those concerns are addressed and they can prepare their work prior to the Clean Environment Hearings being called?

Mr. Cummings: We are dealing with that on a daily basis so I cannot say that I am meeting daily, but certainly they are making their concerns known to the department on an on-going basis. It is one of those situations where I suppose sometimes as Minister you know your critics may have a great deal to say about particular projects. At the same time, they need to have the opportunity to express those concerns directly to the department. So I am not in any way restricting their access to make comments to the department because ultimately the department will be making recommendations on the regulatory aspect.

The application for the forestry management plan, I believe, is now on public record so we are moving forward in that area.

Mr. Harapiak: Has Repap approached the Government to call a Clean Environment Commission to hold hearings concerning all phases of their operation in The Pas?

Mr. Cummings: The Phase 2 mill conversion would be the only application that we do not have presently. As I said, the forestry management application just recently arrived. I am not personally involved in the negotiations between the province and the corporation, and that is for a very purposeful reason. We are the regulating department in this issue and the timing and the carrying out of the terms and conditions of the agreement struck between the province and the company are not an issue of which I am directly involved with other than at the Cabinet level. Obviously, decisions that are made by Cabinet I am part of, but as the regulatory department I am not on a daily negotiating basis with the corporation.

Mr. Harapiak: Will this Minister take the initiative to approach Repap if they have not made the move to you to have Phase 2 of the proposal addressed?

Mr. Cummings: The Member need have no concerns about the willingness of this Government to get on with the Repap deal. Because I am not personally at the table with the company does not mean that there are not other people who are actively working with them and I want to guarantee that that is the case.

Certainly this is a development that we have put on the record many times as being a positive development, one which we believe has a great deal of strong points related to environmental protection. Financially Repap is a strong company. Their environmental record is good. We are very supportive of the manner in which they operate. As a Government we see a great many pluses to this.

I simply indicate to the Member that as the Minister responsible for the regulatory side of this that I am not involved in day-to-day discussions. Repap, however, is

quite often in contact with my department in their regulatory responsibilities and I am fully apprised of that process.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity to travel to Wisconsin to see Repap's operation there and I want to support the Minister's words that this is a corporation that is very concerned about the environment. If their operation went into affect in The Pas at the same level that it is in Wisconsin, then they would be meeting or exceeding the guidelines that are in place right now. So I know that they are a corporation that is very concerned about the environment. There is one area that I felt that they were not supportive though. That is in the area of utilizing recycling paper.

Has the Minister taken any initiative or approached this subject with Repap to see if they are willing to reconsider their operation now that they have more time to evaluate it and see if they are willing to move into an operation which would take into consideration some of the availability of paper that is right at this present time being wasted which would add to the life of the forest in Manitoba to a great degree?

I think at this time people are not concerned about the survival of the forest because they feel there is a lot of it. I think if we are hit as a province with the forest fires that we were hit with last year, if the dry conditions were to continue, then it stands to reason that there would be more fires again in the next year which would again affect our supply of forest products to a great degree. Has the Minister had any discussions with Repap about the utilization of waste paper?

* (1620)

Mr. Cummings: I think the issue of recycling paper in this province is being somewhat distorted by the types of issues that are being raised in relationship to Repap.

We need to remember that Repap is situated in the Northern, well not Northern in terms of our Northern boundary, but further north than where the majority of consumption is in this province. The province has, however, plenty of ability to pursue and actively achieve the goal of recycling a great deal more of our paper and whether it is Repap that does it or whether there is another company that is willing to pick up the volume, recycled paper as it moves into the marketplace will ultimately have the impact that it was intended. That is to reduce the demand for virgin pulp.

Having said that, I do not think that it is a detriment to the Repap project that they do not actively haul the pulp or the recyclable paper back to The Pas. I believe that there are alternative companies that are quite willing to pick up that usage and therefore it will ultimately have the same impact on the total amount of forestry usage in this.

In this case we are talking about a North American market. We cannot view Manitoba as an island unto itself on this particular issue because obviously the pulp is consumed outside of the province. The paper, a large—well we use a lot of paper—we produce a great deal more than what we consume. So the fact that the

paper I believe will soon be into the recycling stream will ultimately have the same results as putting it into a specific plant. The economics of space, the economics of process can be put in place.

After all I think the Member would agree that if we do not have economics in place for dealing with this type of a problem, we are going to have to supplement it with taxpayers' dollars and that is something that I would be very reluctant to get into. I think recycling needs to be done on an economic basis.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of research going on in the whole area of recycling material and utilizing it where in previous years it was looked at as a waste and it was filling our landfill sites.

I think that paper is one of the biggest—I am not sure if offender is the right word—but it is the biggest volume that goes into the landfill sites. I think the sooner that the Government gets aggressive and starts asking for more and more recycled paper to be used in some of their operations, I think that the public is now very willing to utilize recycled paper as well. I think that—the Minister says it has to be economically viable—I think that when you are looking at the economics of it, you not only have to look at the product, but you have to look at the cost of our disposal sites as well. I think there has to be a co-ordination of the waste sites.

The municipalities have to become involved in this because when you consider the high cost of disposing of some of those wastes and you take that into consideration and then the willingness of the public to almost ask for recycled paper right now, I think it would become viable. I am wondering, has there been any discussions with the municipal Government on how much they could save if there was a recycling of paper taking place?

Mr. Cummings: Well, I think it goes without saying that if we reduce a great deal of the volume of paper out of the municipal waste stream that the cost, particularly the large municipalities such as the City of Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, will be dramatically reduced.

The issue that the Member raises regarding the Government actively pursuing recycled paper or recycled content in the paper that they buy is quite correct. I would suggest that it will be addressed through procurement policy initiatives that we intend to take. I would invite the Member to stay tuned, because I believe that Governments can take an active role in how they deal with procurement. That is part of the recycling strategy which we have referred to and is very much integrated with the WRAP Act and some of the principles that are enshrined there. So, yes, it is a concern. Yes, I believe we will be able to deal with it in the not too distant future, and yes, I think there will be recycling of paper, but I do not anticipate it to be part of the The Pas operation.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Chairman, there is another corporation that exists in Manitoba now and I believe at one time they did utilize newspaper print. Has Abitibi-

Price ever used newsprint? It is my understanding that they have. Has there been any discussion recently on how they can utilize—they are in a much closer location to the source of supply for newspapers, so have there been any discussions with Abitibi-Price to either start using paper or if they have not in the past?

Mr. Cummings: The Member has correctly identified a company that would be in a good geographic position to take advantage of the demand for recycled paper and the supply that is needed to make that economically viable. I understand this company has done some very good work in the area of recycling and certainly my expectation, whether it is Abitibi-Price or whether it is one of their sister companies, the recycling companies will end up being more closely located around where the consumption is.

That would give them the efficiencies of transportation, the efficiencies of volume—and frankly while we talk about our recycling drive here in Manitoba and the fact that we expect to achieve a tremendous reduction in volume by the year 2000, the fact that we are only a million people and spread out over quite a large province, is one of the difficulties that we will have in any recycling program. In paper alone, even if we had all of the paper that is used in Manitoba given today's quantities, it does not seem to be economically viable just to use what is available within this province. We really do have to think on a very wide scale and how this is dealt with, but I can assure the Member this is very much in the minds of those who are trying to deal with this. The recycling action committee I suspect will have some very important and salient points to make on this issue as well.

* (1630)

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Chairperson, you are certainly doing a yeoman's duty today, are you not? I have questions for the Minister on a subject I hope is dear to his heart and which I hope he will be well-versed in. It is the whole idea of sustainable development.

I wonder if the Minister would be prepared today to give us an update in some detail as to just what is going on with sustainable development, and in particular the establishment of the International Sustainable Development Centre in Winnipeg. I have recently been going over some very lovely booklets put out by the federal Government, in fact, we are part of an information package on the environment. They were given out at the First Ministers' Conference this fall.

I see one here with a lovely cover of West Coast forest and it says, "Towards a Common Future," which of course is the famous title of the Brundtland Commission Report to the United Nations of a few years ago. We have another one here, "From Backyards to Borders: federal environment action in Canada's communities." We sure are waiting for a lot of action. With that introduction maybe the Minister could give us a factual precise concise update on the Sustainable Development Centre and where do we stand at this point?

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Mr. Cummings: The Member used the word "concise" in asking a question of a politician, I suspect there might be a contradiction of terms there. Yes, I will attempt to be as candid as I can on the establishment of the centre.

In very few words we expect to have an announcement quite shortly on the centre. I think, however, I need to qualify that because I have indicated previously that I anticipated an announcement shortly. What is shortly in the eyes of our federal partners on this initiative is sometimes different than what I have viewed as shortly. The expectation is however very real on my part that we are quite close to an announcement.

The federal Minister of Environment indicated at the last round table meeting, and I sit on the National Committee on Round Table, that certainly he felt it was very close to announcement but it has to come out of the Prime Minister's office. The discussions would lend both of us to believe that an announcement is imminent. Certainly, we believe we have kept up our end of the negotiations; beyond that I cannot, nor should I, reveal any details. In that end, because of the belief of all of the Environment Ministers that the Sustainable Development Centre will be coming here, we received the agreement of all Environment Ministers to move the Canadian Council Secretariat here for Environment Ministers. The very fact that no outward objections were raised to that rationale at that time I think also bodes well for the fact that we expect an announcement quite shortly.

The secretariat as the Member will recall was not a big budget, but it is in excess of a million and does mean that Manitoba will become quite active as a centre for operations relative to the environment at the provincial and federal level, because the feds are a full partner in the CCME process which I think is very positive.

I can tell you that at the last Round Table meeting we had some very significant people there who raised the point that people from Europe, Africa, and South America, have all expressed interest in the concept of the centre and some of them as a matter of fact have expressed interest and their willingness to be appointed to an international board. I am a little—I would be less than candid to say that I am pleased at the speed at which it is going. I would have anticipated an announcement by now. I am however confident that we are going to have that in hand very shortly.

Mr. Taylor: I had a briefing from Government staff, I believe it was this past April, at a meeting of environment groups here in Winnipeg. At that time reference was made to the fact that approximately a half dozen regular provincial staff were seconded from various offices to work on the project. They seemed to be fairly much at the beginning of their work. I wonder if the Minister can first of all address that provincial side of things and say what are the staff numbers that are dedicated to the exercise. Are they full or part time? Also, what sort of a budget have they now got, I would hope, because we are now into the new fiscal year? They were actually pulled together as a working group before the present fiscal year. What sort of a

budget line have we got for that and where are they in their endeavours? What have they actually achieved and at what stage is the development of the linkage between our provincial officials and their federal counterparts which I should hasten to add, the federal counterparts were not on the horizon as recent as April of this year?

So I do not know if there actually is a formal linkage. I know it is very, very important to have the provincial side, the host side, up and working and playing their part. Let us face the fact, and I think the Minister will agree with me, the establishment of the sustainable development centre in Winnipeg is primarily a federal responsibility and that is why I pose those other parts to my question.

(Mr. Neil Gaudry, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Cummings: I would be pleased to address this particular aspect of sustainable development action in the province. First of all, I can appreciate why there might be a little bit of confusion on this so I will endeavour to clear up some of the things that are happening in relation to sustainable development.

* (1640)

The Premier has established a sustainable development secretariat or sustainable development unit in connection with our Government and those are the people whom you referenced. They are not there as a sustainable development unit directly related to the establishment of the centre. They are there to work on sustainable development concepts and operations for the province as well.

The fact is the members are seconded from several parts of the salient departments. Three people from my department are presently working with that unit. The fact is the province has, with the work of this unit, there has been a lot of internal work going on which I would be reluctant to share with the Minister or with the critic at this point. As Minister, I do have resources that can help with some responsibilities that I have related to sustainable development from this unit. I get resource assistance, for example, in dealing with my responsibilities as chairman of the Provincial Land Use Committee. As a member of the national round table, I need some resource to help with responsibilities there, seeing as how I chair one of the subcommittees of that round table.

The sustainable development unit of course works with the provincial round table and the responsibilities that it has. There is a great deal of work being done in that area, the evidence of which is not already evident, which will become quite evident to the people of the province in terms of work this Government is putting together in relation to sustainable development initiatives. Within the context of environment there are a lot of areas we deal with which have the responsibility to look at sustainable development concepts in relation to the projects that we are dealing with.

The fact is, Manitoba is rapidly becoming recognized as one of the provinces of Canada that has taken a very pro-active approach to sustainable development.

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Some of the papers that have been developed within our sustainable development unit will ultimately be made public and I think they will demonstrate that this unit has done a considerable amount of work. I know the resource that they have assisted my department with, in the specific areas associated with sustainable development, the work has been rather well done.

Mr. Taylor: Could the Minister for the record, if he does not have the information with him, undertake to bring in to tomorrow's Estimates the names and the providing departments for those staff seconded to the sustainable development secretariat?

Mr. Cummings: Yes, I will take that question as notice.

Mr. Taylor: In so doing, too, could the Minister make reference to the levels and salaries for these positions, who is paying for an environment department or the providing department, in other words, the department they are coming from because they are not all Environment staff. Also, can the Minister indicate who and how the costing is going on for the other operational requirements for these staff members other than salaries?

Mr. Cummings: Yes, that can be done.

Mr. Taylor: The understanding that I had from a spokesperson for the secretariat was that, yes, there was some work being done in the fashion the Minister indicates which is support to the Minister. The prime role of that group however was to play the role of being the provincial counterpart in facilitating the establishment of the International Sustainable Development Centre and these staff members did and were playing an active role in brainstorming and developing the types of ideas as to what it was that the centre would actually do.

They were also looking at how that could then work out provincially, what would be the involvement of Manitoba's learning centres, what would be the role of Manitoba industries, that sort of thing, getting beyond the philosophical statement of the centre to what it would carry out in real life terms and let us put it in a Manitoba context. Could the Minister enlighten us on just what it is the staff has been doing this last year or so, and how far along are they in it?

Mr. Cummings: I think the Member has some reason to ask about the responsibilities of the sustainable development unit as they relate to this department, but certainly they are not responsible to this department. We are providing some people who have been seconded to the unit. They work on a variety of matters, as I indicated, related to sustainable development within this province. The land and water strategy, and soil strategy, which we have taken out for discussion recently, a large amount of that work was done by people associated with that unit. There is a tremendous amount of work being done on development of strategy for Government for future directions that need to be taken in relation to sustainable development.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair)

The responsibilities vis-a-vis the centre, I think because of the nature of the discussions, I would be reluctant to talk about the specifics of what they are doing in relation to the centre. For example, some work that I am doing with the national round table, and certainly a lot of the work that is being done in association with the provincial round table is handled through this secretariat. Of course, as the provincial round table moves forward with its agenda and makes more public comment and public statements, it will become increasingly obvious what it is they are doing in the area of precisely which topics they are dealing with.

We have a situation where the concept of sustainable development is not just being given lip-service in this province, as some people have tried to criticize us by using those terms, as the work of this sustainable development unit becomes more and more apparent. I believe the people who have made those types of criticisms will realize they were in fact unwarranted because this is an area of Government development that does not happen overnight.

It is not suddenly seeing the Messiah on the horizon and following him with a blueprint that has fallen from heaven. What we have is a development of an integrated concept that has to be used in the decision-making of Government, and when that is fully in place through all of the different mechanisms that we are responsible for dealing with, the Environment and Natural Resources, within those departments and other departments within Government, the integration in fact of Government thinking from department to department is in and of itself a demonstration of bringing sustainable development closer to a reality. To that end, the use of the secretariat and the initiatives which they work on is very, very useful to this Government.

* (1650)

Mr. Taylor: I find it interesting that the Minister makes reference to the fact there has at times been the expression used "lip-service" or "lip-service environmentalism." I think at times that has been more than fair. I think we had here an opportunity for the Minister to, Mr. Chairperson, explain, expound upon what it is this sustainable development secretariat is doing. I, as Environment Critic for the official Opposition, have been more than patient on this matter because I realize the complexity of it.

You do not have an undertaking of this nature occur overnight and you very certainly have to have co-ordination between other departments and other agencies of Government, that is an absolute watchword. I have had that patience because I have had most of my career in Government, and I know these things do not happen overnight. But when one gives the Minister the opportunity to speak to those very points, having displayed that patience, and here we are in Environment Department Estimates and we get nothing more than the past statement. While not offensive, not aggressive, it is totally uninformative.

I would ask the Minister to please reconsider his last answer and try and give us a little more information

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about what it is those officials are doing that have been seconded, some from his department I gather, some from Natural Resources, and potentially other agencies of the provincial Government as well, and say what it is they are doing with more precision and what it is they have accomplished. I think Manitobans deserve more of an answer.

Mr. Cummings: One of the primary areas in which they have been working is in relationship to the Round Table and initiatives that the Round Table has brought forward. I would remind the Member that there is a provincial Round Table meeting coming up in Brandon later this week. In fact I think it would be more than fair for me to say that some of things that are probably going to come out of that Round Table meeting this week will demonstrate the activities that the secretariat has been involved in.

The development of a sustainable development concept and strategy throughout a Government bureaucracy—albeit we are a small province in relationship to some—is a very complex and not necessarily easy thing to do. Again, I refer to the integration of the thinking and the working of the various departments that have responsibility that impact upon the environment and have responsibilities for development that to make sure that the strategies that are used in these areas are well-thought through and developed is important.

I can recognize that the Member may have some small amount of frustration, in fact, that I am not tabling work in front of him today. I can assure him that will come before too long, and that there is a considerable amount of work that is being done within this secretariat to make sure that Manitoba assumes the leadership as a centre for sustainable development and truly warrants the type of attention that is going to be brought to bear in this part of North America as a result of having the centre here.

It is important to all of us that the centre not only be here in name, but that it seems to be here because this is an area that is truly willing to demonstrate, in an active and pro-active manner, the development in the nature of sustainable development and that we have an ability throughout the Government that will be working in association with the sustainable development centre to demonstrate implementation of some of the principles which will be put forward through the centre.

The Member is correct in identifying the fact that this is a federal initiative of which the province is co-operating. At the same time, however, we view the concepts and the thought processes that surround the establishment of a centre here to be very positive in terms of potential financial impact to the province because in fact—and I have said many times and whenever I speak publicly on this issue, as I have done in several locations recently—that the thinking in terms of sustainable development and the concerns that are raised around the world, the clearing house of ideas that the sustainable development centre may bring together will also allow those people in Manitoba who have expertise or who wish to acquire that expertise to work—first of all, one way that comes to mind is

in terms of consulting with various areas that wish to develop, and there is a tremendous growth potential there.

There is growth potential associated with the fact that many people have referred to the fact that sustainable development environmental issues have started to generate its own cottage industry. It is in fact no longer a cottage industry. It generates a lot of small industries and generates requirements for an awful lot of very specific things as industries, and society deals in the way in which they deal with their environment and the types of emissions, types of processes, may very well change dramatically over the next few years as public purchasing power is brought to bear in various directions. We have some very local examples of how that can impact, even in terms of recycling certain materials within our own province.

There are people who will be able to economically take advantage of a lot of the things that may happen. In fact, there are figures being kicked around that would show that if we, by recycling as one of the major methods of dealing with it, could generate an additional 1,200 jobs in this province alone, the manner in which we deal with the waste products and by changing our attitude and changing the way in which we deal with them. So this is not only a concept where people wrap their heads in cold towels and think about the wonderful world of sustainable development.

One can also have some very practical and, if you wish to term it, even some crass thoughts about the potential of how the future of this province could unfold, but it is not just an airy-fairy concept that we are talking about, it is something that we as a Government tend to put into practice.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, you are getting a little closer there. This is a quick question. Who does the secretariat report to, yourself, or to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), or in some other fashion?

Mr. Cummings: Specifically, the secretariat would report to the Premier.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister have any organizational link to that group?

Mr. Cummings: Could you expand on that?

Mr. Taylor: The answer to the previous question was that the sustainable development secretariat is reporting directly to the Premier's Office and what I asked is this: is there any other organizational link to yourself or to your department?

Mr. Cummings: The secretariat does, as I indicated before, act as a resource to me and the department in a number of areas specifically for some specific responsibilities that I have, but in terms of all departments, they work with the departments in dealing with the issues where sustainable development would have a relationship.

As the Member would recall in the announcement and restructuring of Cabinet within this province, we

have now a committee of Cabinet, Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet. They are a resource to that committee which means that they deal with all of those Ministers as well and the responsibilities that they have.

I think the Member would agree that one of the most important things that we need to accomplish in Manitoba or anywhere else is simply to make sure that the decision makers of the day—automatically after awhile without giving it really a second thought, becomes a normal part of their thought process—consider the principles of sustainable development in their decision-making process on a daily or whatever type of decision-making that they are required to make, where it would have a relevance to sustainable development that it be part of the process, that it simply be recognized as in a way we are going to do business in this province particularly from the governmental levels.

You can well see where there is just far more work to be done than there are bodies to do it. We have made I think a significant start by putting together a group of people who can work with all of Government to make sure that we recognize and start to change our thought process so that it is simply recognized as the cost of doing business, if you will, or the benefits of doing business depending on how you view the process.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the Minister would be able to provide the job descriptions of those that are now on the Sustainable Development Secretariat, if he could also provide the mission statement of that secretariat, if he could provide this fiscal year's objectives of that group, and if he could provide those things I have just requested plus the ones that he took under advisement a little while ago before the end of the Environment Department Estimates, so that we may look at them and if necessary ask any further questions that might come up.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I would suggest that the Member's questions are quite legitimate; they do go beyond my responsibility as Environment Minister. I have probably, as Environment Minister or Chairman of Sustainable Development Committee and PLUC, as much to do and as much responsibility and help from this Secretariat, but I would suggest that perhaps his questions might be a little bit more appropriately answered, because all the questions he is asking about the budget would be outside of the realms of my department.

I guarantee him that through the process those answers can be had, but I do not think that this is the department to get them for him. We do know what our costs are inasmuch as we have some people who have been seconded to the unit and that would be our contribution to the support of the unit.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairperson, the interesting point though is that a secretariat that serves to some extent a support to Cabinet function does not necessarily give us the opportunity in the Estimates process to ask the

appropriate questions. I recognize this is not the Minister that provides the only staff for the Minister who gets the only benefit, but sustainable development is considered in a general term a functional responsibility of environment.

I thought it only fair to ask here, otherwise what might happen is we could be hopping all over the map asking in different departmental Estimates. I recognize in all fairness it is not completely this Minister's responsibility, but I would ask his co-operation and use his offices if we might as a focal point to bring forward those pieces of information into the Estimates process. I would sincerely request his co-operation in trying to do that.

Mr. Chairman: I will recognize the Honourable Minister for a very brief answer.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, I hear the questions. We have taken note of it, and I will co-operate to the extent that I can, but I would want it put on the record here that I doubt that I can provide all the answers that the Member is seeking without getting into the jurisdiction of some of the other Cabinet Members. I will agree to make sure that we have an ability to answer as many of the questions as we can.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairman: The hour being 5 p.m. and time for Private Members' Hour, I interrupt the proceedings according to the rules and shall return at 8 p.m.

IN SESSION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS RES. NO. 23-RENEGOTIATION OF AGREEMENT WITH CSIS

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles),

WHEREAS the privacy rights of Manitobans and Canadians are of the utmost importance; and

WHEREAS on June 15, 1988, the Province of Manitoba entered into an agreement (the "Agreement") with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) whereby the Province of Manitoba agreed to provide information and assistance to CSIS; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba did not secure under the terms of the Agreement adequate protection of the privacy rights of Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the Agreement provides inter alia, that certain provincial departments and branches of these departments will not have to gain the approval of the Deputy Attorney General prior to releasing information to CSIS, including the departments of Health, Labour,

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sensitive personal information and we do not know in all instances what departments or agencies are being accessed for information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are precisely the concerns that were echoed in these halls under the previous administration and why the previous administration did not sign the agreement as it stands today. This Minister, rather than heed those concerns, those concerns which are echoed by all Manitobans, signed this agreement very shortly after coming into office. Heaven knows why. CSIS had a record which was far from illustrious. True, no one denies they were attempting to work on it. Their own review committee at the federal level specifically states they were still having a problem tracking information gotten from provinces under this type of agreement.

This Minister signs an agreement, an agreement which is no where near as complete as the agreement signed by Alberta right about the same time. In effect, this Minister got snookered. The Attorney General in Alberta signed an agreement in which only seven Government departments, our agreement covers all Government departments, only seven in Alberta were specifically referenced under their agreement. Their agreement specifically provided that those agreements would be all that was going to be dealt with potentially and those departments did not include the Department of Health as ours does, a particularly sensitive one in terms of privacy for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, then shortly after, a couple of months after this agreement was signed in August, in the *Globe and Mail* it is reported that CSIS is defending spying on legitimate groups to identify "subversives." In an affidavit which was submitted in court, an agent of CSIS specifically stated that foreign-influenced subversives had penetrated broad-based political movements in Canada and might be manipulating them to put pressure on the federal Government. The subversives are attempting to exploit volatile issues by using legitimate groups to confuse public perceptions and sway opinions. That is a statement from CSIS itself. That is what these people are doing. That is what they are seeking information through these agreements to do. That is part of what they perceive their mandate. They go on to state that CSIS had been keeping files on a host of political and community groups including the youth wing of the New Democratic Party, the Company of Young Canadians campus organizations, peace groups, and Native Indian groups.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, CSIS as I say has been a troubled agency in its brief tenure. It has been trying to improve. That is why if the province is to sign an agreement with that agency it had better make sure that the specific problems which have been cited by its own review agency are dealt with in that agreement so that there is some political accountability for any information which leaves this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, later in September of 1988 CSIS revealed that it had used its information-sharing agreement with Alberta, which is a better one than ours, to glean information from personal files. That came from Reid Morden, the agency's director. He said that he had used the national intelligence service to ask a

reporter that summer to spy on fellow journalists in a bid to plug a security leak. Part of the deal with the reporter they had asked to spy on another journalist was that CSIS would give information for future stories in return. That is the kind of activity that CSIS has been involved in as recently as a year ago.

Two months after we signed our agreement which gave them in effect a fast track system on the Department of Health, the Department of Labour, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Energy and Mines, the Legislative Assembly, Industry, Trade and Technology, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Civil Service Commission, Agriculture, the Attorney General, Business Development and Tourism—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the list goes on. That is not all Manitoba gave them. We did not just give them a fast track on that, where the only people they would have to go through would be a bureaucrat who was appointed by the politicians, by the Minister of Justice.

No, we gave them more. We said, you are not restricted to those departments. If you go through the Deputy Attorney General you can get to any department in this province, not the Attorney General. There is no guarantee of political accountability; there is no guarantee in this agreement that any request by CSIS which is granted will in fact go through a political level so that the people in this province will know who to point to when information has been given that they feel has infringed their privacy rights. It is left with the Deputy Attorney General for most departments, and for the important departments, for Labour, Culture, Heritage and Recreation, and Health, it is not even the Deputy, it is an appointed person in the department who is going to review the application by CSIS.

This Minister then had the gall to say in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and I believe I am quoting him correctly, let him say that I am not. He said, the agreement allowed CSIS access to address sex and age of any Manitoba resident without restriction, locator information, but requests for medical data must get specific clearance from the Attorney General or his Deputy. Show me in the agreement where it says that. There is no such guarantee in writing. If he meant that he should renegotiate the agreement and put it in. If that is what he wanted to do, let him do it. He just did it wrong, that is all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that this agreement says you do not have to go through the Attorney General for anything. The highest rank you get to under this agreement is the Deputy, and for most of the sensitive information which is going to infringe potentially the privacy rights of Manitobans you only have to go through a designated person in each department. That includes Health and that is why Manitoba hospitals spoke out loud and clear and said, we do not agree with this, we think this is a bad agreement, specifically stating—and I am quoting *Misericordia*, *St. Boniface*, and indeed I believe the *Health Sciences Centre*—that they had serious concerns about this agreement and its impact on the records that they sent to the Manitoba Health Services Commission, which would then be accessible by CSIS.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister indicated in the House during this debate or one of the times that I

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raised it in Question Period, or my Leader did, that he had sent out a memo to his staff and he had told them anything other than locator information has to come through me. Well, might I suggest that rather than put it in a memo, why not attach it as a Schedule to the Agreement? Why not put it in the Agreement, better yet? Why not do something that Manitobans can point to and say, you are accountable for the release of information in this province, which I feel has infringed my privacy rights? Why not give Manitobans the right to point to someone who is politically accountable when they find that their privacy rights have been infringed? No, this Minister has taken the fast route out, he has put it in the hands of department officials. Not to say that those department officials will not do their best to get the job done and to only release information that is absolutely required and get the proper assurances, but the fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this agreement is all about, as the Minister indicates by signing it himself, is that political accountability is necessary, and the Minister is held to his responsibilities as the defender of privacy rights in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go on to say that in fact the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has misunderstood what he signed all along. That was proved right in his press release of June 17, 1988. He says, only individuals are investigated, not organizations or groups, and the investigations are conducted only through collection of non-intrusive open informations. Where does he get that? That is not in the agreement. There is not guarantee of that in this agreement. He then goes on to state, and it is an admission, in my view, intrusive investigation in subversive cases will be conducted only on an authorization from the Solicitor General of Canada. Does he build in that same power of review for himself, the person who is supposed to defend Manitoba's privacy rights? No, he passes the buck. The Solicitor General of Canada is going to be reviewing what sensitive information leaves Manitoba, not this Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister obviously did not consult with his other provincial counterparts before he signed this agreement. He would have known that many of them, indeed most of them, had better agreements. Somehow CSIS talked this Minister into signing this agreement. As I have said, I am not sure why. The main point is that the Minister has refused to concede that he may have made an error. He is just a little bit too perhaps hot in his seat and enjoys his job too much to admit that he is not the be-all to end-all. Maybe he made an error, maybe. Will he concede that? Never. This Minister has seen fit to go on and on and on on a road that is plain false. He has never read this agreement or he would know—

* (1720)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

The Honourable Minister of Justice.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today with a strong

sense of *deja vu*. The Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), having put this matter on the agenda now for the second Session, feels that rather than damage his own ego by removing from the Order Paper this resolution, which make little more sense today than it did a year and a half ago, in fact it makes less sense, considering the history of the agreement that we are talking about. In order to save face the Honourable Member for St. James had to discuss it again today rather than give up the day to some other Honourable Member who perhaps has some other pressing and urgent matter that really should be discussed in this Chamber. The Honourable Member felt it important to discuss the CSIS Agreement once more.

I guess he thought that somebody would listen to him because the news media so often like to write stories about the Canadian Security Intelligence Service that the Honourable Member thought, well there is a topic that maybe has some interest to people, never mind that I am not making any sense in anything I am saying, but there is at least a topic that we see headlines about once in a while, so I could maybe jump on the coattails of the various news articles appearing.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to jump on the coattails of a news article I have seen recently. In this regard my only suggestion, quite apart from the Honourable Member's suggestions as laid out in his resolution, is that I think the headquarters of CSIS should be decentralized to Brandon or to Portage la Prairie or to Flin Flon perhaps to Carberry maybe Melita.

An Honourable Member: What about Portage la Prairie?

Mr. McCrae: I mentioned Portage la Prairie as one of my first choices for decentralizing CSIS, because we know that the people of Portage la Prairie could benefit from the infusion of people, salaries being paid, but you know, if I was to suggest something like that about CSIS to Ottawa, I already know I would not have the support of the Honourable Member for St. James or the support of his Leader for such a move because we know their view on decentralization.

In that regard, I would like to refer to yesterday's Brandon Sun Editorial. It is headlined, very special note, and there is a subheadline, an open letter to Sharon Carstairs, Leader of the Opposition. Just to let Honourable Members Opposite know the offence people in my part of the province take to the position they are taking, I should tell you that the Brandon Sun, as the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) points out to me, that the Brandon Sun has not always reported or commented in a totally positive way on all of the things I have had to say or do in my career as an MLA. I am quite happy to accept that judgment and agree with the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge that yes indeed I have had negative comments said about me in the Brandon Sun, my own daily newspaper, but at least I have got enough experience in this place to be able to say perhaps I deserve negative comment on occasion but I have not heard anybody in the Liberal Party admitting that they deserve this open letter, but here it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will read it and perhaps in a fair amount because there is a lot here

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that Honourable Members opposite should reflect on before they make their final decisions.

The Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to question the relevancy. Well, I will be glad to yield the floor if he wishes to raise a point of order about the relevancy of my comments. He does not rise therefore I can assume he suggests that what I am saying is relevant.

An Honourable Member: Well, I suggest that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), on a point of order.

Mr. Edwards: I am not going to rise on a point of relevance and my point is that the Minister has indicated this letter is to Sharon Carstairs. I did see that letter. It is also to Peter Olfert of the Manitoba Government Employees Association. Perhaps you would like to clarify that for the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James does not have a point of order. A dispute of the facts is not a point of order. The Honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) has suggested that I clear up the record and I will be happy to do so. I shall read the article in its entirety.

An open letter to Sharon Carstairs, Leader of the Opposition, and Peter Olfert, President of the Manitoba Government Employees Association.

We folks out here, the heathen hicks from the hinterland, want to know why it would be so horrible for 500 civil servants to leave the cultural, social, and economic nirvana of Winnipeg to move to rural areas. From what you said to delegates at the conference of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities Convention, Mrs. Carstairs, Government employees from the capital are shaking in their boots at the prospect of moving here, and the question we must ask is, what is so wrong with Brandon or any other community out this way?

Well, you say we do not have the cultural advantages. Shame. It so happens that one of the best music schools in this country is located not at the University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg but good old Brandon University. As well, Brandon has the art gallery of southwestern Manitoba—

I will just digress for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and let the honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party know that I do not intend to make any comments about his Government's, the previous Government's support for Brandon University or what it did to Dr. Perkins or what it did not do for the art gallery of southwestern Manitoba. I do not intend to talk about that because I believe that would be irrelevant to the debate before us today—

As well, Brandon has the art gallery of Southwestern Manitoba for people more interested in visual arts. So you say Winnipeg has professional sports teams, the football Blue Bombers and the hockey Jets and soccer Fury. Well, you are right we only have amateur teams here but unlike the professional teams that charge big money for marginal entertainment our teams like the Brandon University men's basketball team have actually gotten into the habit of winning and providing affordable, quality entertainment, and the Wheat Kings are improving too. So you say, there is big business in Winnipeg. Well, there is innovative business in Brandon. Yes, the people out here sympathize that families have to move from their homes and change their lifestyles. It also happens that a lot of the people working for the Government started out here but had to move to where the jobs are—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), on a point of order.

Mr. Edwards: Well, to preclude the Minister of Justice having to go on, I agree with the excellence of the music school in Brandon. I agree with all of the attributes which are mentioned in that article of Brandon. My concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the Minister and indeed that article have absolutely misrepresented what this Government's position was on decentralization. That is not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is absolutely not—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. What is the Honourable Member's point of order?

* (1730)

Mr. Edwards: Would the Minister please mention something about the CSIS Agreement in his comments and would he please site perhaps one section just to show that he has actually read it at some point?

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A dispute of the facts is not a point of order and I would remind all Honourable Members the matter before the House is the CSIS Agreement and I would ask the Members to stay as close to the relevance of that as possible. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take your instruction seriously. The Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) said that time is short and it was for precisely that reason I remained in my seat after the Honourable Member finished his comments to see if anyone else wished to take part in this debate, but there was no interest on the Liberal side of the House.

I really find it passing strange that the Honourable Member would be so worried about time being short when absolutely nobody in his Party is interested in this particular resolution. It is just the Honourable

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Member for St. James who got his name in the paper once or twice who thinks that maybe he can do it again. That is the truth of the matter and if there are Members of the Liberal Party who wish to speak to this matter, let them speak. I sat in my chair waiting for them but they refused to rise showing me that they have little interest.

The other point is that I was reading an article in the Brandon—

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be very pleased to take the floor from the Attorney General since he does not seem to want to fulfill his duty as Attorney General.

Mr. McCrae: I am very pleased to see that expression of interest on the part of the Honourable Member for Selkirk and as soon as I am finished I look forward to hearing her comments on this particular resolution. I am assuming she wants to rise in support of it and I would be interested to have her comments on the record so I can use them in the next election campaign when I go out in all parts of Manitoba, and most certainly in Brandon West, and let the people there know where the Liberals stand on protection of Manitobans; where they stand when it comes to plainclothes police officers and how they are somehow second class citizens; where they stand when it comes to CSIS; and where they stand when it comes to protection of Manitobans with respect to their faint-hearted support for the impaired driving initiatives of this particular Government.

I only continue to read this in relation to the CSIS matter raised by the Honourable Member because the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) asked me to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Therefore, I feel duty bound to comply.

I continue to quote, it also happens that a lot of the people working for the Government started out here but had to move to where the jobs are. This policy is only correcting the mistakes of past Governments that bled rural areas dry to the benefit of one city. People here welcome the Government employees with open arms.

I will stop there momentarily and the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) referred to the fact that part of this letter was addressed to Mr. Peter Olfert and because I said to the Honourable Member I would read the article in its entirety I will read it but I had not intended to read this part.

As for you Mr. Olfert, you say the people who will be moved into the rural areas are the people who deliver the service. Big surprise. Is there any logical reason why the departments of Northern or Rural Development, Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture and others are located light years from points where the service is delivered? It only makes sense that the Government wants to move these services closer to the people. It only makes sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Government wants to move these people closer to the people who are supposed to benefit from them. The Government employees are hired to serve the people not vice versa.

I only read the latter part of that article, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) asked me to.

Speaking of CSIS Agreements, if CSIS wanted to enter into an agreement tomorrow with this Government to move the headquarters of CSIS to Brandon, Flin Flon, The Pas, Thompson, Melita, Carberry, Steinbach or Winnipeg, I would be the first to support such a move but the Honourable Member for St. James and all his colleagues in the Liberal Party are dead set against decentralization of any kind. They have made their feelings well known not only in this House through the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr)—oh, he is in favour of it. No, no he was the first one who came out against it—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only is the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) irrelevant, he is also insulting. He is now putting remarks on the record which bear no resemblance to reality at all and I would ask him to withdraw and get to this resolution that is currently before the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

The Honourable Member has two minutes remaining.

Mr. McCrae: I do trust that these four points of order, lengthy ones raised by Members of the Liberal Party because they are so defensive about their position on decentralization, I do trust that the time taken for those spurious points of order will be taken from my time in my comments.

The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) I am not one little bit surprised that he is particularly defensive because, as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, was the first one to come out four square against this Government's plan to decentralize services to rural and non-Winnipeg Manitobans and to provide communities in Manitoba, which lie outside the Perimeter Highway, with a greater Government presence and a higher level of Government Services. I think that this is despicable that the Liberal Party, that comes out and says it is for decentralization, then when a Government moves in that direction comes out four square against it. It is very bothersome to me, the people in Brandon West are not happy about the Liberal position and that is what it says here in this editorial, and this editorial speaks for very many, many Manitobans who happen to live outside the City of Winnipeg.

I, for one, happen to think that a Manitoba is a Manitoban and if they live in the riding of the Member for Fort Rouge, or the riding of the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), or the riding of the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), no matter where they reside they are Manitobans. But over and over and over again, Members of the Liberal Party in this House have let it be known very clearly where they stand if you happen to live outside the City of Winnipeg. The

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Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) for example is dead set against improving highways in rural Manitoba. As a Manitoban who lives outside Winnipeg, I find that totally unacceptable and it is totally unacceptable to all Manitobans, whether they live in Winnipeg or elsewhere because Winnipeggers are smarter than Members of the Liberal Party. They know where their roots are and they know where this province needs to be developed.

Now, with respect to the CSIS Agreement, I would be very happy to enter into an agreement with CSIS if it meant more decentralization of services outside of Ottawa or outside of Winnipeg; but in this sense, in this particular case, if they wanted to bring services to Winnipeg, I would be happy with that. But I will tell you, as Attorney General, the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles) suggests that I take my responsibility. That is what I have been doing all along. I will not be swayed by irresponsible ejaculations from people like the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) when they suggest—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member's time has expired.

* (1740)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Concordia, on a point of order.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you tell me whether the terms just used by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) are consistent with parliamentary language?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to advise the Honourable Member that I did not hear the term, I had my earplug out. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. McCrae: The Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards)—

An Honourable Member: Is this a point of order?

Mr. McCrae: Oh, yes. If I have said something that is unparliamentary, I would certainly withdraw it immediately and offer my apology, but I believe if you look in the dictionary you will find there is nothing wrong with the words that have been used in this House today.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to rise on the resolution and, hopefully, make a few short comments that will—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order. The Honourable Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Mr. McCrae: I am sorry, I will just take a moment. Was my time up, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, it was.

Mr. McCrae: Oh, well, fine.

Mr. Doer: Well, it is hard to be the reasoned voice in this Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I guess reasons should be a part of what our discussions are.

I do not know whether I am speaking on decentralization or on CSIS. It is a very important topic. On the issue of decentralization, all three political Parties support decentralization, if I can recall the election promises of last year, and certainly we will be judging the decisions of Government on their own merit.

I suggest there are a lot of communities are expecting a fair amount from this Government after their announcement. I think there will be some of them will be very disappointed.

Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is logic behind any changes we will say so, if there is not we will also be prepared to say so, but certainly the philosophy of decentralization is one which we followed. We left the Government with 48 percent of the employees working outside of the City of Winnipeg for about 40 percent of the population. We look forward to seeing whether this Government can undo the devastating effect of the Mulroney Government on rural and western Canada, because I do not believe even 500 jobs will offset what Mulroney has done to western Canada and rural Manitoba in terms of the quality of life and quality of opportunities.

Speaking on the CSIS resolution, -(interjection)- well, I am surprised the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) would comment, having urged on his Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) for the last 20 minutes, urged him on so he would not have to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not sign, as the Minister of Justice knows, the CSIS Agreement with the federal Government. We did not do so, not because we did not want to protect the security of Canadian citizens, but—

An Honourable Member: Because you did not have the guts to, that is the reason.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it takes more nerve to say no to the federal Government, and it takes more nerve to say no on behalf of the privacy of citizens than it does sometimes to walk around with "Approved" on your forehead, just signing every document that comes along from the federal Government. Unfortunately, this Minister of Justice who has, in my opinion, done a very good job on a number of issues, has failed in the area of CSIS.

We applaud his efforts to shorten the backlog in the courts. We have tried to work co-operatively with the Minister of Justice on the drinking and driving legislation, notwithstanding the challenges that will take place in the court. We will work with the Minister of Justice because we do not believe that protecting victims of crime and dealing with our justice system is one which we should always deal with in a partisan way. We should try to deal with it in a co-operative way because that is what the citizens expect.

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In the area of CSIS, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are dealing with the balancing of the security of our general population with the privacy of individual citizens. We have had, unfortunately, over the years a very negative record in Canada where the rights of citizens have been trampled upon in the name of the security of the state. We know, over the number of years, there are over a million files for active intelligence in our own country, out of 25 million people, a million files being maintained by our federal Government on the privacy issues of citizens. I think it is wrong for an open and democratic country such as ours to have such security paranoia that the privacy rights of citizens are so trampled upon by these thousands of people running around collecting files on so many citizens and using the provincial Government to accomplish that. It does take a lot of nerve to say no to big brother; it does take guts, as the Minister of Justice says, to say no to big brother. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our opinion the rights of citizens were given a blank cheque on a number of provisions in the CSIS Agreement with big brother, the federal Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we always agree to what somebody proposes in the "name and security of citizens," we would be acting like the Soviet Union if we are not very careful. I say to Members opposite that the rights of citizens is a fundamental right which we all have to respect. We cannot use the security claim of the federal Government always, that they need this for security purposes to give away blank confidential information, I believe to federal Government and the federal Government's intelligence agencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we start from the basic assumption that most citizens are honest, most citizens are working in the best interests on the security of this country, that most people involved in honest debate in our country are sincerely involved for the purposes of improving our democratic country and the rights of our citizens, so we very much worry about the trampling of individual rights. I would suggest to the Members opposite that the agreement that they have signed with CSIS and approved in Cabinet, it can be defended, yes, on the security of the state, but I suggest that the former totalitarian regimes of the right and the left have used this kind of security provisions to trample on the rights of citizens and certainly I think we should be very careful about that.

We are not saying that the federal Government now or in the future may necessarily want to do that with the access they have to files and information in Canada, but I do support the resolution and I am opposed to the agreement we have signed. I really believe that we have to go the extra mile and err on the side on confidential information for the citizens of our province and not be swayed by the arguments of the federal Government. This is not a black and white issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I say that to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), because there are security needs of a country.

All three political Parties have appointed some eminent people to be on the commission reviewing this information. A person whom I respect a great deal, Saul Cherniack, is on the commission; he has worked

on Canadian intelligence before. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe though that the omnibus provisions in some of those sections of the agreement with the federal Government go further than what I think the ordinary and average individual citizens would want. I believe that this agreement does go farther than the individual citizen would want, and I think it does err on the side of the general state rather than the individual citizen.

* (1750)

I believe philosophically that this Assembly should make decisions always in the best interests of the majority but never trample on the rights of the minority, and particularly with the files that are available through the federal Government. I would suggest that Members opposite read that agreement. I do not know whether you went to your caucus, I do not know whether you went to the Cabinet. We have made mistakes in Cabinet, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because things come there, you look at them quickly, you pass it and approve it and then you end up defending it.

I believe this agreement goes too far, and I believe the privacy of citizens, particularly as they work with the provincial Government, is of paramount concern. I think we should review this agreement we have signed. There is nothing wrong with saying sometimes you have made a mistake, and we have had mistakes before, every Government will make mistakes. I believe this agreement is a mistake, and therefore we will be supporting the resolution put forward by the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards).

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to speak not for all of the time I have available, I am going to leave enough time for this Chamber to vote on this resolution because I think that the Attorney General has made a very serious error in the early stages of his administration.

I am astounded that the Attorney General, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), would stand up in this House at this time on a resolution of this nature and treat it as irrelevantly and as frivolously as he has. He says that he has the guts to do it. He should not mistake guts for stupidity. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my father was a policeman. He was in the RCMP and then he was the Chief of Police both in the City of St. Vital and the Town of Tuxedo. I grew up in barracks, I grew up with policemen and I was raised by many of them and I know what a tough job they have and I know the work that they do, and I know the pride with which they do that work and the concern they have about the job that they have to do to protect all of us. But at the same time I share the concerns of the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) and of our critic who are concerned about the balance that can be tipped at times if we are not very careful about protecting the rights that all of us have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I worked on this agreement. I know this agreement very well, because when I was with the Department of Corrections it was my job to review it from the perspective of the Department of Corrections to look at what kind of information was being sought and what kind of checks and balances

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existed in the agreement. I wrote an opinion that was supported by the Government. The Leader of the Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) is quite correct; his Government refused to sign that. They refused for very solid reasons, reasons that are echoed by other people who have reviewed this. In the annual report for CSIS it says, the service does not distinguish between personal information or other information. It does not tag the release or receive the particularly sensitive personal information. They say in their own annual report, we do not know in all instances what departments or agencies are being accessed for information.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was new in his job when he signed this agreement. What the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) is saying is that he stop and that he think and then he ask to renegotiate, that he accept the fact that in the early stages of the administration he made an error and that he acted too hastily and that he take a little while to sit down with CSIS and renegotiate the agreement. Put into the agreement safeguards that have been achieved in other provinces, put into the agreement some things that will assure all of us who live in this province that our rights are being protected and that CSIS is not being given a mandate to wander around with personal confidential information as they choose.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen in Ottawa recently some very disturbing examples of political interference with the police. There have been some very serious charges hinted at and raised as we have watched what has happened with the budget document leaks and how the RCMP have been, or appeared to have been, or may have been influenced directly by the political arm of Government. It is exactly that kind of activity that causes concern and it is exactly that kind of activity that causes us to want to have safeguards built into agreements that allow different levels of Government access to personal information. That is what we are asking for. We are asking that the Minister of Justice of Manitoba act as the Minister of Justice of Manitoba on our behalf and that he be aware of and he approve the release of certain kinds of confidential information. We accept the fact that he has made an error.

I think the suggestion put forward by the Member from St. James (Mr. Edwards) is a responsible one. I think what he is doing is giving the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) a second chance, an opportunity. He is not saying in this resolution, he is not condemning the Minister, he is saying stop and think and correct the mistake you have made. I think it is a responsible approach. I think it is an approach that allows us a second chance, and I would hope that Members opposite would take the resolution in the way that it is represented. I would hope that we can pass this resolution today, and I would hope that the Minister of Justice would take it to heart and would undertake to protect us because that is what we are asking him to do. We have not seen that to date.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I notice the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is attempting to gain the floor. I assume from that sort of activity that he does not wish to allow this to come to a vote. I would be prepared to let him

have the floor if he wanted to put a few remarks on the record and then have it come to a vote. If, however, he is rising -(interjection)- If I had that assurance I would be prepared to relinquish some time.- (interjection)- The Minister of Finance, by his very actions, saddens me. He does the very thing that we are concerned about, he chooses to dismiss the concerns that are represented in this resolution. He will not allow this thing to come to a vote. He will not allow this House to resolve this matter now.- (interjection)-

The Attorney General, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), chose to dismiss this completely. He chose to wander around on decentralization and a whole series of other issues to avoid the embarrassment that he must feel as Minister of Justice for this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what are we asking them to do? The Minister of Justice says he is being responsible. I have to ask him, how is he being responsible?—by taking himself out of the process that evaluates the kind of information that is being released about us. How is that being responsible? How is that acting on our behalf?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not have the kind of safeguards from the very agency that wants the information. We do not have the same safeguards that other provinces have and I think it is incumbent upon the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) to stop following a narrow, partisan agenda and to start representing all of us. Thank you very much.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me assure you and other Members of this House that I take this resolution very seriously. Indeed I sense that every Member that has spoken to this resolution so far has. The Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) in my sense cut his political teeth on this issue. It was one of the first issues he brought to the public attention, so to speak, as a new representative. Let me say, and I say this in a kind fashion, to this point in time it has been the only issue that he has somehow succeeded in bringing to public attention.

So it does not surprise me that there is yet another resolution on the Order Paper with respect to this issue. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the Member in some respects is hurting, he is hurting because as a critic he has been fairly unsuccessful in attacking the Attorney General, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) over a year and a half. He is one of the better Members in my view, and I say this sincerely, he is one of the better Members in Opposition. He takes his task seriously.

I think sometimes he does what other Members of his Party do not do or often do not do and that is research his subjects. So I say to him, I sense that he not only takes this issue seriously but he believes that in presenting this resolution the interests of Manitobans have not been totally safeguarded by way of the agreement entered into by the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think though one must recognize that this Government as a new Government, indicated by the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), it was one of the first issues that we dealt with as a new

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Government and we did not take this issue particularly lightly at all. It just was not a quick recommendation by a new Minister, indeed we are all new Ministers. We looked at the agreement in some depth. We sought the views, the legitimate views of senior officials within the department. We also sought advice from outside. After all we were a new Government, we did not want to make mistakes early so there was a conscious decision-making process that was brought to the consideration of this issue.

Let me say for the record that after we did talk to what we considered to be the best people in the department, as we talked to people outside the department, outside the Government, the Government made a purposeful decision to sign the agreement. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think one might ask the question, well, would you sign the same agreement today, almost a year and a half later? I guess we best answer it by saying the Government would require more substantial arguments to be redundant in words or a greater logic than has been presented by the Opposition at this point in time for us to change our minds were we back a year and a half ago in considering the signing of the agreement.

Rights versus security is always a very difficult decision. Nobody has the perfect game plan. Nobody has the perfect blueprint on which side to err less or more. We have two points of view. I know one thing, we asked some of the very same questions. We are asked some of the very same questions that have been dialogued here in some respects in the debate now

and indeed previously. What is our greater responsibility as a Government? Is it to afford protection to people, bordering a little bit maybe in some respect in locating information, because that is what we signed? We signed an agreement which provided locator information—location.

We did that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and yet where is our responsibility? Is there some plot out there to do harm to our citizenry? What is our responsibility as a Government? Is it to provide location information? I say we take that role seriously, and indeed that is what is required by an authority of the federal Government, an agency of the federal Government. A federal Government which is mandated by the Constitution of the country to protect its citizens—(interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what are we supposed to do? Now the Member says we failed on him. In other words we have not provided I think for adequate protection of rights, of individual rights. That is the charge levelled at us by the Opposition. I say, nonsense. That is obviously the reason we have different political views, because of course there is no black and white on this issue—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene in Committee of Supply at 8 p.m.

When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Minister will have 10 minutes remaining.