



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIB
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	ND
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	ND
DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIB
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Cliff	Interlake	ND
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	ND
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	ND
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIB
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	ND
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	ND
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	LIB
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	ND
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	ND
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	ND
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	ND
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	ND
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	ND
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	ND
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 2, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Wednesday, May 1, in response to a question from the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), I provided the House with incorrect information regarding a housing project in Flin Flon. I rise now as this is my first opportunity to correct that information.

I stated that the project was not approved because the sponsoring group did not have a site for the project. Further investigation later yesterday revealed that the information provided to me by Housing staff was incorrect. On review of project details, the Flin Flon group was requested by the Department of Housing to submit an application under the October 1990 Private Non-Profit Housing Program call for proposals, which they did.

This request was made in large part out of a staff concern that there would be insufficient subsidies available under the Seniors RentalStart program to make the project viable. Applications under the Private Non-profit Program, including Flin Flon, are presently being considered for the 1991 housing program.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for inadvertently providing incorrect information in this instance.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, that would not be a matter of privilege as, according to our rules, it would be followed by a motion. We certainly would welcome any correction in terms of information, but this matter goes far beyond the clear misinformation that was put on the record yesterday and relates to a matter of clear incompetence and interference on behalf of this minister.

While we may accept the correction of the facts, we will not accept the behaviour of this minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a new point of order, I am becoming increasingly concerned about the abuse that the opposition House leader makes out of a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, for some period of time now, I have been sitting here watching him stand to his feet and, on the guise of a point of order, entering into debate and making political commentary. I say that is a tremendous abuse of the rules in itself.

Certainly every member has the right to rise to his feet on a point of order when procedure is being brought into question. That is a legitimate right of every member of this House. It is not the legitimate right of any member, particularly the opposition House leader, to rise on the guise of a point of order, enter into political debate and to attack. I say that is incorrect, and I ask the member subsequently—I ask you to bring him to attention indeed if he is to continue to abuse the rules in this fashion.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, if the government House leader had been listening, he would have heard that I was referring directly to the so-called matter of privilege raised by his minister. If he had advised his minister correctly, he would have advised his minister that it was not in order for the minister to rise on a matter of privilege without a motion to follow. That is clearly against our rules.

I rose on that matter, and given the fact that the minister was apparently not dealing with a matter of privilege, I had indicated that, while this side of the House had accepted the fact that the minister was admitting to misinformation, we felt the matter went far beyond that. Those comments related directly to comments that were placed on the record by the minister, Mr. Speaker, and I have no intention of following from the government House leader's

words. I believe we are following the rules. We are asking the government to follow the rules—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we in the Liberal Party welcome the apology from the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the same point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: A new point of order. As—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We will deal with them one at a time.

On the point of order raised by the honourable opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton), which refers to the matter of privilege raised by the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst), the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs does not have a matter of privilege because he did not conclude his remarks with a substantive motion. Therefore, the honourable minister is out of order there.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what I was going to suggest, and I guess it should have been to that same point of order, was the fact that the minister did not have a matter of privilege. I was going to recommend that we treat it as a ministerial statement—because he would have been within his right to make a ministerial statement of that nature—and allow the two opposition parties an opportunity to respond to the minister.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster did not have a point of order.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise at the first possible opportunity on a matter of personal privilege.

Yesterday, May 1, 1991, in reply to my question to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst), the honourable minister said, ". . . with respect to the housing project in Flin Flon, the organization there was unable to provide satisfactory evidence that they had a site on which to build, . . ." However, Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from Flin Flon Rotary Club to the Honourable Mr. Ducharme, Minister of Housing—formerly—that in fact they do have land.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that this House call upon the Minister of Housing to apologize to members of this House, the Flin Flon Rotary Club and the Flin Flon Housing Co. for misleading the House and putting false information on the record.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, are you seeking advice on this motion or are you ready to rule?

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I am ready to rule on this issue.

On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), I believe the House has just heard the remarks of the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) where he did indeed apologize to the House for misleading.

As far as the Chair is concerned, this concludes remarks and is satisfactory to the Chair that this apology was acceptable, which we thank the honourable minister for. Therefore, the honourable member for Burrows does indeed not have a matter of privilege.

* (1340)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the 1989 report of the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation. I would like to also table the 1990 Annual Report of Manitoba Telephone System; and thirdly, I would like to table the Thirty-Seventh Annual Progress Review for the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of all members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today His Excellency Emmanuel Gondwe, who is a high commissioner from Malawi.

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

Also with us this afternoon in the Speaker's Gallery, we have Chief Raymond Swan who is a chief for the Lake Manitoba First Nations and also the chairperson for the First Nations Confederacy and the chairperson for the Interlake Reserves Tribal Council.

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

Nous tenons à vous signaler la présence, dans la galerie, de trente étudiants de la quatrième année de l'École Taché sous la direction de Giselle Poirier. Cette institution est située dans la circonscription du député de St. Boniface (M. Gaudry).

(Translation)

Also with us this afternoon, seated in the gallery, we have thirty Grade 4 students from Tache School, under the direction of Giselle Poirier. This school is located in the constituency of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry).

(English)

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Minister of Housing Resignation Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne last October said very clearly in this Chamber that Canadians, and indeed Manitobans, said no to the old style of elite accommodation and closed-door politics. Mr. Speaker, we were worried at the time the Premier (Mr. Filmon) made the announcement of the Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing, when he made his Cabinet shuffle a couple of months ago, we said that returned us back to the old closed-doors way of doing business.

Since that time, we have seen through the torturous revelations of the Pines project that preferential treatment was used for some projects over other projects. Certain information was given to other projects in Charleswood and Flin Flon that no money was available when only one project was being considered for money. Public money is being used, in our opinion, in a preferential way, contrary to all the information the government had available to it, for one project over other citizens of Manitoba to put public money in.

I would ask the Premier whether he will practise what he preached in his Speech from the Throne, and say no to the old-style politics, closed-room preferential dealings and elite accommodations, and remove the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst), so that all Manitobans can have a fair shake at housing

projects, just the same way, from one region to another?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have believed, ever since I was a Minister of Housing, that one of the most important things that we do in respect to seniors in this province is to provide affordable housing, one of the areas in which Manitoba has an excellent record and has taken advantage of a whole host of programs that have been put in place by federal and provincial governments throughout the past couple of decades.

We have provided fine-quality, fine-stock housing for seniors in communities throughout this province. Whenever I go into small rural communities everywhere in the province, I visit seniors' homes. I often find that they enjoy their housing, that they are very proud of the—(interjection)—Mr. Speaker, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) is chirping away. He does not have either the courtesy or the courage to speak when he is entitled to speak, and he chirps away from his desk. He has not been asking questions on this issue. Others have been carrying the issue for him, because he knows that this government has a record of fairness in dealing across the board with all of them. The Leader of the Opposition—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to finish his response.

Mr. Filmon: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that this government has approved a number of projects under Seniors RentalStart. Since that very throne speech, approval was given to a project in Dauphin. I did not hear any complaints from members opposite over that. Approval was made to a project in Niverville. I did not hear any complaints from members opposite over that. You have heard in this House of the tremendous demand that there is from seniors in the St. James-Assiniboia area who have been lacking projects for seniors' housing for some time, who came out in the hundreds—

* (1345)

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Why did the minister approve and solicit it then? Tell the truth.

Mr. Filmon: It was not solicited, Mr. Speaker, and I would implore the member for Flin Flon not to put incorrect information on the record—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: When I asked the Premier a similar question on Monday, the Premier answered that the zoning by-laws in the City of Winnipeg that were passed were the consideration of the land-use policies that the government utilized to make this decision.

Winnipeg International Airport Report Recommendations

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): After that date, June of 1990, the government received a copy of an advisory committee for the protection of the Winnipeg International Airport, July of 1990, that had 23 recommendations against high-density projects, that indicated a number of economic factors to consider for the Winnipeg International Airport. The government received this document after the zoning decision of the City of Winnipeg.

I would ask the Premier whether he considered the information he had received about the economic impact on the International Airport when he went ahead and supported his Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) on the approval of this project, or did he neglect this information in awarding the project that the Minister of Housing was obviously so intent on getting approval for? -(interjection)-

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Scattered applause.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat for the member for Concordia, that project went through extensive public hearings and was approved by the City of Winnipeg with respect to zoning and land use. I repeat, that project is supported by the St. James Chamber of Commerce. I repeat, that project is supported by countless community groups and, in fact, has tremendous support amongst seniors who want relevant housing in St. James-Assiniboia. That project represents approximately 80 units of housing that are further away from the airport than are thousands of other existing units of housing.

The point of the matter is to have a long-range development plan, an amendment to review by the City of Winnipeg. That is what we have asked for so that, in the long term, we have plans with respect to various other areas of access to the airport. We continue to be dealing with a number of interested parties in having use of that airport, the Winnipeg International Airport, and we continue to find a great deal of interest in people who will be making use of that.

The reality is that the project met criteria put forward in the program that was developed by the

NDP, met the criteria. Number 2, it also has tremendous local community support, and No. 3, it has hundreds of people who have shown an interest in investing in the project to become tenants in the project. Under all those circumstances, the decision was made.

Plines Project Approval Justification

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the three criteria that the First Minister mentioned did he mention at all the transportation studies, the Advisory Committee for the Protection of the Winnipeg International Airport. The number of recommendations and the analysis in that report talk about the economic loss to Manitoba and Winnipeg if that airport is jeopardized. Every recommendation in this report recommends lower density, lower development, more protection for the area around the airport, not greater density, greater housing and greater encroachment upon the airport area. Every statement in this document argues against the Premier's decision.

I would ask the Premier why he chose to go with this housing project when other housing projects were available for seniors, obviously needed, other community-based projects were needed, when all the evidence in terms of the economic potential for Winnipeg and Manitoba argued against this proposal being approved by his government?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): We have consistently taken the position that the City of Winnipeg has the authority to approve projects, zoning, variances, and so on, within the parameters of Plan Winnipeg. This was not contrary to Plan Winnipeg, Plan Winnipeg that was approved when the member for Concordia was the minister of urban development. This was not contrary to the city's wishes, despite the fact that all those criticisms contained in that report were placed before the public hearing process in 1989. The City of Winnipeg took all of that into account and still approved the project.

All of those arguments were made at the public hearing process. Mr. Speaker, despite that, the City of Winnipeg approved the project. The project falls within the parameters of the program, Seniors RentalStart, that was developed and criteria created by the NDP government. In the normal course of approvals, it was approved, as was Dauphin, as was Niverville.

*(1350)

St. James Rotary Club Letter of Invitation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the last few weeks has brought the integrity of this government into disrespect. This government cannot be honest and straightforward.

My question is to the Minister of Government Services. I have a letter written by the minister, dated September 24, 1990, in which he notes that the Flin Flon Rotary project would appear to be complete, but that, quote: Budgetary availability is limited.

Can the Minister of Government Services tell the House why, one month later, in October of 1990, he was phoning his political friends and asking the St. James Rotary to apply for the same program?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, throughout the process of accepting different projects throughout the province, like the one in Transcona, the one in Dauphin, the one in Niverville, we do send letters out to people and tell them to apply under different, other programs. That letter went out. We told them to apply under another program.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, there is no way that this particular minister solicited any information to any project after that date.

Seniors RentalStart Flin Flon Application

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Housing tell the House why the Flin Flon Rotary Club was told in September 1990 that there was no money available in Seniors RentalStart and that they should reapply under the Private Non-profit Program?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, I was not the Minister of Housing at that time, so I cannot do other than transmit information provided to me by the Department of Housing.

I am advised by the Department of Housing, as I indicated in my statement first off today, that they had a concern that there would be insufficient, or could be insufficient, subsidies available under the RentalStart program for that particular project, particularly because of the fact that it is built on rock, as most buildings are in Flin Flon. There is

considerable blasting that would be required to service the site.

Mr. Speaker, the department asked them to submit an application under the Private Non-Profit Housing Program because the subsidies there are greater, considerably greater, than they are under the RentalStart program. To make the project viable, to provide affordable housing for the citizens of Flin Flon, that request was made.

Charleswood Application

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can the Minister of Housing tell the House, when these two groups chose the Seniors RentalStart program, had their funding all in place, figured out how it was going to work, why the Charleswood-Tuxedo housing project and the Flin Flon Rotary were advised there was no money in the Seniors RentalStart when, at a later date, money was made available from the same program to Rotary Pines?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Charleswood project, which again occurred well prior to my becoming the Minister of Housing, I can indicate that the Charleswood-Tuxedo Lions Club was unable to garner sufficient interest, signed-up interest, in the project. The program requirements require 90 percent of the units to be signed up for prior to any approval to be given. They had considerably less than 50 percent of the people signed up. They were not told it was a question of funding; they were told it was a question that they had insufficient people available to occupy the units. When there is no demand, we are obviously not going to approve a project.

*(1355)

Pinelmuta Place Fee-for-Service Contract

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened today, because I wonder how many times the white community is going to deny the legitimate aspirations of our aboriginal peoples. For five years, dedicated people in the aboriginal community have been working towards the achievement of a culturally sensitive Native Harmony and Restoration Centre. For five years, they have been encouraged, first by the previous government and,

more recently, by this government, towards the achievement of their goals. For five years, they have been investing their own dollars to the tune of about one-half million dollars, funds not easily come by to our aboriginal peoples.

Will the Minister of Justice tell this House why, in a letter dated April 30, the government turned its back on the aboriginal community that is working towards this notable achievement?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The characterization of this whole matter by the Leader of the second opposition party is quite inaccurate, Mr. Speaker.

I have before me the letter referred to by the honourable Leader of the second party. I have before me, also, a letter dated January 29, 1990, well over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, where it was set out that—and I will read the paragraph of the letter if you wish, your Honour.

I must, however, point out that the provincial position is that we will pay for services provided at Pineimuta Place on a contract-for-services basis. It is the federal government which will have to provide the necessary funding to develop those services. I believe that to be a very defensible position to take.

On April 30, in the letter referred to by the honourable member, I set out the fact that the model that in its present form is not something that has been developed to the point where we are able to have that kind of a contractual relationship.

Mr. Speaker, I might be given another opportunity next time around to go a little further into this for the honourable member.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that, in the letter of January 29, 1990, he indicated a willingness to pay for per diem services. In the letter dated April 30, 1991, he shows an unwillingness to pay per diem services.

In light of his own statements, in which he has said that the government caucus will do everything they can to make the case for aboriginal peoples in this country, for their educational rights and requirements, why is he going back on his own words and not now supplying the per diem rates on a guarantee to this particular project?

Mr. McCrae: I thank the honourable Leader of the second party for that question, because I am then given the opportunity to tell a little more about this particular matter.

I wrote that letter in January of 1990. The advisors, the consultants to the Interlake Reserve Tribal Council approached me at a later date to ask me to expand just a little bit on that particular commitment so that they could use that commitment in their attempts to leverage money from the federal government.

The question of our commitment to a per diem fee-for-service contractual relationship was subject to details being worked out. The consultants had asked me to say to the federal people that it was simply a matter of details to be worked out.

I want the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) to know that the details we are talking about are not minor details; by no stretch of the imagination are they minor details. I made that known to the consultants. I made that known to Chief Swan and other chiefs from IRTC. I made that known to Grand Chief Phil Fontaine that these details are not minor.

Does the honourable Leader of the second party know that the difference in the per diem rate that we are talking about is the present rate of about \$30 per inmate per day? The Pineimuta Place proposal suggests a per diem rate of about \$126 a day. That is not a minor detail, Mr. Speaker.

* (1400)

Aboriginal Self-Government Government Commitment

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier said earlier in this week, in Estimates, that he cannot commit to self-government as a principle, because he does not know what it means. Well, this is what it means. It means letting aboriginal peoples take charge of their community when they are in trouble and treating them in a culturally sensitive and holistic manner.

Will the First Minister, in light of his commitments in the past to working towards the achievement of more rights for our aboriginal peoples, investigate this matter and undertake a full review, because the aboriginal community considers the actions of the Minister of Justice to be a betrayal?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): This government achieved a number of precedent-setting agreements with respect to the aboriginal community to devolve services into their control and authority. Working together with the Swampy Cree Tribal Council, established, for instance, the first

Bachelor of Nursing programs for northern and Native Manitobans, devolved authority over gaming to The Pas Indian Band, for instance, devolved authority for management of natural resources in a number of full management projects of natural resources, is working on taxation proposals with Scantebury and many others to devolve authority to make them masters of their own destiny within areas of concern and service to their people.

We are working very strongly towards that, but it all has to be done within a framework of fiscal capability and constitutional responsibility. When we are looking at numbers, such as the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) just put on the record, which are costs that are almost four times what we are normally dealing with, \$11 million over five years, surely, the Leader of the second opposition party understands that we have a responsibility to live within the fiscal capability that we have and that, particularly where these are areas of primary federal constitutional responsibility, we ought not to be held responsible to just throw \$11 million—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable First Minister that answers to questions be as brief as possible.

Public Schools Act Review Public Participation

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, one of my major concerns with the minister's announcement of a review of The Public Schools Act is that it may or may not be open. In the past, this government has not listened to parents, students and teachers on the ESL or on the Cartwright program, for example. It is imposing a funding formula without the taxpayers having a say.

Will this minister really listen and invite public participation, or is this an attempt to deflect criticism away from the government's cutbacks and taxing policies on property tax owners?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I thought that the member for Kildonan was present in the news room this morning when the news announcement was being made, but obviously he must have missed something in the announcement.

Mr. Speaker, this morning's news conference outlined very clearly that the four-member panel was going to be meeting with the communities in Manitoba, rural, northern and urban Manitoba, to

look at changes that will be required to The Public Schools Act. I indicated very clearly that Mr. Roy White, a very known educator in this province, indeed a member who has served on MAST, and a consultant in education now, is going to be heading up this panel that will go throughout the province to hear what Manitobans and organizations throughout this province have to say about what they would like to see within the school act so that it meets the needs of today's society.

Dept. of Education and Training Gag Order

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): In light of the minister's comments, I am wondering why this minister has placed a gag order on all people in the department from talking to the media, MLAs or the public, as far as I know, for that matter. I would like to table in the House a copy of a gag order from the Deputy Minister of Education saying that the media and the MLAs cannot be talked to by anyone from his department.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, we do have a communications director within the Department of Education through whom all the communications—indeed, all of the media know that they are to get their information through that source. It is not a new policy. It is a policy that was followed by the former government. Indeed, it is a way of ensuring that the information that is being given out to media, to others and to the public is consistent and is handled in an effective way.

Dept. of Education and Training Gag Order

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): My final supplementary is to the Premier.

When I asked the Premier about censorship by this minister on keeping people from attending a public conference, he said the government does not condone censorship. That is in Hansard, March 15.

Does this Premier condone his minister's gag order on the staff from Education and Training?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's question seeks an opinion. Therefore, it is out of order.

Will the honourable member kindly rephrase his question, please?

Mr. Chomiak: Is it government policy on the part of this government to have gag orders on departments?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. I can recall full well that the Pawley government regularly placed gag orders. The New Democrats, who sit there hypocritically on that side of the House, regularly placed gag orders on their staff throughout their period of time in government. They even gagged their backbenchers because they were so embarrassed by what came out of their mouths.

Pineimuta Place Fee-for-Service Contract

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): My question is also for the Minister of Justice.

The development of the Native Harmony and Restoration Centre is an attempt to establish a comprehensive and multidisciplinary demonstration of the traditional Ojibway peacemaker role. The development of this centre, Pineimuta Place, has been supported by all levels of government since 1986, when the NDP Minister of Community Services then agreed to purchase services developed by the centre on a fee-for-service basis. I am willing to table that letter in the House today.

My question is for the minister. The minister talks that costs are the reason for not supporting this program. I ask this minister, in light that Native people in the system now are overrepresented in jails, why was this contract not honoured?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the honourable member putting on the record that the policy of the previous government was precisely the same policy as the one this government has, and that is to contract on a fee-for-service basis for services supplied to the government of Manitoba. The honourable member, though, ought to put on the record what cost he thinks this government should be agreeing to with regard to a contractual arrangement.

If the honourable member is suggesting that the per diem rate ought to reflect the cost of development of this centre, please let him say so now.

Consultations

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister: Will he tell this House why there was no

consultation with the aboriginal groups involved before rejecting this proposal, why no one from NHRC was asked to participate in the federal-provincial working group established to review the justice projects in Manitoba, and why no one from the NHRC was even informed that such a committee had been struck and was meeting to discuss their proposal?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do not think I heard the honourable member say that it is the policy of the present New Democratic Party represented in this House that fee-for-service contractual arrangements paid for by the Province of Manitoba ought to reflect the development costs of Pineimuta Place. I would like to hear what his comment is on that.

Mr. Clif Evans: . . . consultation, I ask, why not?

Fee-for-Service Contract

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Will this minister now explain to the House why he has provided no leadership on this issue and outline his reasons, besides cost, for rejecting the proposal?

* (1410)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think that was the honourable member's last question, so I guess we are not going to get his position on this matter, Mr. Speaker.

I have—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is not in order for the minister to engage in rhetorical questions in an effort to avoid answering very specific questions that were asked by the member. I would ask you to have him called to order, and I ask that you request he answer the question asked by the member for Interlake on behalf of his constituents.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to cite anywhere in Beauséjour that says that the minister, in responding to a question, cannot provide a rhetorical question of his own in his response.

Mr. Speaker, in reading the rules, I have never seen a prohibition against the type of question asked by the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Until we hear otherwise, Mr. Speaker, from the honourable member, we will assume that the New Democratic Party policy on this issue has changed, from the one which is our policy now, to a policy that says, developmental costs for Piniemuta Place or any other installation ought to be borne by the Province of Manitoba through fee-for-service contractual relationships.

With regard to consultation, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the honourable member and all members of this House that I have been available to the consultants and to the chiefs of the Interlake Tribal Council on occasions when that kind of consultation has been called for. I have had repeated meetings with representatives like that. I have also discussed this matter with Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, and I have made my concerns well known to all of those people with whom I have met.

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Minorco Sale

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy and Mines.

We learned this morning that Minorco, a U.S. company, has put an offer to purchase Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting for \$100 million. This is potentially a very good news proposition, but we have some questions for the minister responsible for mines. Contingent upon the sale is \$80 million of money from the Government of Canada and from the government of Manitoba to assist HBM&S in environmentally upgrading some of the facilities in the mine at Flin Flon.

Can the minister tell us if he has had any discussions with HBM&S, and how secure is the \$55 million that is required to consummate this deal?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, we have been negotiating with Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting for some three years on this loan agreement. As far as we are concerned, from the Manitoba government, our offer has been on the table for some 18 to 24 months. It has not changed in that period of time. As far as we are concerned, the deal will go through, and the news we hear today will only enhance the agreement with HBM&S.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we understand that the head office of the company that has made the offer to purchase is actually in Denver.

Can the minister tell us if he has had any conversations, or can he guarantee to the House that there will not be any head office jobs lost? Head office has recently moved from Winnipeg to Flin Flon, and can the minister assure us that those jobs will be securely placed in Manitoba?

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, I think it is rather unfair to expect me to have an answer to that question the very morning that an announcement has been made by Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting and Minorco. As far as we are aware, the operation of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting will not change. We have no knowledge of whether or not their headquarter staff is going to be changed. As far as we are concerned and until we know different, the operations of Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting will go on as is.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we understand that the offer expires on June 1. That means it will be necessary for the minister to give his guarantees of the \$55 million to the company by then.

Can the minister give us those assurances in the House today?

Mr. Neufeld: Mr. Speaker, there are four parties that come to the table in this agreement. There are the banks, there is Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, there is the federal government, there is the Manitoba government. As I said earlier, the Manitoba government's position has remained unchanged for some 18 to 24 months, and any delay in the finalization of these negotiations cannot be placed at the feet of the Manitoba government.

Seniors RentalStart Flin Flon Application

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, we, in this Chamber, have known that the integrity of this government is in question for a long time. Now the people in Flin Flon and other parts of the province are beginning to understand.

The Flin Flon Rotary Club applied in March of 1990 for a housing project that is much needed in the community of Flin Flon. On August 3, after a meeting with the then Minister of Housing, the Flin Flon Rotary had not been told, it had not been suggested, that RentalStart was not the appropriate vehicle to apply for housing. In fact, in a letter dated to the minister after a meeting with the Minister of

Housing and two other cabinet ministers, they say, as far as we are aware, our application meets all the preliminary requirements. The Rotary Club has the experience and has the land.

Can this Minister of Housing, the current Minister of Housing, explain to the people of Manitoba why the needs of the senior citizens in Flin Flon should not take priority over the needs of a project which has been described as a boondoggle by virtually everybody in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): I thought, Mr. Speaker, that I had adequately explained earlier the circumstances surrounding the application by the Flin Flon Rotary Club. As a matter of fact, I spoke with Mr. Ahmad yesterday, the chairman of the Rotary Club. He indicated to me that he had resubmitted his application under the Private Non-Profit Housing Program. Staff, in going through the application, had some concerns with regard to the cost and the ability of the subsidies to make the project viable.

Mr. Ahmad is aware and looks forward to the fact that, under the current Non-Profit Housing Program considerations, his project will be chosen. Those are under consideration at the present time. We will make a decision, Mr. Speaker, some time in the next while.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, the fact that this minister cleared the decks to support a project of his political friends does not negate the fact that the people in Flin Flon have not been dealt with honestly. After the August 3 letter, I had another letter from the Minister of Housing, dated September 24, still talking about the application under the RentalStart program. There was no honesty in the dealings of this government with the people of Flin Flon.

My question is to the Minister of Housing. In a project where three times the number of applicants compared to the number of units that were going to be built had already been secured by this group, how can the minister not believe that this is a priority for the people of Manitoba and the people of Flin Flon?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I did not say it was not a priority. I did not say that the people of Flin Flon will or will not get a housing project. That matter, as I indicated earlier, is under consideration.

Mr. Storle: My final question is: How long does it take for this government to get its House in order, to know what it is doing and to be honest? Six months

after the application, this minister is still misleading the people—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the member clearly said: "How long does it take for this government to get honest?"—to use his word. He said, to get its House in order, to get honest. That is the greatest imputation of motives, suggesting that the government totally is dishonest. The member is certainly using the most unparliamentary of language. I ask him to withdraw totally his statement.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if I might be of assistance to yourself and the government House leader, dishonest has been indicated, depending on the context, as being both parliamentary and unparliamentary. I would suggest to you, given the actions of this government on the Rotary Pines project and the Flin Flon Rotary Club, that it is totally, in this context, in order and an accurate assessment of this government.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader did not have a point of order, but I would remind all honourable members, one more time, that we should pick and choose our words very carefully.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Housing, to respond.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat, the Non-Profit Housing Program, as the member should know, having been in cabinet when his party was in power, is a subject of a partnership. It is a partnership between the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Manitoba Housing. Annually, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provides an allocation of units to this province. That allocation came within the last month or six weeks. We are in the process now, knowing what our allocation is, of reviewing those projects that were submitted to us. We have in excess of 100 of those projects. We will be analyzing those projects in terms of desire, need, capability, et cetera, and when that has been concluded, we will make allocations.

* (1420)

Farming Industry Debt Crisis

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) has repeatedly stonewalled on our questions regarding GRIP and the need to improve the program to meet the needs of all the farmers of Manitoba to deal with the inequities and unfairness in the program. Fortunately, he will not be able to say, later on, that these concerns were not raised with him and that no one complained, no one raised concerns. The fact is, we will hold him accountable in this House.

I ask the minister today: With the current debt crisis that exists and the cash flow crisis this spring, as a result of the nondeficiency announcement that was made by the federal minister just two weeks ago, can the minister indicate to this House and explain to this House his actions in response to that nonannouncement, in light of the debt crisis that exists, and whether he has asked for debt adjustment legislation from the federal government as well as an immediate deficiency payment which was not announced two weeks ago and is needed?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about a debt crisis in Manitoba. I would like to inform the member that, through the mediation board, a lot of debt situations have been resolved to the farmers' benefit, with the vast majority of farmers being able to stay on their farm in some restructured fashion. The overall debt load of the Manitoba farm community has dropped from about \$2.1 billion three years ago to about \$1.8 billion today. That is a fair response of the farm community in terms of reducing their debt load, and clearly there is a cash shortfall at this period of time.

Last fall, we called upon the federal government for interest-free cash advance, which they have put in place. They have announced that interest-free cash advances will be in place again for 1991. They have announced a reduction in the premiums for GRIP. They have announced a number of initiatives that are going to help the Manitoba farm community, and the government of Manitoba has put some \$43 million in its present budget to deal with the situation of Manitoba farmers in terms of paying the GRIP premium.

Farm Protection

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, how can this minister stand in this House and say there

is no problem out there, the debt situation is easing and that no deficiency payment is needed? If the minister is not going to ask for a deficiency payment, which he is indicating to this House, will he, to deal with the debt crisis out there now, proclaim those sections of The Family Farm Protection Act that deal with moratoriums to enable farmers, who are now being pressed off their land despite the fact that the mediation board is there, to put in place this debt legislation, The Family Farm Protection Act, to protect the farmers?

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

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make the member aware that farmers outright own 80 percent of their equities, so there is not a horrible debt crisis out there. They own 80 percent of their equity. Many farmers are well positioned to deal with the situation they are facing today. We have constantly talked about this problem, and farmers do not like to come back every year and beg for an ad hoc payment, year in and year out.

They came forward over a year ago through a task force process saying, we want some structured predictability to our future; that is why we want GRIP; that is why we want a safety net mechanism that will allow us to have some predictability in terms of our price support. Farmers want that. Farmers have it in place, and we are very pleased to be able to put it in place for them.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: On Tuesday, April 23, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable government House leader alleging that the words, and I quote: "we cast aspersions on the Minister of Agriculture" used by the Leader of the Second Opposition during Question Period cast aspersions on the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay).

The Leader of the Second Opposition indicated at that time that she would withdraw the words when the minister withdrew the allegation that she was casting aspersions on Manitoba farmers. I had already ruled that the Minister of Agriculture had not imputed unworthy motives by his use of the words mentioned. In fact, the Leader of the second

opposition party came perilously close to reflecting on a ruling of the Chair.

I would refer members to a Beauchesne citation on language which, I believe, also is relevant to the question of imputation of motives. It is citation 486, and I quote: "It is impossible to lay down any specific rules in regard to injurious reflections uttered in debate against particular members. Much depends upon the tone and manner and intention of the person speaking, sometimes on the degree of provocation which the member speaking had received from the person alluded to."

In this case, I am ruling that there was no imputation of unworthy motives and that there was no point of order. However, as I have asked many times before, members must be careful in the choice of their words in the heat of debate or Question Period.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), because I think it is appropriate. I was shocked by the use of his words, and that is what led me to do what I did. Quite frankly, that is no excuse for using unparliamentary language.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank the honourable Leader of the second opposition party, but I had already ruled that there was no point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before I move the motion to go into Committee of Supply, I would ask you to petition the House to determine as to whether or not we might waive private members' hour today.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour? Is it agreed? No. There is no agreement.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, we then will continue to deal with the Estimates in the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and also the Department of Education and Training.

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

Motion presented.

MATTER OF GRIEVANCE

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use this opportunity, as the rules provide, to grieve.

Mr. Speaker, it is sometimes frustrating to be a member of the opposition and not have the kind of open opportunity you would like to have to ask the questions. It is unfortunate, as well, or perhaps fortunate from an opposition perspective, that this government is so incompetent that it leaves so many targets that my colleagues in every area of responsibility continue to have endless questions about the bungling of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity, after the tabling of this budget, after the fiasco we have just seen with the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) with respect to the Flin Flon Rotary Club senior housing project, to express my dismay, my frustration and my anger at the current government's arrogance and attitude toward the people of northern Manitoba, and indeed the people of the province of Manitoba.

I wanted to start by talking about the current fiasco that the former Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme) and the current Minister of Housing are involved in, because regardless of the excuses we have heard from the Minister of Housing, this is and has been a deceptive exercise from the beginning. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that back-room politics have determined who received funding under the RentalStart program in this instance, and in at least one other instance, Mr. Speaker, and that is lamentable.

It is also regrettable that the First Minister has chosen, on too many occasions, to ignore the unacceptable behaviour of his ministers and chosen to do nothing, has chosen to take the coward's way out and not respond to the questionable—and perhaps that is the polite way to phrase it—behaviour of his ministers.

* (1430)

I want to say again that this project, the Flin Flon housing project, has a long history. The group that is involved in proposing this project has an excellent record. The Rotary Club already operates seniors housing in the community of Flin Flon. They applied in good faith to the RentalStart program on March 1 of 1990 after doing considerable groundwork in the community of Flin Flon, determining that there was a need for seniors housing. In fact, in their initial

survey of interested seniors, there was three times the demand for the number of units that the Rotary Club was proposing to build. That is an initial survey—an incredible number of people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the Minister of Housing, who has chosen to support his political friends, that unlike the people in Flin Flon, who have many different housing styles available to them as a matter of choice, those choices are not available to the people of Flin Flon. In Flin Flon, there was no equivalent project to the project that the Rotary Club was proposing to build. So we have a group legitimately believing that the government was sincere, applying under the RentalStart program in March of 1990, believing that their application would be dealt with in an honourable and straightforward fashion.

Was the government honourable? Was the process legitimate? Was it above board? Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt today that the answer is no. The application was on hand. The Department of Housing officials had contacted the Rotary. They had made the necessary information available to them. On August 3, after meeting directly with the Minister of Housing—not some official, but the Minister of Housing—the chairperson of the Rotary wrote to the minister and said, as far as we are aware, our application meets all the preliminary requirements. The Rotary Club is a necessary experience as well—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the honourable Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay) to come take the Chair, please.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Storle: It has not only the experience, but the manpower and finances, and I quote, the company owns appropriately zoned land necessary for this proposal.

Madam Deputy Speaker, here is a group of people who were trying to do something for the community of Flin Flon, thought they were dealing in a legitimate way with the government of Manitoba and as of August 3 believed everything was on track.

He had met with the Minister of Housing and two other ministers of the government. They received a letter dated September 24 from the then Minister of Housing in which he says, while the staff have confirmed that your organization's project proposal would appear to be complete, we must advise that

our budget process is under review. As you can appreciate, there are a number of worthwhile projects on file while the budgetary availability is limited.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is some month and a half now, almost two months after the August meeting. The Flin Flon groups still believe that the RentalStart program is available for them, that their project meets their criteria, that they are going to get funding, but what happens.

The Minister of Housing then starts soliciting. I do not know what other word you can call it, when he calls up another group and says, maybe you should apply. It just so happens that the person he called is also a political friend of the individual. Some months later, of course, we find that Flin Flon is not getting a project either under RentalStart or the Non-Profit Housing Program which they have been channeled into. Now we find that the project is going to the political friend of the Minister of Housing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is even more frustrating is in a community where there is significant need for senior housing, where there is no like project in the community, no like accommodation for seniors, in a community where the appropriate land is zoned, where there are no zoning objections, where there are no apparent conflicts, where there is significant demand, the minister chooses to fund a project of his political friends in an area where there should be no such project.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have heard a litany of groups come forward and say this project should not have been approved, from the Chamber of Commerce to the airport to residents groups.

There can be no justification for the treatment, the way this government has treated the people of Flin Flon, the seniors of Flin Flon and the Rotary Club of Flin Flon.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is simply unacceptable. It is unacceptable. It shows a level of incompetence and a level of ineptitude, a level of arrogance that is unheard of. It is equally frustrating to see the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) get up and apologize when he has put misinformation on the record only when he is caught. He seems to have no regard, no regard for the feelings and the work that is being done by groups that are not affiliated with the minister himself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it would be nice to think that this was the only slight, the only injustice this government has perpetrated on the people of northern Manitoba. Clearly, it is not. I will talk in a minute about the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) who has begun his assault on the people of northern Manitoba. I should say, it is quite ironic. The minister is wagging his finger at me. The minister was one of the people involved in the meeting on August 2 or August 3 in Flin Flon.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Highways and Transportation and the Minister of Northern Affairs and Rural Development (Mr. Downey) were also in attendance at this meeting when the Minister of Housing met with some representatives of the Rotary Club and perhaps some other Conservative colleagues.

This is not the only slight. The fact is that this government has turned its back on northern Manitoba in the most callous and serious way. Perhaps the more insidious attack on the people of northern Manitoba has come at the hands of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who has introduced for the first time, a user fee on the people of northern Manitoba, a user fee of \$50. Every time a person who needs medical attention—and I quote—needs medical attention, the people of Manitoba are going to pay a \$50 user fee.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was flabbergasted to say the least when the Minister of Health and the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) attempted to defend this policy by suggesting somehow that the people of Flin Flon, the people of northern Manitoba had equal access to medical services, that somehow the Northern Patient Transportation Program, in itself, made up for all of the differences between the vast distances that people in Flin Flon, Snow Lake, Shamattawa, Churchill and the rest of the area covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program have to cover. Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is that the people of northern Manitoba, to access adequate medical treatment, to access the best diagnostic services that the people of Manitoba have come to expect costs them considerably more than any other Manitoban to access equivalent services.

The people of South Indian Lake, as an example, have no hospital in their community. To access any

kind of medical services, to have a wound sutured, to have a prenatal test done, the residents of South Indian Lake have to use the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Pregnant women, people with diabetes, senior citizens who want to get some kind of medical attention are now going to be asked to pay \$50 every time they use the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not a simple matter of getting a friend to drive you to the nearest hospital, to the nearest doctor. There are no roads in many of the communities in northern Manitoba. They have no alternative but to use air services. They have no alternative but to use the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the people in northern Manitoba routinely—routinely, routinely, routinely—pay \$100 to \$150 to access a single medical service available to 600,000 people in this province free. Now, increasingly people are being asked not only to travel to Winnipeg for CAT scans or IMRs or mammography scans or ultrasound, they are now being routinely asked to stay over another day because the line-ups are too long, the waiting lists are too long, they cannot get in for treatment. They cannot see the doctor on the appointed day, so they now have to incur, not only the hotel accommodation costs for one day and the food costs, they have to incur those costs for a day or two days.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have written to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). He should not be naive about what health care costs northern Manitobans, but he apparently is. I wrote to him recently about a patient who was covered by the Air Ambulance and the Northern Patient Transportation. Not including the costs of accommodation and food, that individual received a bill for almost \$400 of extra costs that other Manitobans do not have to pay.

For people who have serious illnesses, for people who require continuing medical care, medical treatment, the costs of this user fee is not going to be \$50 on an annual basis, but it is going to be hundreds of dollars, perhaps as much as \$500 or \$600 or more.

* (1440)

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not talking necessarily about people who can afford \$50 the first time, let alone on a continuing basis. Many of

the people in my constituency, in the Flin Flon constituency in northern Manitoba are poor. Many of them survive on subsistence lifestyle. Many of them do not have access to employment opportunities.

This measure, this user fee on Northerners is going to not only cause hardship, it is going to cause deaths. People are going to die because they cannot access medical services. They are going to say, no, I cannot afford as a senior another \$50 this month to see my doctor, to get the medical treatment that I require, to go and see a specialist, my doctor.

This is the most callous, heartless and unfair thing any government could have done and this government did it. It is not only an attack on the health of Northerners, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is an attack on the principles of medicare, one of which, perhaps the most fundamental of which is access to adequate medical services, the right of Manitobans to at least access the best care that we can provide in the province of Manitoba whether that is technological care or specialist care.

It is being undermined by this user fee. Let us call it by no other name. Never mind the synonyms. Never mind the euphemisms. This is a user fee. It is being charged against the people who have at present the least access to adequate medicare. It is unconscionable and it is going to come back to haunt the members of this government. The people of northern Manitoba are not going to stand for it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish that the litany of insults against northern Manitobans and against the people of Manitoba ended there but unfortunately it does not.

The fact of the matter is, besides the slight to seniors in Flin Flon, besides the slight to all of the people who need medical services in northern Manitoba, this government attacks our young people in northern Manitoba, a clear attack by eliminating programs such as the Northern Youth Corps, a program that provided literally hundreds of jobs to young people in northern Manitoba in communities where there are no other employment opportunities.

These young people do not have the good fortune or the misfortune depending on your point of view, I guess, of having a McDonald's or a Burger King or other fast food outlets on virtually every corner. They have no employment opportunities. The few positions that were created by the community

councils, by the nonprofit groups in those communities were the only jobs these young people had. What did this government do? It slashed the program. It cut it out entirely. It left community councils without the youth and exuberance of young employees to help provide community services. It left young people with no support during the summer, no employment, no money. It is a callous cut.

Madam Deputy Speaker, of course they cut the funding for CareerStart. Now they are going to say they are going to create as many jobs, but what they have done is in effect make it quite certain that many nonprofit groups are not going to be able to hire young people in CareerStart positions this year because they do not have the funding. Another group of young people who would have been, and have been in the past, employed in their local communities are no longer going to have that opportunity. On employment they have attacked young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in educational services they have attacked young people in northern Manitoba. We lost 14 positions in the Keewatin Community College. We have seen the elimination of northern employment service offices in Flin Flon and Leaf Rapids. We have seen millions of dollars in cutbacks to ACCESS programs, limiting the number of professional opportunities that people in northern Manitoba have.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, the people of northern Manitoba are not like the people of southern Manitoba. There are very few educational, particularly post-secondary educational opportunities, available in northern Manitoba. Most communities do not have three universities and a community college as there is in the community of Winnipeg.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the cutting of these programs, the ACCESS programs and KCC programs, is not only a hardship, an immediate hardship, it is going to create a long-term problem as Northerners attempt to cope with their economic realities and with their prospects for the future.

I believe that the government of Manitoba has lost the confidence already of the people of northern Manitoba, and I think that the people in rural Manitoba are clearly suspect. We have the government floundering on issues such as GRIP

and rural development. We have an agricultural economic policy, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The North has not only suffered in terms of the government's attitude toward service in the North, but it has also suffered as a result of the government's inability to put together any kind of economic agenda in northern Manitoba. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) was only a moment ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, chastising me for not speaking on the recent announcement that HBM&S is to be purchased by Minorco.

Madam Deputy Speaker, of course I was aware and had received the background documents from both Inspiration and Minorco long before the Minister of Finance was aware of it. There is some good news contained in that, but it would be folly to suggest that the government had any hand in the current transaction that is occurring between Minorco and Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is, and the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) referenced it today, this government has sat around essentially for three years without leading this project to conclusion. I have said on other occasions, that is a failure of leadership—a failure of leadership. We hope now that because HBM&S and Inspiration Resources may be able to salvage the modernization project by selling HBM&S to Minorco, because Minorco is prepared, it seems, to undertake to provide the guarantees required by the Bank of Nova Scotia, that we will see the commencement of this project.

I want to put on record, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the commencement of this project at this time, while it is a relief to the people of Flin Flon should it actually occur, which it appears it will, the fact is that the people of Flin Flon have suffered for two and a half years, almost three years, due to the uncertainty of the modernization, but they have also suffered in a more direct way because many of the problems that are being experienced in the immediate environment of Flin Flon are directly due to the lack of modernization.

* (1450)

Madam Deputy Speaker, since this government was approached in 1988 to conclude an agreement, the people of Flin Flon have suffered through now—this will be the fourth summer of extremely intolerable levels of fugitive gases coming out of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting plant. They have

suffered from unnecessarily high levels of sulfur dioxide in the community, because the modernization would remove almost 90 percent of the fugitive gases that escape into the immediate area of the city of Flin Flon and 25 percent of the sulfur dioxide that is emitted on a daily basis into the environment in and around Flin Flon.

This government and this minister, if they had had the initiative, could have solved the problem in a much more expeditious fashion if they had wanted to, if there had been a modicum of leadership, but there was not. Today, HBM&S is being sold to Minorco, a new company, a company that already has mining interests through a subsidiary in North America, but there are still some questions.

The deal, of course, is still contingent upon the bank and Minorco being able to finalize an agreement, a loan condition. It is conditional upon the federal government living up to its meagre commitment of \$25 million, and it is conditional upon the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) finally dotting the i's and crossing the t's and writing the letter of commitment by the Province of Manitoba to the modernization project.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, maybe the minister can tell me right now whether that letter has been written, but I certainly hope, given the very short time frame that Minorco has to conclude this deal and the importance of the deal, that the Province of Manitoba today will write the letter of commitment so Minorco knows where the province stands, and that the commitment of some \$55 million will be available, and that there will not be so many conditions attached by this minister as there was in the Lynn Lake situation so that this project continues to drag on. We remain hopeful.

The government, and least of all the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), cannot take any credit for the fact that HBM&S has managed now to secure financing under very difficult circumstances. I want to remind the minister that had the province shown leadership two years ago when copper prices were high and HBM&S was at that time profitable, it would have been a lot easier to come to some agreement, certainly with the Bank of Nova Scotia or any other financial institution. -(interjection)-

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), the member who continues to chirp from his seat, the back row now, says, what did we do? I can tell the minister the first

time I met with HBM&S when I was Minister of Energy and Mines, I made a commitment that we would have our money on the table, and at that time we also had a like commitment from the federal government.

I can also tell the minister that when HBM&S came to us in September of 1987 and could not find a partner to begin the development of the Callinan mine, the Province of Manitoba said, we are there and we are prepared to—in fact did own a 49 percent share of the Callinan mine. That is where we were.

If the minister wants a little bit of a lecture on what the previous government—the former minister, the now discredited member for Portage la Prairie—did for the North and Flin Flon, I would be happy to entertain him any time he wishes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I suppose the inability of this government to develop any vision, any understanding of what the North is and what it could become is equally as evident in the most recent actions of this government.

I have outlined some of the things in the budget which attack the progress that has been made in northern Manitoba in health, social services and education. They are now attacking a more fundamental requirement of people in northern Manitoba. Last week, the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) had to answer questions from my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) about cutbacks in transportation services, cutbacks in the ferry services being provided to the people of Cross Lake.

Only a couple of days later, Madam Deputy Speaker, I received a call from the people of South Indian Lake who are having their ferry services cut by some 30 percent, cut by one-third on the Fridays and Saturdays during the open water season. These people, people in South Indian Lake are isolated. They have few opportunities to get the goods and services to meet, attend events as it is during the year, and this minister is now cutting back the basic right of people to access, to leave the communities in northern Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have now also received a copy of a letter from the Deputy Minister of Highways indicating that the winter road program, the program that provides access to northern communities in the wintertime—there is no road during the summer. There is no vehicle traffic into

many of the communities. Now the winter road system is being attacked by this government.

This government now is prepared to say, we are going to stop people from bringing supplies, much needed supplies into our communities in the wintertime. These supplies are trucked in over winter roads because it is cheaper, it is easier to organize, and it also provides some employment for maintaining the roads during the winter period.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we see a tax on all of the services of the communities in northern Manitoba, and now we have the most fundamental transportation being attacked as well. We see attacks on the young people. We see denial of the right of the people in Flin Flon to have a seniors project. Is there no depth to which this government will not sink? Is there no basic level of service that people are entitled to in other parts of the province?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the people in northern Manitoba are frustrated and they are growing angry. We are losing our economic base. We are losing our services, and I think the unfortunate news for members opposite, for this government, the members of Treasury bench in particular, is that that disappointment, that frustration, that anger is going to start to creep across the rest of Manitoba.

It is out there already. It is out there in small communities, communities like Cartwright, for example, that are losing their school because this Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach) has underfunded now in three consecutive budgets the educational services provided across the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a growing disenchantment with this government, and it is being led by an understanding that there is no integrity; there is no integrity of members on that side. It begins with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) who continues to defend ministers for doing the indefensible. It continues with ministers who do not tell the proper facts in this House, and then defend decisions that were made behind closed doors and without due process. When the people of Manitoba no longer have any faith in the integrity of the government, the government is finished. That is the point we are at with the current government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they are here quite apparently to serve their own political purposes and no one else. They are here to serve their own political friends apparently and no one else. They

are here to serve certain regions of the province, certain interests of the province, rather than the whole province which they were elected to govern.

The frustration which I feel and which made me rise as a member to grieve today is being felt by thousands of Manitobans today. I want to remind this government and this House that since the election of the Conservative government in September of 1990, there have been more demonstrations on the front of the legislative steps than in the entire seven years of NDP administration. There has been demonstration after demonstration after demonstration, opposing the callousness, the disregard that this government has for the people of Manitoba.

I was one of those people who was trapped in the arrogance and the fear of this government. -(interjection)- The demonstration—and the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) says, well, all inspired by the NDP.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to assure the member for Sturgeon Creek that neither I nor any of my colleagues inspired or conspired with any of the students involved in the demonstration that was held here a little more than a month ago to demonstrate. They are demonstrating because this government is now creating a situation where their tuition fees are going up 20 percent. Their tuition fees are going up 20 percent. There are classes that are being cancelled, their class sizes are increasing. They did not need any help from either myself or any of my colleagues in the opposition. They were demonstrating because of the callousness of the government.

I wanted to refer as well to the approach that this government is taking with a whole plethora of problems that confront them. This government continues to deal in the back rooms, this government continues to deal only with its political friends and with its own agenda, rather than the agenda, the legitimate agenda, of other people in the province of Manitoba.

So what does this government do when it is faced, when it is confronted with someone who disagrees with them? Well, the answer is that they lock the front doors. They lock the front doors, and they make sure that nobody can enter the gallery who opposes them. That is how they respond. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been a member for 10 years, and that is the first instance where the

government of Manitoba has chosen not only to lock the doors and deny people entrance to the gallery but has refused at the same time to address the concerns of the people who were demonstrating in a forthright way.

*(1500)

I, on another occasion, protested the fact that individual members' rights were being sacrificed to protect this government's perceived agenda, and I object as well to that.

One of the hallmarks of a good government, which this government clearly is not, is the ability to listen. This government has failed to listen on virtually every major crisis that has faced it since the election in September. Madam Deputy Speaker, we can talk about the nurses, we can talk about the nurses' strike. We can talk about the government's unwillingness to sit down and discuss with the nurses the legitimate problems they were facing in the workplace. We can talk about the government's unwillingness to involve nurses even in their own management of their own pension plan, their own superannuation plan. We can talk about the government's unwillingness to talk to students.

We can talk about the government's unwillingness to listen to their own constituents in the main, who are concerned about agriculture in the province of Manitoba. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), as an example, continues to ignore the pleas of the farmers of Manitoba to revise, replace the GRIP system with a system of income support that works for farmers. They continue to ignore that.

The Minister responsible for Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has, in effect, abandoned the North. Perhaps we are blessed in that respect, because he comes up very seldom any more because, frankly, he is not welcome, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach) has refused to listen to the education community on every significant issue affecting education. The Minister of Education refused to listen to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees or the Manitoba Teachers' Society on the issue of funding to private schools and continues to divert public funds in the millions of dollars to private schools while schools in Cartwright, and other areas of the province, public schools, are closed.

The Minister of Education refused to listen to the University of Manitoba Students' Union when they

requested an appointment, in fact, nominated people for appointment to the University Board of Governors. The Minister of Education has refused to listen to the advice of his own committee when it comes to changes that are required in our high school program in the province of Manitoba. The Minister of Education refused to listen to teachers and school divisions when he changed the calendar year of the schools, Madam Deputy Speaker. -(interjection)-

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) reminds me that the minister refused to listen to safety experts, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees again, and others, when it came to the privatizing of student transportation in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) refuses to listen to, I guess, logic and common sense when approving housing projects, but finally and ultimately, the blame for the confusion, the blame for the increasing arrogance that we see on the part of members opposite, by the executive of government, the blame clearly lies with the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Madam Deputy Speaker, we recognize that the First Minister is paralyzed by fear of losing control. We recognize that he has dismissed unceremoniously, I might say, two of his Executive Council members, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) and the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery). We understand that puts him in an extremely tenuous situation, but sometime leadership is required and sometime, at some point in the history of this government, the First Minister is going to have to overcome his fear, his cowardice, and he is going to have to take a leadership role and remove some of the cabinet members who have displayed continuing arrogance and continuing inability to make decisions in the best interest of the people of Manitoba.

He cannot continue to duck and avoid questions about competence, because ultimately, not only will his party pay the political price and his government pay the political price, but the people of Manitoba are in the meantime paying an extremely high price for the raging incompetence that we see on the part of the government opposite.

Madam Deputy Speaker, finally, I want to say that the northern part of this province is not the only one that is losing in all of this—not the only part—nor is

rural Manitoba. The fact of the matter is that this province is losing, because while we have a government that seems to be intent on fostering its own very narrow political agenda, we have a government that is refusing to recognize the symptoms of an extremely precarious economy.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Since this government was elected, the unemployment in the province of Manitoba has increased by some 21,000 people. Since this government was first elected in 1988, almost 22 percent of the manufacturing base in the province has disappeared. Since this government was elected, we went from a province where the per capital private investment was the second highest to a province where the per capital investment is now the lowest in this country. Even the province of Prince Edward Island has more private per capita investment than the province of Manitoba.

We see no economic initiative. We see a government that seems completely oblivious to the problems that our economy faces and therefore the problems that we all face as Manitobans.

The government has been given ample choices. They have been given alternatives, and the choices they are making are to the detriment of the province, and that is lamentable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 2.(e) Historic Resources: 2.(e)(1) Salaries, \$970,000 and item 6(d) Historic

Resources: 6.(d)(1) Grant Assistance, \$834,700 on pages 31 and 34 of the Estimates book and on pages 38 and 39 of the Supplementary Information book. Shall these items pass?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister can give me some type of a breakdown on the Community Museums Grants, who is receiving what.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there are 90 community museums. Twenty-five of them receive a grant of \$1,500 per year and 65 of them receive a grant of \$3,500.

Mr. Lamoureux: The St. Boniface Museum, how much would they be receiving?

Mrs. Mitchelson: \$3,500.

Mr. Lamoureux: Has it been frozen for the year for all the different museums then?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, since about 1984 or '85, these grants have been the same. It is a formula-based grant based on the size of the museum.

Mr. Lamoureux: Moving down to the Heritage Grants, there was a substantial reduction in the line. Does the minister want to comment as to why that is, or what the change has been?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there has been a reduction of about 20 percent in the operating grants to the community heritage organizations. These are provincial organizations based mainly in Winnipeg.

Mr. Lamoureux: The last thing I wanted to talk on in this particular line was in regard to Heritage Building Grants, and this would probably be the appropriate line to ask in terms of the theatres that were being closed down last fall. I am wondering if the minister can give some type of an update in terms of what is going on with those two theatres.

* (1520)

Mrs. Mitchelson: There has been a consulting engineer who has done a feasibility study on mothballing these theatres, and we have not got the final report yet.

Mr. Lamoureux: Was anything done to the theatres over the wintertime to ensure to minimize the winter elements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There was nothing done over this past winter, no, but in fact the report was to look

at the feasibility of how those theatres could be maintained throughout the winter months.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would think that it might be somewhat beneficial for the committee, at least the committee in future sittings, that we get some type of an idea of how these theatres have depreciated over the last winter, so that we are better able to get a better understanding on future buildings that we might run into this type of a problem in the future. I ask the minister if she has any intentions or any plans on doing just that, going in and taking a look and comparing how it came through the winter.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, we will do that.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would ask her for a copy of the results, the damage that has occurred over the winter.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Well, I have been saving up questions for three years. I hope I can get them all in in the next hour and a half. Actually, I will try not to duplicate questions that have already been raised, and I hope you will bear with me if there are any duplicate questions, and try to follow some areas of interest being pursued by my colleague the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen).

First, on the grant system, I am just wondering if anybody has asked yet, for a complete list of all grants for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, and if not, could we get a complete list with last year's expenditure and this year's proposed?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No one has asked for that, and yes, we can provide that.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Thank you. I understand when Estimates adjourned earlier this week that my colleague the critic for this department for the New Democratic Party was asking about the depth of cuts in this area, and has noted, as we all have, that Historic Resources has probably taken a deeper cut than any other area in this department, and was asking the question why this branch more than any other. What is the reason? What is the strategy or planning behind it all?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I was just starting to indicate that the nature of the branch's work has changed considerably over the last five years. You know, as The Heritage Resources Act—I know the member for St. Johns was very instrumental in having that act introduced

and proclaimed. I think over the last five years the role has changed, more the role of a facilitator of community initiatives rather than direct services to communities.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I am not quite sure I understand the response, since I do not believe we had ever envisaged that the work would become less, that there would be less of a role for government as time progressed from the introduction of the legislation. In fact, I think everyone envisaged increased awareness and increased community activity requiring, if possible, and given the circumstances of the day, an ever active and increasing role on the part of government.

So I am still not sure on what basis—and I note also that the minister has made this statement in her opening address, that the Historic Resources Branch is now more able to focus its efforts on its core services and responsibilities. On what basis can she make that statement, and how can she explain reduced role for government in this very important area?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Over the last five years there have been, I guess, about 15 municipal heritage advisory committees that have established very successfully throughout the province. There will be one staff person in the department dedicated solely to be working with these advisory committees. These committees will be determining what the needs are for heritage development in the communities and, in fact, we will be assisting, we will be maintaining the core functions that have been done in the past.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Let me go on to some specifics then in terms of the cuts in this branch, a big cut in terms of staff under the Professional/Technical category of Historic Resources, and I believe the footnote references that. I am wondering if the minister could give us more detail in terms of precisely which positions were cut and the names of the individuals who lost their jobs.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I can indicate what positions have been cut, but I think it is premature at this point to be indicating names of people because of the process that has been put in place whereby some people are opting to take early retirement, and there are other options available to staff. We do not have a final list of the names of people at this point. If

someone does take an early retirement, that might mean an opportunity for someone that has received a layoff notice to fit into that position, but I can give the positions.

There is one word processor operator, one heritage resource officer, three archaeology officer positions, one vacant position in archaeology, one position in architectural history, one position in history, and one in museums.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could I ask for a little more detail now with respect to the one heritage resource officer? What was the specific area of work for that person, or the expertise of that individual? We are trying to get a sense of what is being lost by this cutback.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Maybe just for some clarification, I guess they were heritage resource officers in archaeology, and there were four positions there.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Sorry. Again a clarification then. Are you saying that it is not one heritage resource officer and three archaeology officer positions, but—perhaps you could give us a breakdown again.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one SY in administration, four SYs in archaeology, and one of those was a term position, one SY in architectural history, one SY in history, and one SY in museums.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Okay. With respect to the four archaeology officer positions, could I have a clarification of what specialties those people had, or what areas they were responsible for?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there was one person doing heritage awareness, and the others were doing discretionary projects such as site excavations. The one at Churchill West was completed this last fiscal year.

* (1530)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On the last point of the minister, is she saying that the project in Churchill was completed and there was therefore no further need for an individual to cover off the North in terms of archaeological developments?

Mrs. Mitchelson: This was originally envisioned as a four-year project, and last year was the last year of the four years, the Churchill West Peninsula survey.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Is the other position you mention as heritage awareness, does that mean

there is no additional resources in terms of heritage awareness, or what is left?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there has been a lot of data that has been collected, and we still will be able to continue along with this process. With the advisory councils that have established themselves, 15 different advisory councils throughout the province and the one resource person who will be delegated to working with them, we will still be able to continue with Heritage Awareness.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could I also ask for the clear description of the loss of the other three positions, the architectural history position, the history position and the museum position. What specifically were those people involved in? What areas of expertise?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the two positions, the architectural history position and the history position, were both doing research work for the Manitoba Heritage Council, and in fact we will still be able to continue to do research. We may have to limit and specialize the types of research that we can do.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Was one of these positions devoted in large part to Native history?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The one person did do research on Native history but not exclusively Native history.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister tell us, the loss of eight individuals in this branch is very significant in my mind. I am wondering if the minister could tell us what is the impact on services and service delivery as a result of the loss of these eight positions?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we will be able to maintain the basic services such as designation, impact assessments and support for the Manitoba Heritage Council and work with the Heritage Advisory Committees. We will not be undertaking any major digs at this point.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just a comment with a general question. I am getting increasingly concerned about the blow to this whole area in terms of the province of Manitoba. The minister seems to be indicating that this government has chosen to go back to providing only what they must absolutely provide under the letter of the law, under The Heritage Resources Act, and has withdrawn from many of the broad based, community outreach-type activities that go hand in hand with any real commitment to legislation with teeth.

The minister says in her opening speech that there has been an increase of heritage awareness and then draws the conclusion therefore they need less resources. However, I would assume that if there is an increase of heritage awareness, then one certainly needs a Heritage Awareness Officer—I believe that is the right title—and from my experience there was always demands on staff. I always felt that staff at that time were being overburdened and coming near to burnout. I am worried that this loss of seven, eight individuals, really eight positions, will have a very serious impact on the energy level of remaining staff and on the ability of this whole area to reach out in creative and innovative ways, working with the community on heritage projects.

I sense that there has also been—there is a contradiction in terms of the minister focusing, or says she is focusing, on enhancing aboriginal and northern multicultural aspects of heritage of our province, and yet some of the cuts seem to directly impact on those areas. It seems rather than meeting those original objectives, where the minister is working at cross purposes, I am just wondering if that is the case, has the government, because of the fiscal situation, chosen to go back to providing a bare-bones service that they absolutely have to, under the act, and pulling out of many of the other areas with the expectation and the hope that communities will do it on a volunteer basis entirely?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, with the act in effect now and with the community support—and I want to commend the communities and the advisory councils that have taken the initiative, have looked at the value of the Heritage Resources in their community and established themselves—those advisory councils will be able to apply to the Heritage Federation for project grants. I think it is incumbent, or I suppose I might say very much commendable, that there are people out there who are aware of the value of heritage that, in fact, they understand the needs of their community. If there are specific projects, and the needs are different within different communities, if there are projects that they do want to undertake, they can apply to the Manitoba Heritage Federation and receive funding to do those projects.

*(1540)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The other area I want to point to that seems to contradict the assurances that the

minister is giving us today is the outcry from all of those organizations that received significant cutbacks from this government. There has been public comment, there has been concern expressed on the part of a number of organizations. I am wondering if the minister can explain the rationale behind the reduction in grants to those listed in the press release that followed the budget. I believe there are about 10 major organizations that have received cutbacks. I would like to know—what we have now is what they are reduced to. What was the original grant for each of those organizations and what was the rationale or the formula used in terms of the cuts?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have had one call from one of the organizations, and they were all informed as the budget was released that in fact there would be reductions to their operating grants. We are going to be working with that organization that called, but obviously with all of the organizations we will be meeting and discussing ways we can work together to ensure that they can maintain services.

I do want to indicate that there has been basically around a 20 percent reduction to all of those organizations. In fact, we did not ask the organizations out there in these difficult times to take any greater reduction than what the branch took administratively within. The decisions were made and they were difficult. I have indicated before, none of these decisions were easy decisions, but within the department there were reductions. We did not ask any external organization to take any greater reduction than the department or the branch had to take.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Is the minister saying that a straight percentage was applied across the board regardless of needs and demands facing the organizations? Was it a straight 20 percent cut to all of the organizations listed, regardless of any other factors, criteria?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess when we look at the overall budgets of the organizations that did receive a 20 percent reduction, I guess the impact would have been anywhere from about 4 percent to 10 percent of their total budget—the reductions. It basically was 20 percent to all of the organizations. As I indicated, we will be working with them on an individual basis to see how they can continue to operate and work with the department along those lines.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does the minister have a contingency plan if any of these organizations are not able to fulfill their responsibilities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess we felt, as I indicated, the organizations that we fund would have to share in the responsibility of these really difficult economic times. We were faced with a challenge when there was no growth in revenues in the province.

We have indicated already that our decision had to be the priorities of health care, Family Services and Education, and that many departments had to share in the responsibility of reductions. In fact, this was one area that we asked to share and not accept any more responsibility than the branch within the department did in reductions. Over a period of time and over this difficult year anyway we will be working very closely with them to help them to cope through the difficult situation.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: What is the actual reduction for the heritage building grants?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is no reduction in the heritage grants. The difference is just a carry-over from monies that were not paid out from the previous year.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The reason I am asking is it is listed in the press release under the category of grants reduced. On page 2 it says Heritage Building Grants \$400,000.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that should not have been on the list then, because I think it was \$85,000—\$485,000 was just a carry-over.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On a few other minor issues, where is the proposal involving St. Boniface Historical Society and the Grey Nuns in terms of their longstanding work in that area?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have met several times with the committee that is involved. They have submitted a proposal to us, and we are at this point in time—Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have not received a formal request from them, but they would be eligible under the Heritage Building Grants program.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just a question on the question of burial sites, there is a note in the Estimates book on it. I am just wondering if the minister and this government have finalized an aboriginal burial policy?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are still working with the Native community on the

human burials policy. We have asked for their input and to date have not received that back from them. We have a resolution that has been drafted and it is presently being considered by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: While we are dealing with aboriginal issues, and relating to the reference in the Estimates book about the 75th anniversary of the Women's Suffrage, the minister knows that there was concern among aboriginal women about being really excluded in the sense that it did not acknowledge the later date when aboriginal people were given the right to vote.

Has the minister addressed that in any way and made any plans or commitments to the aboriginal people to commemorate the anniversary of aboriginal people getting the vote?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know that the 75th anniversary commemorating women getting the vote was a monumental occasion, and I think there was mention made by both myself and by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that in fact we know that it was not all women. It was aboriginal men and women at a later date that did receive the vote, and I guess we would have to wait for the appropriate anniversary to commemorate something like that. I would imagine that would be done, given that it was all aboriginal people, quite possibly in conjunction with the Minister responsible for Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey).

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I have a question on the reduction under Other Expenditures in Communication from \$75,000 roughly to \$63,000. What would the impact of that be?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have maintained enough budget in that line to go ahead with one or two technical papers and about five pamphlets this year.

* (1550)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Will this reduction or any other of the reductions in this branch have any impact on the ability of the department to respond on a fairly prompt basis to public inquiries?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there may be a minimal impact. We do not get a lot of requests for primary research, and if it is research that we already have, we should be able to provide that very readily. I suppose it would have to be referred if it was primary research to libraries or to the Archives.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister indicate how many inquiries this branch receives and how long it takes to respond to each one? Is that possible?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess that kind of information is not tabulated, but I am told that there are about 12 calls per day requesting information and it is able to be handled in a very timely fashion throughout the department.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On a new matter. The application for the World Heritage site, where is that and how is it going?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the research is done, but we are delaying the proposal at the request of the LGD, which is waiting for the establishment of the national park.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: A couple of questions on these special edukit projects. The first one, Discovering Manitoba Architecture. Could the minister indicate the cost of this project, and if and how it is being cost shared with the Department of Education?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is not being cost-shared by the Department of Education. It is our initiative, but we have worked with the educators throughout the province in the development of the kit. It is in production right now. We do not have a final figure, but the kits cost approximately \$5,000 to \$6,000 to produce.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The Northern Native Lifeways project to me sounds like quite a useful and innovative project. Why is it simply limited to school-aged children? Why not for the whole public? Has that been considered in terms of its broader usefulness?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess what we wanted to do was start off with children at the earliest possible stage, and I think that we can build on that in the future.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just a couple more questions in this area. I just want to clarify, under Community Heritage Grants, the reduction from \$701,700 to \$506,100 is the sum total of that reduction list. Is that what is listed in that press release, or are there additional grants not listed in the press release, or additional organizations that received reductions?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is the total list.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Then finally, on Heritage Building Grants, I have just noticed that there is

actually, in your own detailed Estimates, a reduction from \$485,400 to \$400,000. Could the minister explain that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the \$485,000 last year was a carry over of \$85,000 from the previous year that was put into last year's figure.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Can the minister tell us if she has made the forecasting, or whatever, to know whether or not she will be able to accommodate all requests from municipalities in terms of that \$400,000, or what kind of a waiting list there will be, or what kind of projects will be put on hold?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is a very popular program and there will be applications, I am sure, in excess of the number of dollars that will be available this year. I suppose there will have to be some priority decisions in that respect. It was a program that we were able to maintain this year but we were not able to increase funding for.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Would the minister be able to tell us how many projects or requests may not be able to be accommodated this year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we cannot give an exact prediction, but I do know from the applications we do have in right now, we would be able to accommodate all of them.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister give us her assessment and analysis of the problems around Barber House?

* (1600)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we are satisfied, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that the funds we have given to Barber House have been expended properly, and we are just waiting now for the city's assessment because of the inquiry that they have asked for.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I will have to move on to the next line.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: 2.(e) Historic Resources: 2.(e)(1) Salaries, \$970,000—pass; 2.(e)(2) Other Expenditures, \$199,300—pass.

6.(d) Historic Resources: 6.(d)(1) Grant Assistance, \$834,700—pass; 6.(d)(2) Grant Assistance - Capital \$400,000—pass.

We will now move on to item 2.(f) Recreation: 2.(f)(1) Salaries, \$272,000—(pass); 2.(f)(2) Other Expenditures, \$160,400—(pass).

6.(e) Recreation Grant Assistance \$1,028,000.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The first question I have is, I want to know if the Piney Blueberry Festival is getting its grant.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am not quite sure how to respond to that question. Would the member like to provide a little more in-depth explanation?

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: No, but I am really curious to know if the Piney Blueberry Festival got a grant this year. Perhaps you will have to take it as notice.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will have to check the grants list, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Now to a more serious matter, the reductions in this branch. Again a significant reduction in terms of staff, from nine to seven, and I am wondering again, in the context of this being a fairly stretched-to-the-limit branch of the department, if the minister could tell us precisely what the loss of those two positions means and on what basis the decision was made to cut those positions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: One of the positions was a clerk who basically managed the stores, and the other one was a position dealing with rec policy. We are in the final stages of that development and that position is now no longer needed.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does that mean the recreation policy is done and its public unveiling is imminent and we will soon know what this government's views and philosophical approaches to recreation are?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are coming very close.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister tell us when we might expect the release of the recreation policy?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I certainly cannot give an exact date, but I will indicate that it will be shortly.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister explain the three-year time lapse from the point where a fairly major consultation process had been done and a major paper done and a significant policy statement drafted to today? We still do not have a policy statement. What has transpired in those three years? What was wrong with the original recreation policy paper, and what changes to that we can expect?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I think that probably with the changes in government, there

were some changes in philosophy and what we felt recreation would be. I do know that there is a national statement that we agree with, that recreation is all of those things that people do with their leisure time to enhance their quality of life. I certainly agree with that concept, but I think the direction that the former government was going in was more providing or indicating that it was government's responsibility to provide recreational opportunities for all Manitobans.

I guess, my philosophy would be a little somewhat different. I think there is a local government responsibility, and I think recreation is very often driven by people's individual choices for the types of things they would like to do in their leisure time. I think the branch should be providing a leadership role, but I do not think we as a provincial government should accept the sole responsibility or the prime responsibility for recreational opportunities. I believe there is a major responsibility on behalf of the local government and the local community to determine what their needs are. We can provide leadership in many ways, but we are not going to be the sole deliverer of recreation throughout the province.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I certainly do not recall the first policy statement on recreation or the draft that was put together under the former NDP administration stressing that the province assume all responsibility and, in effect, play a big brother role in this area.

I recall the major theme of that paper being one of providing equitable access to recreational opportunities for all Manitobans, particularly dealing with groups in our society that have experienced systemic barriers and have a great many obstacles in accessing recreation opportunities, particularly aboriginal people, seniors, the disabled or members living with disabilities, women, visible minorities, and so on. I still believe and the NDP believes that is still a major area that has to be addressed in a recreation policy.

Can the minister indicate to us if that emphasis will be still followed by her government, and what kinds of action plans she is looking at to address this whole area? I know she has not released the paper and cannot give us specifics but some broad themes of policy statement and approaches this government intends to undertake.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I could continue along the lines as my last comments whereby it has taken us three years and probably will be a few more months before we introduce our recreation policy, but I do not think we as a government have stood still. As far as attempting to address some of the aboriginal issues, I think the northern recreation directors pilot project that we implemented, which to date has trained 23 Northerners to go back into their own communities to provide recreational opportunities for those communities, is a very positive step and one that has been very well received in the northern and Native communities. They are all Northern Affairs communities, and that is very positive. I think it is a major step in the right direction.

I guess another thing that we have done is put in place the Recreation Innovation Fund where, if there is a community need, they are able to apply to that fund and access some dollars based on what they believe and what they feel the community's needs are.

So, in fact, we have not stood still. We are still continuing to work at improving recreational opportunities throughout the province of Manitoba. I guess over the last three years there has been a fair amount of consultation with community groups and organizations. We have been talking with the local governments through MAUM and UMM to see what the problems were in the Recreation District program. I know the member knows that is a program that has been in place since 1972, and there are concerns within the community that there is not enough flexibility in the program.

It has been almost 20 years and every once in a while programs have to be re-evaluated. We have to look at ways that we can make it more flexible to meet the needs of the communities, so we have been working in consultation with them. That consultation is still ongoing. We are looking very shortly at putting in place a change to the Recreation District program that will attempt to meet the needs of the communities out there in a better way.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: It would seem to me that any change in terms of the grant system and the funding formula, and any new initiatives that would seem to flow out of a policy statement on recreation, would require some additional resources and staff. Yet in this budget we see a reduction.

What kind of plans are in the works to ensure that resources will be there to address a new policy on recreation? Would it not have made more sense, even though the paper may be completed and therefore a recreation consultant is not needed to draft a paper, to hold onto that position for the work that will flow out of a new policy statement?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think that our Regional Services people will be able to be a major player in assisting communities in working with us to put in place the new district grant program. Indications are it will be announced with the phase-in over the next year so that the access will come in the next fiscal year for the new program, because I think there will be a fair amount of work to be done with communities in evaluating what types of districts they want to form as a basis of providing recreation to their communities.

So it will be announced. We will be working with the communities, and Regional Services will be able to help to deliver and establish the new program.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I am wondering if the minister, in preparing for the release of her recreation policy and thinking about reorganizing and putting in place new initiatives, has followed the whole Health Advisory Network process and perused the papers that have been produced on preventative health services for the elderly?

* (1610)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, my deputy is involved with a committee of deputies who are dealing with healthy public policy, so we have been a part of that process whereby there is co-ordination and co-operation among departments to ensure that one program enhances another.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I would just on that note point out to the minister that there is a very strong statement in one of the task force reports entitled Preventative Health Services for the Elderly on recreation. It clearly states that recreation includes a wide range of pastimes including physical activities and mental activities. It goes on to say, there is much we do not know about recreation and the role it plays in the lives of elders, but there is good reason to believe that the more involved elders are, the healthier they are both physically and mentally, and therefore the task force recommends that recreational opportunities be available for Manitoba seniors. I think that is a fairly strong statement, and I hope that the minister will take that

into account and address the particular concerns of seniors.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That statement could have been written by me. I have repeated that over and over again, and I believe that recreation does play a major role in the mental and physical well-being from our seniors right down to our youth and our infants. There have to be recreational opportunities, but I believe that they are community-driven based on the demographics of a community, the isolation, some of the barriers that might be in place.

I know that even some of the graduates from the recreation program at the university are now working in nursing homes and working with the elderly in communities to try to rehabilitate them and get them back to a point whereby they can manage better in the community. That is the right direction to be going, and I think that sometimes recreational opportunities can provide for people.

I have often said that sometimes in the past, and hopefully not as much in the future, that some of our elderly end up going to the doctor on a weekly basis because—you might even call it a recreational outing in a way—because they are not active and busy enough. I think that within communities, we have to look for ways that we can harness the energy, maybe help to get rid of the loneliness and get people together, whether it be in the seniors community, whether it is seniors with seniors or seniors working with the rest of the community. I tend to agree, and I would really support that. We will be moving along those lines.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does that mean we can expect to see some major new initiatives for seniors and recreational opportunities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I have indicated, I believe that when a community, whether it be with seniors or with any component of the community, when a community comes forward with an initiative—we have in process the Recreation Innovation Fund that can be accessed for new and innovative programs. I have indicated that I do not believe it is government's responsibility to dictate, but I believe we are the facilitator and can help and can work with communities. The opportunities do have to be community-driven, and we should be able to assist in a leadership role or in any way we can to provide those opportunities.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On the Recreation Innovation Fund, how long has that been in existence?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairman, it started last year.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: What kind of criteria does an organization have to meet? What projects have been funded to date?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairman, I can send a copy of the application and the criteria or provide a copy. They are innovative, new, community-initiated projects, and I can provide a list of those projects too that have been funded. They are projects that do not receive any other source of government support.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does the minister expect that the program will be fully accessed, or whatever the word is?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There have been several applications. The one thing that is not funded under this program is capital. There have been some capital applications which we have, of course, rechannelled either to community places, or the Manitoba Community Services Council, and asked them to seek applications there, but it is not a capital program. It is sort of a community project that is going to enhance the quality of life.

What we have asked is that the applications be sent to the local governments, that the local governments look at the applications and indicate to us what they perceive the priorities in the community to be. I think it is important that the local governments, the community and the Manitoba government work together in these areas, so that we are all partners, I suppose, in the recreation process.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I still need some clarification. So has this fund been fully operational for a year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, no. The first approvals, I guess, were in January of 1991, so that has been four months now that the program has been up and running.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: And how many applications have been submitted to date? How many have been approved, and what is the waiting list in terms of this fund?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not have a full list here, but we can provide all of that.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Yes, on the reduction under Recreation Operating Grants, could the minister give us a breakdown of that cutback?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay, the one reduction, I guess a complete reduction, a 100 percent reduction for the Canadian Hostelling Association, and that is the total.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Before I come back to the Hostelling Association, where do the reductions to the Whiteshell District Swim Association, Eastman Swim Association, Interlake Swim Association fall under—or the cuts, or the total grants withdrawn?

Mrs. Mitchelson: They are in Lotteries. Oh, it is Regional Services, the next appropriation.

* (1620)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Yes, on the Canadian Hostelling Association, the minister knows that total withdrawal of their grant came as a complete surprise to the organization, and it is causing very severe difficulties for the Hostelling Association. Can the minister tell us on what basis she made this decision to withdraw all provincial support for the Hostelling Association of Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that their grant was \$14,000. I guess they had retained earnings of \$25,000. We do give them a grant for their building, a building that they share with MPRA and the camping association of \$25,000 per year. When we looked across the country, there are not very many provinces that do give operating grants to hostelling. I think Alberta and Nova Scotia are the only two, and we will work with them if they decide to move to a new facility with applications through Community Places and that kind of thing.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The Canadian Hostelling Association of Manitoba has written a letter to the deputy minister and expressed grave concern about the lack of consultation. They have indicated that they were not consulted, that they did not receive any prior notice, that this came out of the blue. Why was there not any consultation with an organization that was to have its total provincial grant cut off?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I think the member for St. Johns knows that when budget decisions are made, that kind of information is not discussed publicly until the actual budget is released. They were notified immediately, as were all of the other organizations that had reductions in funding, and we will be prepared to sit down and meet with them and discuss how they can use some

of their retained earnings to help them get through, and how we will continue. We will work with them, as I said, to try to get through this time, but we felt that they would be able to manage with their retained earnings being, I guess, almost twice as much as what their grant was.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Has the minister done any consultation with this organization since the budget announcement and the total cutback?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the letter was received within the last couple of days, and we will be meeting with them shortly.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does the minister anticipate that there will be an impact on this organization and on the service it delivers as a result of the total withdrawal of provincial support?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I indicated, Mr. Acting Chairperson, they do have a surplus of almost twice as much as what the grant was we were providing for them, so we will work with them, and I would expect or anticipate that it would not have any impact.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Does the minister not feel, especially in light of the letter that has been sent to her department, that there will be an impact, down the road at least, in terms of services available to young people, services available to our aboriginal people, and also services available to people with mental disabilities, since this is also a work site for such a work education program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as I indicated, we will sit down and we will talk to them. We will evaluate what direction they see themselves going over the next year. We have not abandoned them. As I said, we will consult with them. They have indicated certain things in their letter, and I think as staff meets with them we will have to work through the issues that they have raised.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Is the minister prepared to at least give us some assurances now that if this organization's future is threatened, and it is not able to provide fairly high quality service for young people, for aboriginals in Manitoba, for visitors from throughout the world, that she will then reconsider her decision and take forward a request for some provincial support for this organization?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, Mr. Acting Chairman, those are hypothetical questions at this point. I think we need to sit down and talk to the organization, work through how they plan to

manage through the next year. I cannot at this point in time give any assurances of anything.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I have just another question on this whole area. I think when the name of this department was changed it certainly caused some concern in the community and, I think, left the impression among some people that recreation was no longer a priority of this government. I realize that one would have a long ministerial title if one included all culture, heritage, recreation and citizenship but, on the other hand, I think it is a very important message.

(Mr. Deputy Chairman in the Chair)

I am wondering if the minister considered this at all, if there was any consideration to finding a way to include recreation in a ministerial title, and whether or not she has received any advice or feedback from the community.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairman, yes, I have received several letters, and I have answered them all indicating that there certainly is a priority on recreation by this government. We will be having a policy. We will be changing the recreation district program that we have established, the Recreation Innovation Fund. We have established the Northern Recreation Directors pilot project, so certainly there is an emphasis on recreation, and in the throne speech that was recommitted by this government.

As far as the name in a title of the department, that is certainly not going to be a change that is made right at this point in time. I think when you look at the budget in the recreation area, there has not been major reductions in this area. We have a commitment and recreation does remain a priority.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Pass.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I just have virtually a general comment and then one or two questions on the hostelling association.

As we all are quite aware, lifestyles change quite dramatically as the number of hours, work sharing and so forth, aging population, changing demographics; and we are moving towards a society that does want more leisure time and recreation time. I am wondering if the government is doing anything. The minister had made mention of the recreation paper in terms of addressing the changing society. What different programs can we expect to see any time in the near future?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do have an agreement with the University of Manitoba to do research on recreation, and they have been doing that kind of thing. Yes, things are changing. People in some instances are retiring earlier. There are people who are job sharing, but I guess I will go back to saying something that I said just a little earlier, that we can put in place programs that allow communities to access funding for projects that they feel are very worthy in their community, but I believe that recreation needs to be community driven and there needs to be local government support also.

* (1630)

We can provide a leadership role, we can work with communities through Regional Services to help them determine the demographics, to help them to determine the types of needs that are there, and each community is different. They all have individual needs, and they all choose different ways to spend their time recreationally, their leisure time, and I think there has to be a partnership, there has to be a community need expressed with local government support for that community need, and that is where the provincial government plays a role in assisting that.

I do not think it should be driven by the provincial government. I think recreation and leisure opportunities need to be driven by the community.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I concur with the thought that it has to come from different communities but, saying that, I also believe that the government does play a major supportive role in ensuring that there is a development of our recreational volunteers and so forth and that we should not underestimate that role.

There is a net decrease in this particular line when you add the two lines together, and that is somewhat of concern to me, because it should be a higher priority, as I have stated in my opening, very brief remark, that we do see a change in lifestyles. The government, I believe, should be putting more of a priority on recreation in the province of Manitoba. The minister might want to comment on that, but I wanted to also get into one other thing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Okay. We, through the Recreation branch, have a skills program, modules for volunteer training, for board development, that is used extensively throughout the province of Manitoba. We certainly will be continuing along those lines providing that kind of material for

communities, working with communities, refocusing in some ways the work that Regional Services staff do to ensure that they are working with communities with a recreation orientation and assisting to help communities to develop.

I think, as I have said before, that there has to be that community responsibility, and our role is a leadership role. It is to provide the tools there for the volunteers who want to get organized, who want to put forth a project or develop a project that will enhance recreational opportunities in their community.

As I have said before, we are going to be changing the Recreation district program so that there is more flexibility and more communities can access funding through the provincial government, with a phase-in probably over the next year, to be fully implemented by next fiscal year. So we are moving in that direction, and I suppose the reductions that were mentioned are due to reductions in operating budget as a result of reduction in two staff years in the branch.

Mr. Lamoureux: I wanted to also pick up somewhat briefly on the Canadian Hostelling Association, because the letter was cc'd to myself, and I guess once again I bring up the point that many different organizations or a number of organizations that have been able to create retained earnings, apparently at least on the surface, seem to be penalized in a sense that these are the groups or different organizations that are being cut back on. We have seen this on a couple of occasions, and I am wondering if the minister can tell us if that was the first priority in looking at different groups, associations or organizations when it came to whether or not they should be reducing or dropping the budget in its entirety, if they have accomplished over a number of years some type of retained earnings?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, that certainly was not the first criterion, but I will indicate here that when tough decisions have to be made, we have every hope that every organization that has had to receive a reduction, will be able to continue on. When times are better and there is more money to go around, then of course governments make different decisions. This was a tough year.

We believe that the Hostelling Association—hopefully, we can sit down and work together with them through this time. If, in fact, there is a need for

accommodation, we have indicated that we would be very supportive of them applying for a Community Places grant for a new facility. We will be discussing those things with them as we meet with them.

All I can say is that in difficult times, there are difficult decisions and difficult choices that have to be made.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I believe that the government did put large emphasis on the question of retained earnings. I know for myself, if I was an executive director or involved in many of these different organizations that have received these cuts, one would have been inclined to recommend for future groups and organizations that you should spend the money that you have been allocated.

If that means going out and purchasing things that you might not necessarily need, at least in terms of immediately or in the near future, I think that is to the disadvantage of different agencies. The argument can be used for governments. When I was a member of the forces, I know at the end of the fiscal year you would see Hercules aircraft flying around the tower burning up gas because if they do not use up the gas, they are not going to get the same quota that they received, plus, for the following year.

I believe that this is the type of a message that the government is—if you do not believe that you are sending it out, indirectly I believe that you are, in fact, sending that message out. I think that is a wrong message to send out to the organizations. I think they should be rewarded in one sense that they are able to use their funds.

One of the ways that you can reward them is by suggesting that they expand in one aspect that the government was looking at. If that means adding a facility to it, promoting some other aspect, in one sense the government will save the money because they will not have to do it. In the other sense, those retained earnings are not being squandered away. So I think that would have been a better message to have sent out to the organizations.

To conclude on this particular line, my question to the minister specifically is: Is it fair to assume—I know one should never assume anything, but is it fair to expect organizations that have had retained earnings and cuts that were made based in part on these returned earnings, that these organizations, once those earnings have been used up, can

anticipate some type of financial support from the provincial government in the future?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess all of the decisions that were made are individual decisions that will have to be re-evaluated when there is more money to go around. I guess I might sort of put the question back. All of us have certain budget allocations to live within. In fact, the decisions that we made—a lot of thought was put into the tough decisions that had to be made.

I guess if maybe a suggestion could be made to me about what other reductions should have been made instead of some of these, then I would listen to those suggestions and take them into consideration for future budget years. In this year, we, as I said, had some very difficult choices to make. We made them, and we will have to live with those decisions that have been made and, hopefully, be able to work through this tough time with the organizations that have been able to maintain some funding or, in fact, have had complete reductions and are going to maybe need some assistance with staff and the department to get through this difficult year.

* (1640)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I find it encouraging to hear the minister would take into consideration recommendations that we in opposition might bring forward. I will suggest to her that, in fact, later on in the department, we will be making a couple of recommendations, and I hope it is not too late to even change it prior to the next budget. We will wait for that.

It should be noted that, earlier in my opening remarks, I had made some suggestions in terms of the Community Places Program. So I think it is a question of priorities, but the bottom line is, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is that the government in its wisdom has placed a priority on this particular department, and that priority has not been a high priority. We have seen that in the overall budget.

Now, for whatever reasons, whether it was the minister's inability to get more money or resources to her department or whatever it might have been, that her department has been allocated out this number of dollars, it is her responsibility to ensure that she set her priorities from within. I would suggest to the minister that this department should have had a higher priority with the government.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We will take a five-minute recess.

* * *

The House took recess at 4:41 p.m.

After Recess

The House resumed at 4:46 p.m.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I just had a couple of more questions on Recreation, inspired by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), since that led us into the discussion of hard times. The minister is suggesting that given the hard times we all have to do our part and this area is certainly doing its fair share.

I do not think anybody is disagreeing with the fact that difficult decisions have to be made right now. We are in difficult economic times. I think our biggest concern is with the fact that there does not seem to be a rational, planned basis for how cuts are made and what services are reduced.

In the previous branch, Historic Resources, it appears from our discussion of that section that all organizations, nonprofit organizations in the area of heritage, received roughly the same kind of reduction. In Recreation—and let me just add, we certainly do not find favour necessarily with those reductions. We think this is a very important area that should be sustained and supported. The point I am trying to raise here is that when you get to Recreation, then there is no rationale for where reductions are made other than what appears to be the singling out of a particular association, the Canadian Hostelling Association for Manitoba.

My understanding is that there was fairly firm criteria in place for funding provincial recreation organizations and that those criteria, if they had been followed, would have, I would think, assured some level of provincial support for the Hostelling Association. My understanding of those criteria are that the organization must be provincial in nature, and I think that no one can dispute that the Hostelling Association is not provincial in nature.

A second criteria is that the organization must be involved in the development of recreational opportunities. I do not think anyone will deny that is not the primary purpose of the Hostelling Association. A third criteria is that the organization must not receive double funding from the provincial government. We know from these Estimates that is

not the case and, finally, that the organization must be nonprofit incorporated.

So here we have an organization that meets every one of the criteria that are in place for funding provincial recreation associations, and yet it has been hit with the total withdrawal of provincial support. I think that needs an explanation, that regardless of our different positions on action that must be taken when times are tough, there is still the question of planning on the basis of rational, objective criteria. I think the minister has to explain how she has violated, in effect, such standards in criteria.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess that there are lots of organizations that do satisfy that criteria, but this is the time when we just do not have enough money to go around. As we looked at what other provinces were doing, we found that in the instance of heritage organizations most provinces do fund those heritage organizations or similar organizations to what we fund.

* (1650)

As I indicated earlier, there is only a couple of other provinces that do fund a hostelling association. Most provinces do not. I guess that was one of the reasons the decision was made.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I think that we should look at that fact as a matter of pride and as offering some leadership in terms of the country. I think it is very regrettable that instead of maintaining a position of leadership, we are actually seeing our quality of recreational services reduced to keep pace with the rest of the provinces or most of the provinces in Canada.

On another matter—I will leave that for now. I think we have certainly gone around and around it. I still hope the minister will look at that criteria, meet with the organization and consider reinstating a provincial grant for the Hostelling Association of Manitoba.

I do want to, though, ask once more about—since the minister has made some comments, has made them enough times that I am becoming very disturbed and concerned that recreation must be community driven. I think what I am hearing the minister say over and over again is that this government has decided to basically pull out of the field of recreation in large measure and is leaving it to the volunteer sector by and large.

There is a clear trend emerging through these Estimates on many fronts that causes us great concern. I think the minister and this government are leaving a very contradictory message, some very strong conflicting messages. The minister is saying today that projects and initiatives in the area of Recreation must be community driven, and these are hard times, and we cannot do as much as we would like, and so we are going to have to rely on communities and volunteers, et cetera.

At the same time, this government and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) are saying: We have to start seriously looking at rising health care costs. We have to look at reforming our health care system, finding new approaches, looking at community-based health care, looking at preventative health care, looking at holistic approaches to health care.

It seems to me that in any such approach to health care, the availability of quality recreational activities and opportunities is central, is key. One cannot look at preventative, holistic approaches without a very strong approach on the recreational front, and that is going to mean more than simply a hands-off approach and saying, well, let the community come forward, and if it does, we will offer some support—certainly moral support; maybe, but not likely, financial support. Basically, you are on your own.

So those kinds of activities, which are so vital to a reform of our health care system and bringing down the health care costs in the long term, are being neglected and, in increasing ways, abandoned. I do not know how we can, on the one hand, say there is a proactive health care policy, and then, on the other hand, say, we are going to leave it to communities to address their recreational needs.

To me it does require an active government role, and I do not see that active government role. I would like the minister to explain how she can rationalize these two different messages coming out of this government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not think there is any conflicting message that is coming out of this government at all when we look at recreation and recreational opportunities. But I will not profess to sit here as a minister—and I would hope the member would not think that she could go out into a rural community and go through that

community and tell a senior or tell a member of that community what they should do in their leisure time, and recreation is leisure time. People do have to make those choices.

There have to be community organizations out there that support recreational activities, and I think that we, as a department within government, should provide leadership, we should help to co-ordinate, we should participate in the research on the demographics and on the needs out there in the community. I think that we have a role to play in training volunteers. I think we have a consultative role to play through regional staff that is out there in the community. We fund and support recreation districts through the Recreation Innovation Fund. We fund through the northern recreation directors pilot project, and I must indicate that, before that program came into place, under her government there were not the recreational opportunities. There were not those in the communities trained to go in and work with the community to assess the needs and to come forward with projects that might be well worthy of funding because there was no co-ordination.

So that is our role, and that role will continue. I think that, when I indicate that it has to be community driven, there have to be people within the communities, because, as I have said, I cannot sit as a minister here in the city of Winnipeg and tell a community what they should do with their leisure time, and what they should do recreationally.

If there is a large component of seniors within a community, we can provide the leadership, first of all, through the research, knowing that kind of thing, and working with the community to help to develop innovative ways of including a majority of the seniors in that community, whether it be actively or passively, participating in recreational or leisure time activities. That is our role and our responsibility, and the funding will be there.

Also, we cannot look at recreation in isolation, as we have talked about. We have to work co-operatively with the Department of Health and the people who are dealing with healthier communities. We have to work with the Department of Education to ensure that there is co-operative utilization of the facilities that exist out in rural Manitoba.

Recreation can be part of an economic development in rural Manitoba. We have to work

with the Department of Rural Development in ensuring that recreation is a player in the overall component of a healthier community, whether it be health related to physical well-being, whether it be health related to mental well-being, whether it just be the health of the community with recreational facilities and opportunities, whether it be sharing with the educational facilities out there, with the libraries, with the museums.

All of those things are a component of recreation that we want to be a player and a partner in with all other departments and with the community at large.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I have just a couple of points in response to that. I will be the first to admit that the former NDP administrations did not do enough in recreation. It was a very underdeveloped area and needed major work, but I think that work was beginning. I think a pattern has been developed over the years that as times get tough, programs and services in an area like recreation are often the first to go.

I think that has to be stopped, and it has to be dealt with because what we are now seeing is that the minister is saying she expects more and more of municipalities and more and more of community organizations who do not have the resources when times are tough. In effect, what is happening is more offloading from the province to municipalities, and we are not going to advance at all in the area of recreation. In fact, we are going to be set back.

I would like to see this area taken more seriously, whether it be both in terms of this department but also on an integrated, co-ordinated basis among all the departments that are involved, and hope that we can start to see some significant initiatives in this area. That does not mean side stepping communities and not responding to the wishes of communities, because I will be the first to say that is a fundamental principle that must be followed.

That does not mean that there still is not a major role for government. I would hope that in the coming months the minister recognizes, and her colleagues recognize, that government must be there to stimulate and support initiatives to offer more than just encouragement, but also to offer financial support, resources, staff to help co-ordinate projects and ideas that are there at the grass roots level. Without that kind of support we will not see that major work happening at the community level, and we will not see the kind of transformation of our

health care system that the minister and her colleagues talk about.

* (1700)

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Item 2.(f) Recreation: 2.(f)(1) Salaries, \$272,000—pass; 2.(f)(2) Other Expenditures, \$160,400—pass.

Item 6.(e) Recreation Grant Assistance, \$1,028,000—pass.

Is there a will of the committee that we pass the last number in Lotteries Funded Programs, Regional Services Grant Assistance, \$104,000? It is the last item there. It is under Regional Services. I believe we will still have the Regional Services salaries and stuff to deal with on 2.(g). It is just the staff will not have to be here on Monday for the one item. Is that the will of the committee? -(interjection)- (f), 6.(f) Regional Services, just for the grants for the Lotteries.

The time is now 5 p.m., and time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

SUPPLY—EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Madam Chairman (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, page 37, item 1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support.

I would ask the minister's staff to take their places in the Chamber.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Chairman, I had hoped during the Question Period to be more positive about the announcement the minister made this morning with respect to review of legislation. In fact, I am fairly positive of the efforts and many of the points mentioned in this document, but at the same time, I unfortunately was very distressed by coming into possession of the document that I laid out in Question Period to the minister, which was signed by the deputy minister.

I wonder if the minister can elaborate for me on what the policy is with respect to communications from his staff and from individuals in the Department of Education to the media, the MLAs and the public in general.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Chair, I would be happy to elaborate on that particular policy. It has not

changed from when the former government was in power, that is, that there is a purpose for a communications director or a communications person, either within government or within a department.

Madam Chair, in the last year, staff in the department have been barraged by a series of calls from staff from the opposition parties and from the public at large. There is a process that is followed, and indeed staff have expressed some concern about the fact that they cannot carry out their duties effectively sometimes, because they are barraged by phone calls. To that extent, we have simply reiterated the policy that is in place, and the deputy minister quite rightly put in place a memo that would indicate what the policy is. It does not mean that we hide or keep information from the public or from those who may wish it, it simply means that all calls from individuals wanting information, or groups of individuals, would be directed through the communications director, who would then indicate to the party which department or which ADM or who would best be able to answer their concern or their question.

There are times when we have concerns from the school divisions. There are times when school divisions want information, but they do not exactly know who to call. If we have a consistent approach to it, then it is very easy for somebody on staff to indicate, please call this number and they will direct you to the appropriate person. That is all it is.

Madam Chair, at no time has the member opposite been denied access to information or been denied information unless, of course, that information is of a sensitive nature for internal use and cannot be shared by the department with anyone. Those matters sometime occur, especially when a matter is before the courts or if it involves a very sensitive nature.

It is just a simple method of having a smooth and efficient system in place for communicating, not only with the public, but with all members of this Legislature, the media and whoever may want information from the department. At no time have I ever put any sort of gag order on my staff, but it is important that that information flows properly and accurately.

Mr. Chomlak: I beg to differ with the comments of the minister, because the document states, and I quote, no one other than those named is to respond

to the media, end of quote, and what that seems to indicate to me is the minister has said only he, the ADM or the communications person can respond to the public, and is that not unprecedented.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, indeed, it is not. It would not make much sense for somebody from the media or somebody from the public to phone somebody in the K to I2 side of the Department of Education to ask questions about something that is occurring in the community college side. There are certain people who have responsibility. For example, if it is a matter that deals with the colleges, the most appropriate person to be calling would be the ADM responsible for PACE. If it in fact has something to do with a specific college, then it probably would be directed to the president of that community college by the communications director.

Madam Chair, it is not something that we are trying to keep from the public; indeed, it is to try and give the public the correct information, the accurate information and to present the true picture as it really exists. In that way, I think we as a government and we as legislators can be more effective in the way that we give information out accurately and completely.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, the minister said present the picture as it exists. This memo seems to indicate the picture as it exists is the way the minister determines it should exist. Does the minister not realize that the public servants of the Department of Education do not work for him, they work for the public of Manitoba? Is that not the case?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, of course, and I am responsible for that department. The reality is that everybody within that department and within any government department has a job description. For that reason we have a Communications division, if you like, or we had a Communications division. Now we have one for government which can channel those kinds of questions that come to the appropriate people, so that the proper picture and proper perspective can be given, rather than someone having the incomplete information, an inaccurate picture of the matter, and try to guess. There is a great deal of pressure put on staff who may not know of an issue but are constantly bombarded on a matter especially by those who may be in opposition, who want information to be in a particular way.

The policy before—when I was the critic for Education and the New Democratic Party were in government, it was made very clear to me that if I wanted information from the department I was to go through the minister's office, and there would be someone in the minister's office who would give me the information. I respected that, Madam Chairman. Indeed, that is the way it should be, because I am a politician, and my questions should go through the minister.

When the media call, it is important that they get the information accurately. For that reason, it is important that they deal with the communications area, who have some knowledge about what it is the media might be asking about, so that they get the accurate picture. Never in my department has there been a withholding of information that should be made public. Even through the Freedom of Information we have been very willing to disclose any information that can be disclosed. I have to caution the member that from time to time there is information which is sensitive, which perhaps deals with an individual, a matter which may be before the courts and which cannot be shared with the public at large.

* (1520)

Mr. Chomlak: Again, the minister has indicated that there is information, and I agree with the minister that there is information that perhaps cannot, should not, be shared on certain occasions with the public or with the media or with opposition members. That is not what this memo says. It says that information must be channelled through specific—I would suggest perhaps, politically, information can be changed to present the picture as the minister says it should be presented. That amounts to a form of censorship on a department that is the second largest in government.

I am asking the minister, if someone from rural Manitoba, from a media outlet, should phone and ask for factual information with respect to enrollments, does that mean that this dictum is in effect, it has to go through this associate deputy minister or the ADM or the minister?

Mr. Derkach: I guess we could spend the whole afternoon arguing about what the memo really says, but let us be clear about something. I do not consider that the assistant deputy ministers within my department are going to be in any way political. That is my responsibility. The questions that are

going to be asked of them will be answered in a very administrative way, as they should. It is not fair for questions to be asked of perhaps very junior staff about very complex matters as they relate to a specific branch of the department.

That is why we have directors. That is why we have managers. That is why we have assistant deputy ministers within the department who have responsibility for those branches and for divisions.

There is nothing wrong in asking that if information is required, the communications person within my department can direct the media or the group or the public at large to the individual who can best answer the question.

I have to tell you that there are many, many calls coming into the department where the matter is channelled to an ADM or a manager. I do not even know about them and I never will, because there are too many calls coming into the department for me to try and screen all of those calls, but there has to be some mechanism whereby the message that is going out is consistent, so that the picture is complete when it is presented.

This is the way that it has been done in the past. This is not a difference in policy. It is the same policy that was in place when your government was in office. It is not a different policy at all. Indeed, the Communications branch was the branch that handled all of those calls.

When school boards call in about enrollment figures or about matters of that nature, that information is simply passed on to them directly. I mean, there are hundreds and hundreds of calls coming into the department daily. The department is very large, and those calls—there has to be a system in place whereby that information can be sent out in an appropriate way, so that the information is complete.

When we talk about media, when media ask questions, they are not the type of questions that can probably be answered by some junior people in the department. Many times, if a person in a junior position responds and then is quoted in the paper, that puts a tremendous amount of pressure on that individual, because then they can say, well, nobody told me what the proper procedure was in handling these questions.

Is it not important that the staff in the department know what the procedure is and that it does not put any onus on them? In fact, they can simply refer the

matter through the Communications area, and it will be handled in an appropriate way.

So there is not any ill intent here to try and hide information from anyone at all.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, I think it is inappropriate for staff to have to live with the fear that they cannot talk to the media, they cannot talk to opposition MLAs on a myriad of details. This letter does not say sensitive information or information that may be of a complex nature should be referred to the ADM or the deputy minister or the minister. This memo says no one other than those named is to respond to the media.

That is not what the memo says, and this minister has instituted a policy on December 12, 1990, several months ago, that I suggest is unprecedented in the Department of Education and probably is consistent with other policies in this government in terms of communications.

Will the minister consider an alteration of this policy in order to clarify what he has tried to clarify for me this afternoon?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I reiterate for the member that the policy is clear, that the policy is effective, that the policy allows for access to information, for efficient information, a smooth way of gaining access to information and acceptable to staff.

I have not heard a complaint from my deputy or my managers at all with regard to the way communication is disseminated. I do not have any intentions of changing that policy at this time, because the policy is very consistent with the way that the former government handled the matter as well. What the member is criticizing is also the way that his former administration used to handle communications within each department.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister loves to compare the former government. He has been minister now for four budgets. I would like him to table a memo like this dealing with the Department of Education when the NDP was government, and then perhaps we could have a discussion—

An Honourable Member: You shredded it all.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister knows the art fair well of shredding, of doctoring and of massaging information—he knows full well. This memo came out because the minister knew politically there was difficulty and trouble. The minister is saying that, on

the day that he announced public hearings on very major legislation to deal with public schools in Manitoba, he is not going to change this gag order that is in effect in his department.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I thought that the member could read and understand far better than he does, because obviously—maybe for his own political purposes he wants to put his own little spin to that particular document that was sent out by my deputy minister.

Madam Chair, as a matter of fact, although I discussed the matter with my deputy on several occasions, as can be noted from the memo, I did not sign the memo. It was an administrative thing that was handled by the deputy minister.

Madam Chair, on the day that I announce an important initiative in terms of public consultation on the legislation for this department, it is ironic that he should be bringing something forward that is not a gag order at all; indeed, it is an internal procedure of handling communications in the department so that the access to information can be smooth.

Madam Chair, for that reason, there is a contact person on every news release, and if you would note, I think your party does it as well, that there is a contact person so that media know who to contact, so that they can get the information or be directed to get the information. If that process was not used, I do not know, we would have media phoning anybody in the department for information.

Madam Chair, I have no intentions of changing the policy that we have in place right now. The policy will stay in effect. There are contact people in the department who can handle the media calls as they come in, and they are usually named in press releases.

When he talks about the Legislative Reform Panel that is going out to hear Manitobans on the question of The Public Schools Act and The Administration Act, indeed, any person in this province, any individual, has access to the panel to make representation and to have their views known very openly. If they do not want to make an oral presentation, they are also entitled to make a written presentation, and they can send it in without making a personal appearance before the panel.

We are giving every opportunity possible for Manitobans to be heard on this question, and I am afraid that all the noise that the member is making

about the fact that this is a closed process rings very hollow.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, the minister talked about spin, and if this memo does not indicate that every single communication will have the ministerial spin on it, I do not know if anything else does. That is correct, and the minister is nodding his head in agreement, and I agree. This ensures that the minister has the appropriate spin on every piece of communication coming out of his department.

I would like to turn to a question. I asked for clarification of a question that I asked the last time we met, and that was April 30. I asked about the increase on the Communications portion of the 1.(b) expenditure, and the minister said at that time it was upwardly adjusted because of an increase in telephone costs of the particular branch, and also the past two fiscal years the budget did not contain sufficient dollars. Well, that is obvious, but my question to the minister is: Is this not just an attempt to increase the Communications budget in that component of the department while making claims that somehow they have decreased Communication expenditures overall in the department?

* (1530)

Mr. Derkach: No, Madam Chair, the member is dead wrong. The Communications line that he speaks about is the increased costs on such things as telephone, postage, advertising, career services and other such communications items that are just a process of running an office. They have nothing to do with the type of communications that he is referring to.

Mr. Chomlak: Expenditure has effectively doubled from what we voted on last year in the Supplementary Estimates, and my question to the minister, has postage, advertising communications doubled in costs since last year?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, may I just use, by examples, some of the previous costs to indicate to the member what the actual costs were within the department. What has happened over the last number of years is there has not been an appropriate amount budgeted in this particular line to reflect the true costs. For example, in 1988-89 the telephone costs for the branch were \$25,000. In 1989-90 they were \$30,451. In 1990-91 they were \$26,575. So although we were budgeting

something like \$16,000 on that line, it was not nearly enough to pay for the costs of that type of communication, if you like.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, that concerns me. The minister has indicated that in '88-89 the expenditures were in the \$20,000 range and then last year they were in the \$30,000 range, yet in the budget that came here before us, he only budgeted in the Supplementary Estimates \$16,400. That does not make sense to me.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, one of the things we realized when I became minister, of course, was that being a rural member adds an additional cost to such things as telephone costs and that sort of thing. The new technology that we have within government, for example, such as cellular phones have added an additional cost in that line of Communications, so to appropriately reflect the actual costs, we have had to adjust that particular figure.

Indeed, we should have probably done that way back in 1987, because if you go back to the history of that particular line you will find that the amounts were somewhat out of line in that particular area. I guess there has been, for one reason or another, a reluctance to increase that to reflect the appropriate amount. We have tried to do that in this particular budget.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister is saying last year, or the last Estimates process, when he came into this Legislature and asked for \$16,400, he knew at the time that the expenditures were \$20,000 or \$30,000, but he did not come forward with that particular figure. Were the funds being allocated somewhere else? Were they being paid out of some kind of other appropriation within the branch or within the department?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, when you set your Estimates, that is really what they are. When we come back with an Adjusted Vote there is probably a difference in that, and so to more accurately reflect what the actual costs are when budgets are finally set, there has to be adjustments made. What we are trying to do this year is to ensure that our Estimates are going to more closely reflect what the Adjusted Vote may be.

Mr. Chomlak: I guess to utilize a word that is often used by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), I find it "passing strange" that we see an increase in the Communications component of 1.(b), we see almost

a tripling of the Communications component of 1.(c) and we see a \$12,000 increase of Communications component 1.(e).

What that says to me is that Communications functions which were done in some other agency or expended at some other part of the department, namely the Communications branch, have now been taken into these particular branches and divisions. Is that not the case?

Mr. Derkach: If we go down a little further the member will note that there is an item called Other Expenditures. If you look at Other Expenditures, that is where you might have to take monies from to shore up such things as overexpenditures or an increased cost in any one of these other lines. Now if you take a look at Other Expenditures in this particular branch of this particular division, you will note that Other Expenditures have decreased significantly.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister table for us in this House the list of Other Expenditures?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the Other Expenditures that the member talks about includes such things as computer-related expenditures, assistance payments of one kind or another, out-of-province travel, incidental expenditures, training fees, promotion and hospitality, publications, accommodations and membership in various things as well.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate for the record that that is the complete list of Other Expenditures?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Madam Chair.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister then indicate for me where those Other Expenditures that were bounced up into the Communications budget come from?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I could indicate that there was a reduction in each of them, but those reductions in each of those categories varied, so there was money taken from each of those to ensure that in fact there would be less expenditure in that area.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister table in this House a list of the out-of-province trips that came out of that Other Expenditure category?

* (1540)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I do not have that specific information here, but I will get that information for the member at our next sitting.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for that. Can the minister indicate to me what the present salary is for the deputy minister of the department?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the first line of Managerial is the deputy minister's salary, and it is outlined on page 27.

Mr. Chomlak: So I take it from the minister's comments that the deputy minister's salary went up \$4,100 from last year.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Chomlak: The regular merit increases and other civil servant provisions that the minister made reference to last time we met?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Madam Chair.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister made mention last time we met, that is, in the preceding fiscal year '90-91, about \$60,000 was set aside for the public review of legislation.

Can the minister indicate to me where that \$60,000 is located, if it is in the Administration and Finance portion?

Mr. Derkach: It is not in this appropriation. It is in 1.(c).

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Chair, I just have a couple of questions in this area, so I will make it very brief.

First of all, I would like to say that I am pleased to see the Other Expenditures reduced, because I know that it has often been used as a slush fund, and it has put it appropriately in the categories where it belongs. I think that is a positive move on the minister's behalf.

With respect, however, to the policy announcement which was issued by his deputy minister on December 12 of 1990, I would like to say that one of the difficulties that we experience is getting our calls returned rapidly. Deputy ministers are very busy people and it is—we are constantly warned that we are not to bring information into the House that is not accurate. When I ask my research staff to verify that information—and I am interested in facts and figures, not policy shifts, because I will ask the deputy minister about policy shift or the minister himself—there sometimes is the delay that is put upon us when the issue is going to be raised in the Chamber.

All I ask the minister is to be aware that when sometimes research people get frustrated because they do not get returned calls, that does in turn lead

them to going down further into the ladder to ask people the kind of factual information. The minister will respect the fact that when they are doing that they are simply trying to ensure that they have the correct information to bring into the House in the afternoon.

Mr. Derkach: I respect those views put on record by the member of the Second Opposition, and I have made a point of indicating to my staff that priority has to be given to members of the Legislature, whether it is in meeting with me directly, whether it is getting a phone call through to me directly, or whether it is getting information for them. Regardless of whether those members are on the government side of the House or in opposition, that should make no difference to them. Indeed, they must receive priority for the very reasons that the Leader of the Second Opposition talks about, that they need the information to bring accurate information into the House.

I will acknowledge her criticism and agree to make sure that staff receive a memo from me, from my office, that when calls are received, they be returned quickly and without hesitation and that information be delivered appropriately.

Mr. Chomlak: I am just looking for direction from the minister on two areas, whether or not this would be the appropriate appropriation to discuss them, and the first is the framework policy. Whether we discuss it here or preferably later on under Section 3 would make sense to me.

Mr. Derkach: 1.(c).

Mr. Chomlak: 1.(c), okay, which is the next appropriation. Secondly, I have some questions about the budgetary cuts as it reflects staff positions, et cetera, with the Department of Education. I am wondering, would that be 1.(c) or would you prefer Personnel or—

Mr. Derkach: There are two areas that we could probably deal with those types of questions. First of all, if they are of a general nature, we could deal with them in the Personnel appropriation. If they relate to a specific branch, we could deal with it within that appropriation, if it is PACE or whether it is PDSS, depending on the nature of the questions. We will try to be as open as we can in terms of answering these questions.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for those responses. I have no further question on this.

Madam Chairman: Item 1.(b)(1) Executive Support: Salaries, \$379,700—pass; 1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures, \$116,600—pass.

Item 1.(c)(1) Planning, Research and Policy Co-ordination: (1) Salaries.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, the minister indicated that this was the appropriate section to discuss the \$60,000 that was set aside with respect to the review of legislation, and I am wondering what that \$60,000 was for and what it produced.

Mr. Derkach: There are several items that I guess we could highlight. First of all, there was the production and the work that went into the research and planning of preparing the document itself for the consultation paper, Madam Chair. There is also the entire consultation process that is going to be taking place. I guess I could read out in terms of the projections that we have for the hearings. We are talking about advertising, which would take approximately \$15,000; printing of this document and preparing of this document took another approximately \$15,000; transportation of the panel to travel throughout the province, and that will be for transportation and lodging and whatever other ancillary costs are associated with that, will take another \$20,000; in terms of postage and rental of space, sending these documents out to the various school divisions, the interest groups and the individuals throughout the province may cost an additional \$25,000. Those are the projections we have for doing the entire review.

* (1550)

Mr. Chomlak: That adds up to roughly \$75,000. The minister is nodding his head in agreement. I thought the minister talked about in the range of approximately \$100,000 this morning when he made his announcement.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the figure that I spoke about was \$150,000 this morning, and the other item that I did not mention was the professional services that are required to make sure that the legislation is put into place, and that would cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$75,000.

Mr. Chomlak: Just so that I can be certain that I understand it correctly, approximately \$75,000 in terms of production, distribution, et cetera; another roughly \$75,000 for professional services—that is what I take from the minister's answer.

What I do not understand, therefore, is where that appropriation is within the context of this department.

An Honourable Member: Under Professional Fees.

Mr. Chomlak: It is under Professional Fees?

An Honourable Member: Yes. It has gone from 21,000

Mr. Chomlak: That says \$21,000.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, there is a figure of \$198,900 in Total Other Expenditures, and it would be included within that total figure.

Mr. Chomlak: I see. So I take it from the minister's response that it is all consumed in that particular item under Other Expenditures. Then I have two questions. Firstly, where is the \$60,000 that the minister made reference to in the last Estimates, and what has it been spent on? Secondly—well, I will get to my second question when I hear that one.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, because we were not able to begin the process, and because of its delay, that money was unexpended last year and therefore had to be carried over to be allocated for the consultation and for the development this year.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chair, I take it from the minister's answer, there was no preliminary document or any consultation or white paper produced as a preliminary document to this one that has been presented to us today.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, there are no preliminary documents to this. Indeed, the department, through the Planning and Research branch, did a considerable amount of work as a normal course of their activities in preparing the information for the document, but there was no preliminary document, if you want to call it that, that would lead us to this particular one.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chair, can the minister indicate by what process—is it an hourly rate that the consultant will be paid, and how much that rate will be?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the panel members will get a per diem for their efforts and their work. That amount has not been established yet, because we are still awaiting the appointment of one panel member.

As I indicated this morning, one of the panel members whom we had appointed unfortunately found that her schedule was such that she could not

fulfill her responsibilities and asked to be taken off the panel, so we are now in the process of finding another panel member. Once we have the total complement of panel members, that topic will be addressed between staff of the department and the panel members, but there will be a per diem paid for their services.

Mr. Chomlak: I take it from the minister's comments that the consultant who was hired, the gentleman who is chairing the panel, a Mr. White, would he be paid on an hourly basis? He will be paid on a per-diem basis as well?

Mr. Derkach: He will be paid a per diem, as the other members of the panel will be paid. He will not be paid a consultant's fee, if you like, on an hourly basis. Rather, it is a per diem fee as other members are paid, but because he is the chair of the panel and will probably have some other responsibilities, his rate may in fact be somewhat enhanced from the others, but I cannot be definitive about that at this time.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate—I was not present for all the press conference—who all the members presently of the panel are?

Mr. Derkach: Yes. Mr. Roy White, who is a former teacher and superintendent, a former staff member of MAST, will be the chair. We have a Mr. Borden Hawryluk, who has been a member of MAST for some 25 years, who is a school board member from the InterMountain School Division. We have Ms. Claire Riddle, who is the vice-president I believe of the MMF, also on the panel. We are looking now for an individual who is a Francophone for the panel as well.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate whether or not this group or body will be requiring legal assistance or any kind of assistance from legal services?

Mr. Derkach: There may be instances from time to time when legal advice may be required, but that can be handled within the department because we have access to a legal counsel here. We do not anticipate going outside of the department for any legal counsel or any legal advice at this point in time. However, I have to point out that once we get into the writing of the legislation, that is when legal counsel will be involved quite heavily.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister just briefly outline for me precisely what the implementation and

strategy is for this process in terms of time lines and in terms of the process itself?

Mr. Derkach: Yes. I met with the various organizations this morning before we had the news conference to give them as much information as I could about this issue. We agreed that we would begin advertising for the public hearing process next week. We would begin the hearings in June and the hearings would carry on through the month of June. We would postpone the hearings for July and August, because that is sort of holiday time in Manitoba, and would resume those consultations again in September and October.

Besides the various regional meetings that they will be conducting, we will also set up at the end of October, or somewhere in the month of October, a special session for organizations such as MAST, MTS, MASBO, MASS, perhaps the municipalities, chambers of commerce, whoever may want to come as a provincial body, to make representation before the organization.

This was something that came up this morning and we agreed to do, so that we could give as much opportunity to those organizations to prepare their presentations.

Following that, the committee or the panel will put together their report, and I will be anticipating that report to be handed in to me by the end of this year, some time probably in late November or December.

Following that, it will be our responsibility to take their recommendations and their report and then to begin the process of drafting the legislation. I can indicate that it will take at least a year to do this process if we are going to do it properly, so therefore the earliest that we could anticipate any finalization of this would be the early part of 1993.

Mr. Chomlak: Last year, or last Estimates process, the minister provided us with a list of projects undertaken by this branch, and I am wondering if the minister will be providing us with the list today?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Madam Chair, but before I table this information, I would just like to go back to the last question, and I do not want to mislead the members. I did not mention one individual who was going to be assigned to the panel and that was a secretary. We have secured the services of Mr. Alec Krawec who has worked in the Planning and Research branch and also worked in the Admin and Finance branch as a director and has retired. We have been able to get Mr. Krawec to act as secretary

to the panel and because he is a man who has considerable knowledge about that particular area.

I would like to table, Madam Chair, the projects that were the major initiatives of a Planning, Research and Policy Co-ordination branch. I have two copies.

* (1600)

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I have a number of questions I want to ask in this area. First of all, can the minister tell us what were the functions of the two analysts that have been cut, and to combine a question, how is he going to achieve this rather major project with a lack of analysts in this particular department who will help this committee analyze the material which, presumably, they are going to receive?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, it is true that any reduction in staff has some impact on the department, and we have looked at our department very carefully to ensure that we can somehow carry on the responsibilities and fulfill our responsibilities as the mandate allows, and indeed we will be able to do that.

First of all, we will have to change perhaps the way we do things within the branch. The branch will shift its research responsibilities away from performing the, if you like, original studies and surveys and rely more upon analyzing existing research findings. That means that we do not have to reinvent the wheel on every occasion. We can use data and information that perhaps is available even outside the province as well.

We will have to decrease the practice of developing and maintaining our data base. Instead, the branch will work with other areas of the department as partners within the department in harmonizing and collecting data. The branch will also undertake a greater role in co-ordinating and unifying our statistical information data. All requests for such information are now being directed through Planning, Research and Policy Co-ordination.

The branch's research and planning functions will be driven by the policy implications they carry for the department as a whole. The key to the branch's mandate is to provide senior management with information to enhance effective policy and program decision making. When we talk about the work that will have to be done on the legislative package, that will be required, it will not just be the Planning,

Research and Policy Co-ordination branch; it will be all branches within the department that will have to contribute to that process.

Mrs. Carstairs: The minister has announced the committee basically that is going to conduct this review, but there are some very glaring spots. First of all, there does not appear to be on the committee two people that I think are critical to any such review.

Firstly, there is not at the present time a practising teacher. Now that means that while there may be somebody who, like Mr. White, has certainly an education degree and a wide background, there is nobody presently on the panel who right now is a classroom teacher. I think that is very critical, if you are going to conduct this kind of a review and get the kind of input you want.

The other person who is equally absent—one of these can be filled by the Francophone—is the absence of a parent with no educational background. I think that is absolutely critical for this kind of a review, because frequently I get questions, and I am sure most MLAs get questions, from parents who simply do not understand the system. They do not understand the system because they have not been in it as either trustees or superintendents or principals or teachers. If that input is not on that committee, then I think we are missing a great resource in trying to understand where people are coming from when they criticize our educational system.

Mr. Derkach: It would be extremely difficult to structure a panel that could represent each and every part of our society and still be a panel small enough to be effective. What we tried to do, rightly or wrongly, was to have people on the panel who had some knowledge of The Public Schools Act as it is today or have had some knowledge in working with The Public Schools Act.

Additionally, we wanted somebody who had some experience in the whole field of administration. We wanted someone to have some understanding of how the MAST organization works, how MTS works, perhaps how MASS works, how the principals' association works, and someone who has some practical knowledge about perhaps being a citizen; and every one of those panel members will.

We wanted somebody who understood the urban way of life, if you like, someone who had some knowledge about the rural way of life, someone who

had some knowledge about the aboriginal way of life to represent the Native community, and, yes, very important also, somebody who has a bilingual knowledge and some in-depth knowledge, not just a matter of a language, but indeed a knowledge of how the Francophone community lives and something about their culture and that sort of thing.

We have put together four people who we think are going to have a fairly broad representation in terms of those communities. We are hopeful that the individual that we are seeking now will in fact be an educator. We had the individual before, Lucille Malo (phonetic) was in fact an educator, a principal of a school as well.

One of the difficulties with teachers and with principals is the fact that these are busy times of the year, and whether it is June or September or October, there are always great demands placed on these individuals. Sometimes you have to be happy with someone who perhaps has retired recently or has come out of the classroom in the last few years, but we are still actively pursuing someone who has some recent experience or in fact current experience in the whole area of teaching and administration.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, thank you, but I think the minister understands that one of the easiest times to get a teacher out of a classroom is the month of June, believe it or not, and that there really is not any difficulty in getting a teacher on side at this particular point in time.

I have absolutely no criticism of any of the panel that the minister has selected. I noticed that two of them definitely have trustee experience, but there is nobody there with current teaching experience, and I am pleased if in fact the Francophone individual is going to have that experience. That still leaves what I think is an enormous gap. I recognize that each one of these people are probably parents, but they are parents with knowledge of the education system.

*(1610)

I have to tell him that I went to a panel not too long ago of black members of our community, and the panel was on education. Their frustration was they did not understand the system. They do not know what makes it work. They do not know why their children are taken here and placed here, what is meant by a reportcard or what their rights are within the system. I think if you do not have that ingredient,

then you are going to have a person at that table who says, hey, I do not understand what these people are talking about. They may be experts on the Teachers' Society, they may be experts on the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, they may be experts on The School Act, but I am just a simple, ordinary parent with no educational background, and I do not understand.

I think unless that message gets through to this committee, then we are going to continue to disenfranchise parents and to some degree disenfranchise the children.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, yes, indeed, I acknowledge the fact that it is preferable to have that kind of expertise on the panel, because there is then a broader understanding of the presentations, but I think when I looked at the panel they are people who need to be open minded. They are people who need to be ready and willing to listen, and I think they are. They are people who have to understand our system, and, as I mentioned, we are endeavouring to find that fourth individual who has either current teaching experience or very recent teaching experience. I have to say, when you look at someone like Mr. White, you cannot deny the fact that he is a very knowledgeable individual, both from an administrative point of view and also as an educator. As an educator, he was a teacher, a principal, a superintendent and then, of course, worked for MASS, and now is a consultant for education as well. So he has that knowledge.

In terms of students and parents and individuals presenting to the committee, the committee's role is going to be to be good listeners and to take the information and write it down as accurately as they can, and that is going to be the job of the secretary. Although it would be nice to have a larger panel, we have to keep in mind what the costs of this are, what the practical applications could be, and the ease of moving a committee like that from area to area and ensuring a good attendance of the panel members in all of these hearings. The larger the committee becomes, the more difficult it is to structure meetings, to get everybody to attend, and it is more cumbersome and costly to move them around the province.

I accept the criticism of the member, but indeed for that fourth member we are going to endeavour to find someone who has teaching experience, and maybe somebody who is a parent for that matter or a parent with children in the school system. Most

importantly, we want that individual to be bilingual and a Francophone.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, and I do regret that there is not that person on there that does not understand the system quite so well.

I would like the minister to take a look at page 13, and of this Creating a Framework for the Future, if he has it available, because I want to just raise the concerns of, again, the parent. The way in which this whole document has been presented, I would suggest, is a way in which those of us in the field well understand, but those who are not in the field do not have a clue. I use this page, and I am not going to go through the whole submission. I am just going to use this as an example.

We start off with saying, how should education legislation define the right of each student to receive proper or adequate instruction? Well, first of all, if I am a parent and I know nothing about The Schools Act, how do I respond to that, because there has been no documentation which says, well, these are the rights of the students at the present time, defined in the legislation. Should Manitoba's education legislation more clearly define the basic education program to which individuals are entitled? There is nothing in the document which says what they are entitled to now. How do you get that individual without the educational background to kind of come forward and make a presentation? They do not know what the questions mean, and they have no background information at their disposal to say: This is how I would direct an education system if I had my druthers. Here is how I would facilitate the system to represent.

I am concerned that what we are going to get in response to this is experts. We already know how experts feel about education. We can talk to trustees and we can talk to teachers and we can talk to principals, and we will certainly get three different opinions. The people affected are the kids, and they do not know what their rights are now.

There is nothing in this document that says to them: Well, now here is what we have; these are your rights now; this is the outline of what government policy does. Do not ask them to read The Schools Act because it is too convoluted for even teachers and educators. These are some of the options that we perhaps should consider for the future, and what do you think? That is not here, and

I think that because it is not here it is going to mean all we hear from are experts.

That would be a tragedy, because I think we have to involve those at the ground level. That includes parents and in some cases, at the senior high level, certainly teachers. I mean, I do not think we are going to get too many Grade 1's appearing to guide and give us some future about their education, but I think there is a lot our high school students could tell us about what is wrong with the system. I do not think they are afforded the opportunity with this kind of an outline.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, one of the few criticisms that we have received today was the fact that the document was rather broad and long, and anybody presenting would have a very difficult time in addressing all of the issues and reading through the document and trying to make comment on each of the items in the document.

We tried to keep the document as concise as we possibly could. We also tried to use language that could be understood by students right from Grade 9 up, and every item in that book gives a very brief definition or, if you like, a sort of preview of what it is we have. In this particular one, when we talk about the right to a basic education program, it says that The Public Schools Act requires school boards to provide or to make provision for education in Grades 1 through 12 for all residents who have the right to attend school.

Manitoba residents have the right to attend school from the age of six until they reach 21. School attendance is compulsory between the ages of seven and 16. Following that, we asked some questions. We tried to build from the first question onward until the final question, if you like, which in this case addresses the area of adults. It is very difficult to try to be more elaborate when you try to make a document that can be in the hands of individuals where they can use it and still not be so complex and so long that they become discouraged from using it.

We tried to balance it, and maybe there are some shortcomings. Indeed, we are going to be prepared to provide information to anyone who has difficulty with this document. We are going to be prepared to describe in layman terms any article of The Administration Act as it exists today, so that the input can be meaningful.

We are going to be reaching out not just to the professionals, the experts, but indeed we are going to be reaching out to the students, and very importantly, to the parents, because I feel personally, and I know our attitude as a government and in the department is that parents have the first and primary responsibility for the education of their children. They must have input into the process, so in any way we can, we are going to be reaching out to these individuals to ensure they have the opportunity to make representation.

As a matter of fact, I have indicated to the panel, to Mr. White, that if he finds that through their series of meetings throughout the province that one particular area has been isolated for one reason or another or that there is some expression of difficulty in getting to the hearings from an area, then they have the flexibility to call an additional hearing or two to accommodate those particular cases.

We are going to try to be as open as possible. We do not go through this exercise every year or every five years. When we do it has to be made very open, very clear, but yet very thorough. As a department and as minister I am going to be as open as I possibly can to ensure that the process is successful, not just for our sake, but I think more importantly for the sake of all of us who are legislators, all of us who are impacted on by the education system and all of us who have an interest in the system as well.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I just have a facetious question.

Look at page 2 of your report, Mr. Minister. It immediately says, of course, if you want information or clarification you are to phone the acting executive director of Planning, Research and Policy, which, of course, for MLAs and media is directly contrary to your December 12 memo.

* (1620)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, that is simply what the director of Communications would do. Instead of doing that through the director of Communications, saving the people who have long distance calls two calls, they can now call directly to the director of Planning, Research and Policy Co-ordination Branch and get any information they want. It is just an open process. We are just such an open bunch.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, with respect to Answering the Challenge-Strategies for Success in Manitoba High Schools, can the minister indicate

whether or not it is under this particular appropriation funding for the staff for that program comes out of?

Mr. Derkach: No, Madam Chair, that kind of information is contained under the Bureau de l'éducation française and also the PDSS area.

Mr. Chomlak: I am sorry I missed the latter half of the minister's answer—the Bureau de l'éducation française, and what was the other branch?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I said the BEF, or the Bureau, and also the Program Development and Support Services Branch.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, so questions related to Strategies for Success in Manitoba High Schools the minister will suggest be done under that appropriation?

Mr. Derkach: That is correct.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairman, I thank the minister for providing us with copies of the Planning, Research and Policy Co-ordination Branch studies that have been undertaken.

I want to refer to item (d) Background Paper on School Division Boundary Review. I wonder if the minister could describe for us in a little more detail what is entailed in this background paper.

Mr. Derkach: My apologies, Madam Chair, I was looking at item (b) but I think it is (d), the Background Paper on School Division Boundary Review. The information that the member is seeking—the background paper that was prepared provides a descriptive analysis of existing boundaries, populations and other demographic information. The paper also proposes, if you like, a suggestion for review and presents a number of concepts in terms of how we might proceed with a review. It is not in any way conclusive, but it is the beginning of the process.

Mr. Chomlak: When the minister says the document proposes a process for review, is he talking about the process by which the review of the boundaries is to take place, or is he talking about options for boundaries within the context of the paper?

Mr. Derkach: No, it proposes options for the process, not options for boundaries. That is something that is much more elaborate and could not be done in a beginning process such as this.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for that. The reason I raise that particular question is because it has been brought to my attention by individuals that

it is their impression that the department has already determined preconceived boundaries and has made interim and preliminary determinations as to what the boundaries might be.

My assumption is when the department was preparing this paper, people may have wrongly concluded that is what it was doing. I am wondering if the minister might comment on that.

Mr. Derkach: No, there is no way that the department would even attempt to try and draw any boundaries within the province. This is a process that is going to have to be one that is outside, if you like, of the department itself. In no way would the department ever attempt to do anything like that. Rather, it proposes options for the process in proceeding with a review of boundaries.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for that comment. Just by way of clarification again, one of my constituents works for the minister—I believe he is heading up the High School Review—again, the minister might be familiar. The appropriate section to deal with that would be the program services and development. Am I correct in that assumption? When can I talk about Mr. Isler? Is it under this particular appropriation? In other words, is he paid under this appropriation, or is he paid under Section 4, Program Development and Services?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, indeed the fine individual the member for Kildonan mentions has begun a very big task in terms of co-ordinating the High School Review. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) chuckles at it, but I do not think anyone would question the credentials of this individual and a man who has a Ph.D. in Administration, has been a superintendent. We should take a very careful look before we criticize an individual of his calibre, but I would say that the appropriate line in which one would like to talk about his salary would be in (XVI) 4. or Program Development Support Services and the Bureau.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for those comments, but I must remind him and correct him that there has been no suggestion of a challenging of Mr. Isler's credentials from this side of the House. The minister must have misinterpreted the chuckle meant for something else probably by our Leader.

I want to get into the announcement of this morning and some of the omissions, I believe, in this particular document. I would also like to concur in some of the comments of the Leader of the third

party that in fact I agree with some of the suggestions for representation on the panel, because I too have been inundated from parents, individuals and groups who required direction and advice with respect to The Public Schools Act and the process is not at all clear.

The most fundamental issue affecting policy in education is, of course, the financial structure and the financial input into that policy. What this document fails to make reference to is the funding formulas and the way education is financed and the way taxes are paid as it relates to education. I am wondering why that omission exists.

*(1630)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, in the introduction on page 2, it points very clearly to the fact that the consultation paper does not include reference to two major topics, minority French language education as guaranteed by our Constitution and public schools financing. It says very clearly there as well, as I continue, these topics are being addressed in separate reviews. It is anticipated that the new legislation will be considered as a result of these reviews.

As the member for Kildonan knows, we have an ongoing process at this time called the Ed Finance Reform or Ed Finance Review, which is going to be concluded by the end of June or sometime in July. At that point in time we will have a new approach to funding our public schools. It would be inappropriate to include it in this document which will not be completed until at least 1993 in terms of the legislation.

Madam Chair, the other issue of Francophone governance—again we have a task force out there which is considering the model that it will be recommending to government, and indeed once that happens we will have to make the appropriate amendments to the legislation. What this package includes are all the other issues which are part of The Public Schools Act. I just thought I would point that out to the member.

Mr. Chomiak: One of the criticisms that has constantly been brought to my attention with respect to the 1989 green book on Special Needs Education is that a policy has been announced, provisions are put in place, but the appropriate funding vehicle and mechanism is not there.

Consequently, it is my opinion that in fact there are a myriad of issues which must be discussed that

relate to programs and relate to finance, particularly given the state of crisis that education finance is in, in this province. I think the lack of a financial plan as a part of the review—and, as the minister indicated, legislation will have to be embarked upon with respect to ed finance—is a glaring omission.

I am wondering if the minister does not see the advisability of dealing with the funding issues as they relate to the program model.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, once again, the Ed Finance Review will address specifically the issues as they relate to special needs and support of special needs in this province.

I have to indicate that we in Manitoba have probably one of the best special needs programs in Canada in terms of the funding that we put into special needs, in terms of the programs that we have within our province. The special needs policy document, which is probably adhered to by 100 percent of the divisions across the province, has been widely accepted. Indeed, we have been complimented for putting together that document.

I cannot take the credit for that document. The credit is due to the people who worked so hard from the field who put the document together. They worked for several years to try and encourage government to come up with a guideline or a policy for special needs education. We were committed to that process as a government, and I was as a minister. We put the green book out, first of all, as a guideline. We indicated very clearly that we would expect some feedback from the field in terms of how the guidelines were addressing the needs.

Yes, the issue of funding is there, but that has to be addressed to the Ed Finance Review because you cannot isolate that from the total education picture. Although there are many issues addressed here, and there is not any specific funding announced here, it does not mean that we simply throw dollars at a particular issue and hope the problem will be resolved. There are many things that you can do without simply throwing dollars into the mix.

The issues that are addressed here are those that will change the way we do business. Yes, there will be some financial implications, but I do not think it would be appropriate and, indeed, even redundant to try and address some of those issues through this document.

Mr. Chomlak: Many times on this side of the House I have indicated that we on this side of the House welcome the education guidelines. One is not questioning those education guidelines, but I guess it is a question of the cart before the horse, in some instances, or the horse before the cart, or they are not travelling together.

One of my concerns about answering the challenges—again, the policies went out. A lot of them had not the means or the mechanism, be it financial or systematic, to be implemented. The strategic plan announced about a week ago by the minister had no financial plan attached to it. This document will have serious ramifications in a financial sense on all school divisions, in all school boards and on the PSA. I think it is an omission on the part of this government to not deal with the financial situation in the context of looking at the PSA, because so many issues are fundamental to it.

The other glaring omission, in my opinion, with respect to this review is the fact that while mention is made of private school funding, there is no questioning the decision on the part of the administration to increase the funding to private schools. I think that is a valid question, given the serious state of financial commitment to public schools and the deterioration by this government.

I am wondering why the government did not choose in this review to deal with the question of consulting with the public vis-a-vis the issue of increasing the grants to private schools to 80 percent of the level funded for public schools.

Mr. Derkach: If one takes a look at the Strategic Plan itself, first of all it will indicate that points the direction for the department. It would be inappropriate to say that we are going to attach certain dollars to the Strategic Plan, because what we need to do is, first of all in a general and a broad sense, point the direction that the department is going in. Then if we want to talk about dollars, the dollars will be assigned to the initiatives.

In other words, when we talk about such things as Ed Finance Review, that speaks directly to the dollars. When we talk about legislative reform, there have to be dollars attached to that as is noted here. There is something like \$150,000 attached to doing the legislative reform. The High School Review—there were significant sums of dollars

identified for the implementation of the High School Review.

Again, if we move on with human resource development or boundaries review, there will be dollars announced in terms of carrying out those kinds of initiatives, but each of these initiatives is going to be dealt with separately as part of the overall Strategic Plan. When they are announced, there will be dollars associated with those announcements.

* (1640)

Now when the member talks about the fact that we should have included the question about whether or not we should be extending funding to independent schools, I would have to indicate that we have in place today an agreement which addresses that entire issue. We made a commitment through the election in 1988 that we would extend funding to the independent schools to a level of 80 percent of what funding is received by the public school system from government.

In addition, we said that we would also clean up the mess that the independent school funding was in. That included such things as removing the double funding; removing the lottery dollars that were sort of being given without any mention, though, to the independent schools; putting in place some regulations in terms of the reporting and accountability of independent schools to the department for programs, for finances and that sort of thing; ensuring that independent schools had boards that they could answer to.

All of those things were done, and yes, there were letters of comfort, if you like, exchanged between the MFIS and government that meant that the remedial order for the Catholic schools would be withdrawn, as long as government honoured the agreement that was in place.

It would not be appropriate to bring that issue into this particular document because we already have an agreement, one that has just been recently signed. Letters have been exchanged of understanding, so, indeed, we intend to honour that kind of commitment as a government when we received the mandate in 1988 to do just that.

Mr. Chomlak: I beg to differ with the minister. In fact, it is indeed appropriate to bring that discussion into the context of this document when you have situations where small schools are forced to close because of lack of funding, where you have

situations where courses cannot be offered, class sizes are growing, teachers have to be laid off, and at least one source of revenue and one source of lost revenue to this government is its determination to increase funding, to create what in effect is going to be a two-tier system of education in this province.

The failure to deal with that is a serious omission in this particular document, and one of the reasons that I fault the document is its failure to deal with this fundamental issue.

Manitobans are asking, they may come back and say in fact, yes, we want to fund private schools at 80 percent of public schools, but that question has not been asked of Manitobans, and the failure of this document to address it is a major omission.

The minister indicates that financial considerations should not be a part of this document, and I just point out to the minister, he has put in place a financial regime. He announced it on January 22, the financial regime, the base formula that was funding for schools next year which resulted in teachers being laid off and results in courses not being offered, that results in clinicians being let go, that results in small schools closing, that results in special needs not being met. It is a consequence of the funding formula put in place by this minister and this government.

I do not know how the minister can indicate that a review of The Public Schools Act, a review of the programs that we offer in this province, does not require some kind of financial commitment with respect to the financial review that is taking place. When does the minister anticipate the matter will come before this assembly?

Mr. Derkach: I do not know what matter the member refers to, Madam Chairman, but I will try to answer the question in reply to some of the comments that were put on the record by the member.

First of all, Madam Chair, when we ran for government in 1988, one of the election commitments that was made was the fact that we would increase funding to the independent schools. We have fulfilled that commitment as a government. We went beyond that in ensuring that independent schools are accountable, something that the former government did not have in place.

There was no formula for how independent schools would receive their funding. There was no accountability measure put in place either in terms

of programs, in terms of financial aspects, in terms of certified teachers or any of those things. The New Democratic government of that day simply kept on going along as long as they did not have to face the issue head on. We cleaned that mess up, Madam Chair. They were trying to supplement some of the school funding by means where the public would not necessarily see visible by extending lottery funding to the independent schools to keep them quiet for the time being.

That kind of an approach only goes so long before it collapses around their ears. Madam Chair, we indeed made a commitment to ensure that the appropriate funding would go to those schools so that students of this province could be funded appropriately regardless of whether they were attending an independent school or a public school.

One other thing that they were doing was extending funding to students who were coming to this province from outside of the province, whether it was from other provinces or from the United States. We were able to correct that situation as well, because students who come from outside of the province do not get funded in the public school system, and they do not get funded in the independent school system at this time.

Madam Chair, despite the fact that this member makes a lot of noise about the funding to independent schools—and I cannot quite understand that because he is a supporter of independent schools when he goes outside of this Legislature, he is even a member of a group that supports funding to independent schools, so I do not quite understand where he is coming from as an individual, but it is important that we in this province have choices and allow for those choices for our youth.

Those parents pay taxes to our system, to our government, to support that kind of an educational process. It should be known that every student who goes to a public school system in Manitoba at the present time is being supported by something like \$3,650. Every student who is in an independent school system is supported at a level of about \$2180, so if we were to take all of those students out of the independent school system, put them into a public school system, the cost would be considerably higher, and the member should know and understand that.

Madam Chair, so I think that it is important that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) be aware of what really has taken place with regard to cleaning up the situation as it related to the independent schools. In terms of the funding that was allocated to the public school system this year, the 2.1 percent that went out to the public school system, the NDP feel that the only way you can address a situation is to simply dump money into it and tax the individuals in this province. We are the highest taxed province in this country, thank you to the former NDP government. This is not something that we can continue. The taxpayers are stretched as far as they can be. The senior citizens who live on limited incomes cannot afford to pay any more of a tax burden than has been forced upon them by the previous New Democratic government.

We are not prepared to take that approach. We have had to set some priorities; we have had to make some very difficult decisions with regard to funding the education system. We have taken that approach. We have set our priorities, and we have asked those who are in charge of the school divisions to do the same. We have asked the teachers of this province to make their share of contribution to the pain that we are all experiencing at this time.

Indeed, Madam Chairman, I would have to say that school boards have taken some very careful consideration in setting their priorities. We still continue to call upon the professionals, the teachers within our system, to dampen their expectations on the public purse for at least this time that we are in a recession.

I think we have done the responsible thing. We hear from the field that we are being supported by school divisions. Yes, they are indicating that they had to undergo some pain this year in reducing some of their wish list, if you like, but the field is saying to us that they are able to cope.

I would like to address the last question, or the last issue that he raised, and that was the funding formula. We committed ourselves to putting in place a new funding formula for the schools in this province. -(interjection)- Yes, for three years we have been working on it. Indeed, we had to put in place legislation for assessment reform which the former administration could not bring about. We could not bring those two issues to the people of this province at the same time. We have had to postpone the implementation of the Ed Finance

Review until such time as that assessment reform was duly in place.

Madam Chair, we have had to bend that GSE formula that was put in place by the NDP government which discriminated against low-spending school divisions, which discriminated against efficient and effective school divisions and allowed for greater funding to those school divisions that continued to spend more.

We have cleaned up some of that mess and will continue to do that. When the new funding formula is announced, it will be one that is effective. It will treat divisions across this province equitably and will take into consideration what it is that we as a province should be funding and what school divisions should be funding as well.

* (1650)

Mr. Chomiak: I can always tell when the minister is sensitive, because he attacks me personally and then retreats back to the NDP years, but I will not lower myself to personal attacks as has become the habit of this minister whenever he gets sensitive on a particular issue and is not able to discuss it rationally and goes off half-cocked on some kind of personal attack or personal rebuke.

In any event, the one point the minister conveniently forgot was another election promise that was to fund school divisions and universities at inflation rate or better, but the minister conveniently forgets that particular promise, although he remembers the promise of the private school funding.

Another omission in this document, I think, that is a serious omission and was something that I made reference to in my opening remarks the other day when we last met, was the whole question of interdepartmental co-ordination between various departments and the Department of Education. I am wondering why the minister chose not to include reference to those kinds of activities in the course of this document, in other words, the assistance of various government departments, social services, Health, et cetera, and its relation to the public school system and the provision of total education for children via the Department of Education.

Mr. Derkach: That is not something that you would normally put in the Strategic Plan of the Department of Education and Training, nor would you put that into the Strategic Plan of the Department of Family Services or the Department of Health.

I would have to say that within the last three years there has been a very close co-operative approach between the departments in this government. The Department of Health, the Department of Family Services, the Department of Education have worked together on many of the initiatives in terms of providing services to Manitobans.

We are currently discussing the entire issue of special needs and the impact that is having on the Department of Education and on school divisions. We are doing it through a process, through a committee of government called the Human Services Committee of Cabinet which deals with those types of issues.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the Minister of Education and Training are members of that committee, and we work co-operatively to ensure that—whether it is duplication, for example, that we can eliminate as much of that duplication as possible. Where we have resources for a particular area that are needed by another department, we can share those types of resources. That is going on in government right now and will continue as we move through this year.

Just one point, the member said that I had forgotten to indicate the whole issue of funding education at the level of inflation. If the member recalls properly, that commitment was made during 1988 for the mandate of the government that was elected then.

In 1990, we indicated very clearly that we would fund education at as high a level as we possibly could, given the financial situation of the province, and I am sure that he understands and knows that is the commitment that was made.

Mr. Chomiak: I believe the minister missed my question, and it was perhaps the manner in which I phrased it, so I will try it again.

With respect to the document that was released today creating a framework for the future—and if the minister recalls, in my opening remarks I gave credit to the department for some of the activities that it undertook in terms of an interdepartmental co-ordination of activities—I am wondering why the issue of interdepartmental co-ordination and between various agencies of government as it relates to public schools was not considered as an appropriate topic of discussion in this particular document?

Mr. Derkach: That issue is not a part of either The Public Schools Act or The Administration Act of the Department of Education and Training, and, as I indicated in my previous answer, the mechanism is already in place to deal with those issues that he talks about. Yes, they are very important issues. I acknowledge that. We have to ensure that we share resources, we do not duplicate unnecessarily, and that individuals who are out in the field can be accessed by other departments.

The mechanism is already there to deal with that issue. It would not be appropriate to include that in The Public Schools Act or The Education Administration Act.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess what I fail to understand is why the minister at the onset would make the statement that it is not appropriate to include either of those kinds of provisions in The Education Administration Act or The Public Schools Act.

Could not the discussion at least of the involvement—I mean this document deals with public schools, admittedly. This document deals exclusively, however, with the Department of Education and Training, and we all know that in public schools today other government departments and other government agencies are involved in activities.

I am wondering whether or not a provision for protocols between various government departments might not be put into the legislation or whether or not specific programs or guidelines, as they relate to Health or Family Services, might not be included in the legislation or at a minimum at least discussed as a prelude to the legislation?

Mr. Derkach: Well, Madam Chair, I guess the panel would not rule out of order anyone who was wanting to speak about that sort of issue as part of The Public Schools Act, but indeed that is an issue that has to be dealt with between departments.

It is an issue that school divisions need to address between Education, Health and Family Services, but it is not something that you would want to put into the act of the Department of Education and Training, because that act does not apply to the Department of Health or to the Department of Family Services.

The issue that the member speaks about is one that is best handled through an agreement between departments to work together to address problems in a similar fashion and to co-operate on issues

where there is joint responsibility or overlapping responsibility.

As I indicated, the mechanism is already put in place, so that in fact will happen in the future.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for that answer. In response, I think that it might be appropriate to be brought up at this level. We can agree to disagree, but The Education Administration Act itself might be an appropriate act to include interdepartmental protocols or other legislation of that nature. I do not know why the minister is ruling it out at the onset.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Madam Chair, that is something that can be handled through the panel and through the deliberations that go on, and I am not going to rule out anybody from approaching the panel wanting to address that issue through the consultations that go on.

The report would probably reflect those kinds of comments that would be made to the panel on that topic. It certainly could be handled. I am not closing the door on discussion on that particular item.

Mr. Chomlak: Along the lines of that particular question, I am wondering why there was no mention in this document of the recognition or identification of early diagnosis of requirements for special needs students in this particular document as part of the study for special needs?

* (1700)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I believe, with the greatest of respect for the member, that is probably covered under the section on page 14, section 9, where learners with special needs is addressed. Indeed that kind of discussion can certainly take place under this particular item, and I would encourage that that is where that discussion take place.

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 22—The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr), Bill 22, The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Régie de l'énergie du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr Neufeld). Stand?

Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. Agreed.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I wish to leave it standing in the honourable minister's name, but I would like to speak to it. Thank you.

I would just like to put a few comments on record referring to second reading, the proposed motion, The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act. On July 21, 1980, this bill was introduced by the Conservative Party at that time and it was supported by the Liberals in 1980.

The reason for introducing the Manitoba Energy Authority board was to encourage markets for our hydro powers in Manitoba, and they have met some of those demands. They have fulfilled some contracts nationally in Canada and also in the United States. Also, they have travelled worldwide to build contacts from other countries and other resources. The personnel involved in the Energy Authority board have a lot of years of experience, and we have to take into consideration the expertise that is there and the potential for other alternative markets.

We welcomed the news by Manitoba Hydro the other day. They are buying into the Power Smart program, which will benefit all ratepayers in Manitoba and which is an excellent step forward. I think you should give credit where credit is due. You know, like in 1980, it was the Progressive Conservative Party which brought the bill in and the Liberals supported it, and now we have a bill to repeal the Manitoba Energy Authority. If you checked the records, you will see where they have obtained positive markets for Manitoba.

I was just speaking, Mr. Speaker, about the conservation side of Manitoba Hydro, and when you know that Manitoba Hydro will be saving power from a Power Smart program, what are you going to do

with that extra power? Are you going to just watch it flow over the dam and say we have done an excellent job for all ratepayers in Manitoba? No, what you do is you find markets for that power, and you export it wherever you can, hopefully, to cut back on neighbouring provinces or other states from building nuclear plants, which we all read about, we hear about, that it is a danger to all people. If we have excess power and, by being a friendly neighbour, exporting it and making a profit for our province, we are generating wealth and, hopefully, driving the cost to the ratepayers down.

What I would strongly recommend, Mr. Speaker, is we look at the mandate of the Energy Authority, and I am sure the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) has spoken to, or will be speaking to, other energy consumers.

We look at the consumption of fossil fuels, nonrenewable resources, and Centra Gas is a good example. They are in the business of selling gas, and what would they say if you went to them and said, I would like you to go on a conservation program, we would like you to run that? I am sure they would say, well, if we conserve too much energy, our profits will go down and the shares will not be as valuable as they are if we sell more. So I do not think that would be an appropriate idea.

If you had the Energy Authority in place and if you expanded their mandate to look at the whole conservation side of nonrenewable resources and fossil fuels, then you might have a chance at conserving energy across Manitoba and, hopefully, to keep the price of gas down for all ratepayers.

Also, another big, important part of the MEA was to look at and find alternative corporations and companies to set up their organizations in Manitoba, create employment opportunities, generate jobs and career opportunities for individuals. One example that we could use, Mr. Speaker, is the Dow Corning project. That was a great initiative. It will be a big benefit to all players.

An Honourable Member: It is one of our projects.

Mr. Hickes: One of my fellow members said it was one of NDP initiatives. Well, yes, probably it was, but if it benefits Manitobans—and it will create a lot of jobs for Selkirk. You know, Selkirk, we just heard the other day, will be losing their school. So that will cut down some opportunities there, but with the expansion and the opportunities for Dow Corning—I have heard it will create in the neighbourhood of 400

to 500 jobs. That is a lot of jobs, Mr. Speaker, and it is an excellent project.

I commend the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) for going ahead with it and creating employment opportunities. So I do not think the answer is to wipe out or do away with an organization that has proven themselves over the years. You know, they have been there—it is 1991. That is 11 years they have been in existence. They have created employment opportunities. They have created other opportunities.

Also, we have to look at the employment opportunities of the individuals who are now employed by the Energy Authority Board. There is—by repealing it, by taking the advice of the Liberal Party, that would be hacking and slashing, and I do not think we need to see that, to do away with the whole organization, a whole board that is the whole, entire operation.

Now that kind of puts a little fear in me, if the Liberal Party is willing to do that. If they were in government, what would they do? Like, that is a small example of hacking. -(interjection)- The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) says, now George. Well, that is a whole agency that you are willing to just let go and do what with the workers? A lot of those individuals have given their whole life to those careers and they—

An Honourable Member: I wonder if they really care.

* (1710)

Mr. Hickes: Well, I wonder too at times, but Mr. Speaker, when you do away with the whole board, you have individuals there like I mentioned earlier, that have dedicated their whole lives. I know some of the individuals who work there. They are single-parent families. Are we willing to sacrifice and take the easy way out and say, well that Authority Board is redundant. We wipe it away and do away with the jobs. That is what the member for Crescentwood is telling us by bringing in this bill, and I say, let us use a little initiative, a little foresight and look at expanding the mandate, creating more responsibilities for the benefit of all Manitobans.

I have to go back to the conservation of nonrenewable resources. Who is going to look after that? Today I do not think we have anyone in place to look at the conservation of our natural gas, propane, our gasoline. I do not know. I have not heard of anybody. -(interjection)-

Well, he says, give it to the chairman of Manitoba Hydro. You already have a board in place with people that are already employed who will be out there selling the excess power that the conservation programs should save and create more employment opportunities, more money for the province of Manitoba. Also, it will save people from drawing unemployment insurance or having to go on welfare, because like I mentioned earlier, I know some of the individuals there, and some of the individuals there are single parents and that has been their whole life. I would not want to see that taken away from people that have sacrificed.

No, Mr. Speaker, I think the Energy Authority has proven itself. It is an excellent opportunity for Manitobans, and also it was an arm's length operation away from government which had some independent opportunities. Some of the programs that we talked about like, for example, Dow Corning—but there could also be other opportunities and other programs that the MEA could bring into Manitoba.

For a small example, we hear about coal generation. We talk about the wind, the solar, and small generators and stuff like that. Who will market that? Will Manitoba Hydro market that? Manitoba Hydro's mandate is to supply power to Manitoba. Their mandate is not to export power or to find sales for excess power or power that is generated here. So we need an agency that will develop and, hopefully, manufacture in Manitoba the opportunities of co-generation.

I know for a small example, in Northwest Territories it is almost continuous wind storms in the wintertime; we have lots of wind. In summertime there is almost continuous 24 hours of daylight; we have a lot of solar energy there to capture.

I know that it is very, very costly to bring in diesel fuel to Northwest Territories by barge, and they use cat trains, and it is very costly. Just for a small example, to heat a home in Northwest Territories is around \$900 a month. That is just to heat a home, \$900 a month. So if you perfected co-generation and give the responsibility—you have to expand the mandate of Energy Authority to make it work and to create employment opportunities. If you expanded their mandate and give them the responsibility to bring in the scientists or specialists to perfect co-generation, the agency could also market that.

The reason they would be best suited to market that is because they already have contacts throughout the world. They already have those contacts. They have been in the business of selling power for 11 years, and some individuals in the Authority have been there from Day One.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to put it on record that our party will not support this bill, because it is a sign of hacking and slashing. Anything to do with hacking and slashing, especially a whole agency, we could not honestly support that kind of a bill. -(interjection)-

My constituents will be very supportive. They will not be disappointed, because you are talking about wiping out a whole agency. If you were the government, what else would be just gone with the wind, and without taking people's lives and their opportunities into consideration? The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) said it will save dollars. It might save dollars in the short term, but in the long run when you conserve energy and you are able to export that, create more dollars for Manitobans, you will save dollars. It will not cost you money. That is the way to save money for the ratepayers and taxpayers of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

Bill 23—Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 23, the Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil interculturel du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave. It is agreed.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to be able to speak on this bill.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington has the floor.

Ms. Barrett: I understand, Mr. Speaker, that this is at least the third time that amendments to the MIC Act have come before this House. I would like to suggest that our party would be more in favour of the amendments that had been presented in the last two sessions dealing with The Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act. However, we will support the more limited amendments that are being brought forward by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in this session.

I believe that the principles that we are talking about here in this amendment, and in the amendments that were brought forward in the last two sessions, deal basically with two principles that we feel in the New Democratic Party, and particularly in our caucus, are of vital importance to Manitobans, whether they be individual Manitobans or Manitobans acting in groups, as is the case in the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

Those two theories, those two principles that underlie these amendments, and underlie the amendments that were brought forward in the last two sessions are accountability and empowerment. These are two principles that have been, in many cases in the last three years of this government's mandate, undermined, emasculated, changed almost beyond recognition. The Manitoba Intercultural Council, when it was established, had the power of dealing with its own financial arrangements. That has been taken away from it, and I look forward to the ability to speak on this again should the occasion arise. Our party feels very strongly that that element of the act should have been put in place in this amendment, dealt with and hopefully passed by this House.

* (1720)

My reading of the record in the past sessions on this particular part of the change to the MIC Act that took place by this government, was that there was some concern raised about the use of funds by the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I feel that the situation that took place at that time was subject to audit and that the MIC was more than willing to participate in that function in order to make any necessary changes to the funding ability of the Intercultural Council.

In its now very clearly defined method of dealing with groups in this province, the government took away the MIC's accountability and empowerment in this area. I believe that they assumed that the

Intercultural Council members were unable or incapable of handling the finances of the council, and so they acted in a very patriarchal, hierarchical, undemocratic fashion, as they have done in many other occasions in their time in government and refused to allow the Intercultural Council the ability to retain authority over its own funds.

We on this side of the House are not at all concerned that accountability not be followed. We feel very strongly that everyone in society, individuals, groups, governments, must be accountable for their actions. We feel, however, that the Intercultural Council, in this regard, was not given the authority nor the ability to in effect be accountable for their actions, to work co-operatively with the government in this regard, that they were unilaterally stripped of authority that should have been theirs, that was theirs and, we certainly hope on this side of the House, soon will be theirs again.

They as an organization do not deserve the kind of treatment that was meted out to them by this government. We hope very strongly that the government, on its own initiative, will act responsibly in this regard and reinstate that ability of the Intercultural Council to deal with its own financial resources.

There are many examples of this government's lack of willingness to give its organizations the authority to deal with their own financial resources, many of which have been brought up in this House by myself and by other members of the opposition.

The second area that I believe these amendments to The Manitoba Intercultural Council Act speak directly to is the area of empowerment, that being the area of giving, in this case, an organization representing many different groups the power to advocate and act on behalf of their groups. The whole concept of empowerment is one that is fairly new in our society and, in some cases I would suggest, certainly on the part of the government, is not a concept that has found much favour.

The government of the day has certainly not shown in any of its actions toward any of the organizations that it funds or has some control over a sense that these organizations are able to make decisions on their own and should be empowered to do those things.

The Manitoba Intercultural Council, as we know, gives advice to the government on all multicultural issues and, at the same time that they give advice,

they also advocate for those same groups and on those same issues. I think it is very important for all of us to recognize the fact that you cannot divide, in this kind of a situation, the advocacy from the advice positions taken by the Manitoba Intercultural Council. It is an inherent part of their role and their empowerment to be able to not only give advice, but to also at the same time advocate on behalf of the organizations that they represent.

I do believe that the amendments that have been brought in by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) begin to address some of those issues, by allowing the Intercultural Council direct authority to deal with its own executive and the people that it asks to perform the functions on a day-to-day basis as staff people, that it has the control over who those people are.

I think that we need to be very careful in how we deal with not only the Intercultural Council but the Intercultural Council as representative of many of the organizations that the government has legislative authority over. The government makes a good number of appointments to the Intercultural Council. The communities themselves make other appointments to that council. We need to be very careful that we do nothing to lessen the ability of this Intercultural Council to be representative of the groups that form it, that make it up; that it have the authority, the empowerment to act on behalf of and to advise and advocate on behalf of the organizations that are part of it.

We believe that this system, which is a community-based, elective system, a community-based system that elects representatives to the MIC, is, at this point in time, the best system that could be devised to enable this community to make representation, to have the ear of the government, and to be able to lobby, advocate and advise the government on the issues of the day that they are required to deal with.

We do not believe that this Intercultural Council should have any less ability to do those jobs that it has been mandated by the act to do. We believe they should have more ability to do that. They have shown themselves to be responsible; they have shown themselves to be able to provide good, solid advice and advocacy on behalf of their member groups. We strongly urge the government to support this amendment that has been brought forward as a beginning step toward reinstating the authority and the ability of the Manitoba Intercultural

Council to do what it was designed to do, which was act on behalf of the intercultural community, the multicultural community that we are a part of.

More than half of the citizens of Manitoba can now claim to be representatives or parts of the multicultural mosaic of Manitoba. It becomes even more and more essential that all of the organizations, all of the groups that we as government have at least some control over, reflect the reality of our society today, and that we need to make sure that the systems that we put in place today reflect the needs of the 1990s, reflect a vision of our society that allows for groups to come together, as the Intercultural Council has been allowed in the past to come to make presentations and advice and advocate on behalf of their constituent groups.

We hope very seriously that the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) will carry out and will follow through on the statements she has made in the House before, where she said that she had no difficulty in supporting the areas of the changes to the acts that are now before us today, that she had difficulty in supporting the elements that dealt with giving the funding ability back to the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

We on this side of the House, as I have stated earlier, would hope that the government will see fit to reinstate all of those aspects of the bill that have been taken out, that they show their support for the work of the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

In the meantime, the NDP caucus, the official opposition in the House, strongly supports this resolution, this private members' bill and urges the government, and in particular the minister, to carry out the statements that she has made, that she would be able to support these elements in the debate, and that we can then carry on with the changes that would provide for somewhat of an increase in accountability and definitely an increase in the empowerment of the Manitoba Intercultural Council by giving them the right to elect the presiding officer and hire the executive director.

* (1730)

These are two areas that organizations and agencies and groups such as MIC must have responsibility for and the right over in order for them to be truly accountable to the government, to the people of Manitoba, to the groups that they

represent, and in order for them to be able to carry out those functions for which they were elected by their constituent groups. So, I would like to end, Mr. Speaker, by saying that we do support this private members' bill and we hope to see a second one, or a government amendment which includes the addition of the funding ability to be returned to the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Bill 25—The Environment Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), Bill 25, The Environment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed.

Bill 26—The Environment Amendment Act (3)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James, Bill 26, The Environment Amendment Act (3); Loi no 3 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. It is agreed.

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): I take great pride and pleasure putting some thoughts on the record on this bill, Bill 26, The Environment Amendment Act.

The requirement for this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is a direct result of the environment bill passed by the former NDP administration, and at the time that this bill was passed, the Minister of Environment at the time said, this bill is not perfect. Some people would have us do a little more of this;

some people would have us do a little less of that. You go two miles, but you cannot go all at once; you have got to walk before you run.

Well, some people would say that this bill crawls in the area of public consultation, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say that the government saw that there was a void in the legislation and passed an amendment that would clear up the void, but the government chose not to do that in its own amendments to The Environment Act. So it is left to the Liberal Party, through the progressive amendment put forward by the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), to correct an oversight of the NDP, an oversight that has been ignored by the government.

What does this bill say? It is really quite simple, and I believe if you refer to the bill you see that it is really only a couple of paragraphs, insignificant in length, but terribly significant in consequence. What this amendment does is ask the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) for all Class 3 projects to have a set of guidelines for those who are reviewing the project and to open up to public consultation and public hearing.

I am reminded of the catchword of this government when it first took power in 1988. This was going to be an open government. Now I do not know how many times we have seen over the last three years when this government has not acted in an open way, but the focus of this particular amendment is to open up the whole environmental review process and to assume in proposing the amendment that the people will have a contribution to make to the debate over large megaprojects, one of which we have coming up in our own province and that is the Conawapa project.

After all, when we introduce legislation in this House it always goes to committee, and we invite members of the public to see if they cannot improve the work that legislators have done. In my own short experience of three years, I cannot remember a committee hearing where a member of the public has not come to committee and made a suggestion that was positive, that could improve the bill, and the assumption is—

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Well, I can.

Mr. Carr: Well, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) says he can. I hope the Premier is not saying that there is not value to ask the people if they have suggestions. Maybe once in a while the suggestions are not to

the Premier's liking, but if you open up the process and say, we want to hear what you have to say, the chances of getting a good idea are a lot better than if you say, you do not have an opportunity in the first place.

Mr. Filmon: I got news for you. The process predates your being here. Do not start taking credit—

Mr. Carr: There are a lot of things that predate my being here, and I have tried to bite my tongue not to take credit for a lot of things lately, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier continues to rile me, maybe I will start trying.

This bill, as simple as it is, can open up an entire new dimension of environmental assessment in our province. Let us take, for example, the old Conawapa dam project which will have to go through a series of environmental reviews until, we are told now, January of 1993. So we will want to know by then exactly what the consequences are, not only for the construction of the dam in northern Manitoba, but also the transmission line that presumably will go on the east side of the lake all the way to southern Manitoba and then on eastward into Ontario.

There are some of us in this House who are questioning whether or not Manitoba is going to need the power in the year 2000 or in the year 2001, part of it because of the progressive work done with the new management of Manitoba Hydro, with presumably the blessing of the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) by joining the Power Smart program, by perhaps even doubling the very modest energy conservation targets.

While I am on the subject of energy conservation targets, Mr. Speaker, I think that the New Democratic Party should be reminded this is the party that wrote the environment bill in the first place but paid no attention to public consultation for Class 3 projects. When the New Democratic Party was in office between 1981 and 1988, energy conservation targets were not 1 percent, were not 2 percent, were not 6 percent, but they were zero. Now we hear speeches by members in the New Democratic Party who self-righteously and sanctimoniously talk about the need for energy conservation as if energy conservation did not exist in 1986, in 1987, in 1988. Sometimes, the difference between what the NDP did when they were in power and the things they say

they would like to do in opposition are absolutely incredible and boggle the mind.

Let me pose a question that the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) may choose to answer when he speaks to the bill. Why should we not open up the environmental review process to public hearings and consultations? Maybe the Minister of Environment has five or six or eight very good reasons why the process should remain closed, and we will listen very carefully in our party when he makes his speech. Maybe he has something convincing that will ask us to change our minds or to have some sober second thought on the issue of this bill, but I cannot come up with those arguments myself, and heavens knows I may have missed an awful lot, but I invite and challenge the Minister of Environment to argue against opening up the process of public consultation for major megaprojects in the province of Manitoba.

I would ask the minister: Why should not the people of Manitoba have a say on the environmental consequences of the Conawapa project, on the environmental consequences of any major water diversion projects in southern Manitoba, of the environmental consequences of building Bipole III from the generating station at Conawapa down to southern Manitoba?

Perhaps members of the public have an important contribution to make. We operate from the assumption that they do. The minister may want to argue from the assumption that they do not. The way The Environment Act reads now, the assumption implicit in the bill is that the public does not have a contribution to make. We look at it the other way around. We are convinced that the public has a responsibility to add its voice to a debate on matters of such major importance to Manitoba.

The NDP forgot about that when it introduced the legislation. The current Progressive Conservative Party has not corrected the fault. We intend to do this through this amendment, this very sensible amendment. I am delighted to speak in favour of it, and I invite all members of the House to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards).

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 16—The Motor Vehicle Lemon Law Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 16, The Motor Vehicle Lemon Law Act; Loi sur les véhicules automobiles défectueux. Is the honourable member prepared to proceed? No.

* (1740)

Bill 17—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 17, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur. Is the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) ready to proceed? No.

Bill 24—The Business Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 24, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry). Is the honourable member for St. Boniface ready to proceed?

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 24, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and put a few comments on this Business Practices Amendment Act, dealing with the protection of employees.

The Sections 1 and 3 outline unfair business practice committed by employees. However, there was no provision protecting the employee where an employee committed an unfair business practice. Therefore, the amendment will add a subsection which will limit the employee's responsibility and liability where an employee acted in good faith.

In a nutshell, it is an employee protection provision that will be included in this act. I think it is important when an employee acts in good faith on behalf of an employer that he is well protected -(interjection)- and they should not be penalized, as the member says.

In the other section, the original clause where it protects the advertiser from any responsibility or liability and where a supplier breached the act within an advertisement, it is very important. Therefore, in proposing this amendment, places some onus on the advertisers in instances where it would be generally known that the content of this ad is misleading and where we have seen lately where there has been some of those misleading advertisements.

For example, if a cigarette company made a claim that smoking reduced the risk of cancer or lung disease. As I talked about it last night, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that maybe today I should put some more comments on this from last night's discussion on minors and smoking. I know you yourself enjoyed the comments on it last night.

Under the amendment, advertisers would assume a limited responsibility for what they print, broadcast or otherwise publicize—cigarettes again, you know because we see a lot of that, but I think a law should be legislated so that we know what the cigarette does for the—and personally, I would not spend my money on cigarettes because it is very hazardous to my health and it is very costly. Like the honourable Conrad Santos last night, the member for Burrows—

An Honourable Member: Broadway.

Mr. Gaudry: Broadway—I am sorry—mentioned that he would put a tax of a dollar a cigarette and he would not be afraid—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gaudry: That is what he said last night, but that is the NDP for you though, they like to tax the people, and give, give, give and tax, tax, tax. Like I mentioned the other day, they are morally bankrupt, I think, you know.

The other amendment the clause addresses is the right of the director to refuse to mediate or investigate a complaint. While we agree in principle that the director should refuse to investigate a complaint, if the complaint is within the federal jurisdiction, or under the purview of another department, we do not believe that the director should be able, as the legislation reads, to refuse to investigate or mediate for any other reason.

Consumer protection is the object of this legislation, and therefore we believe that it is imperative that where a consumer alleges unfair business practices, action is taken. Therefore, by

changing may to shall, we strengthen the clause in that the director must investigate, and it is very important in every instance where he or she believes that there is a contravention or possible contravention of the act. What we are doing is taking away his right not to investigate the possible contravention and, therefore, enhancing the protection of consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I think these amendments are very important to this bill. I know it is very important for the consumers and the employees. Therefore, I would ask that all the members support this bill because, I think, not only for cigarettes like I mentioned before, but many other things that are very important for the consumer. I would ask that we all support this bill in favour of the employees and the consumers.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I do want to put a few words on the record because this is one of those bills, Mr. Speaker, that I think is a very progressive step. We have seen legislation brought forward in the last session which the member for St. Boniface, in his analyzing of the bill, came up with—a couple very positive amendments. Unfortunately, the government of the day did not see fit to adopt the amendments at that point.

Mr. Speaker, that disappointed many of us members of the Liberal Party. I would hope and trust that some of the New Democratic members would have been somewhat disappointed because after all, the amendments that we were suggesting were very positive amendments. It would have made a major difference in the legislation. It would have closed what we perceive were some loopholes. That is the type of thing, or those are the type of amendments that are supposed to be debated in the committee stage. That is why, after all, we have a committee stage.

The government brought forward the legislation through time and time from the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) to go out and consult with different groups, different associations, and hear what individuals had to say about the legislation the government was proposing. Only then was he able to come across with amendments of this nature, that we now have before us today, to the legislation that the government was proposing.

The committee stage process allowed the member to bring forward those amendments and

those amendments, at that point in time, should have been passed. That was the opportunity for the government of the day to take some credit, to recognize that no government is perfect by its own nature, that legislation can be amended in a positive fashion and not only that, Mr. Speaker, but governments have to realize that opposition members can provide positive amendments. That is what this bill is all about.

It was about a positive amendment to legislation that would have seen Manitobans, in particular the employees of different companies, benefit from. Why to this day the government chose not to support the amendment—and I am not too sure what their position on this particular bill is going to be. I will wait with anticipation to hear what the ministers and backbenchers have to say about this bill. I hope and trust that in fact they will stand up and give their views once again on the bill, because I do not understand to this very day why it is that they felt it so necessary to defeat those amendments, Mr. Speaker.

Really, that is all we want, some type of rationale, some type of defence, some type of argument to justify the actions that they took a few months back.

What does the bill itself do that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) is proposing? Well, it limits the liability of the employee if he or she does something unknowingly.

Mr. Speaker, I used to work for Caprice Distributors, and we used to sell virtually anything and everything under the sun, and it just was not possible for myself to know, as a salesperson at one time, to have an excellent background knowledge on every product, every widget that was being sold out of that store, as much as I would have loved to.

* (1750)

So if something slips by me, something that I inadvertently tell someone who asks a fairly straightforward question, and within the best of my abilities I give the best answer, and unfortunately, for whatever reasons, whether it is the manufacturer, whether it is advertising, whatever it might be, I am limited or I could be sued under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is wrong. If I, as an employee, or if there are people out there who are selling products and intentionally misleading the public and persuading them to buy a widget for whatever reason and are intentionally doing it, then

I would agree with the government's comments that legislation of this nature is needed in order to prevent the employee taking advantage of unknowing consumers who come walking in off the street and have a certain amount of trust in the salesperson, because even though I believe firmly in the consumer beware, and ultimately the responsibility is with the consumer, there is a role for government to play.

Some governments will argue that it is a very little role. Other governments might suggest to you that there is never a large enough role.

Well, being a Liberal, I believe that there is an in-between, that there is a role for the government to play in terms of protecting our consumers, and I know that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) agrees with me 100 percent on this, Mr. Speaker. -(interjection)- Definitely.

This role we have seen in the past. We have created consumer boards and different consumer organizations in order to protect our consumers, and those are positive things.

We have legislation such as the consumers act, the business act, to some degree, that protects our consumers, and we have to come to grips, those of us who are elected, those of us who are making the legislation, in terms of what is in the best interest of the consumer, of all Manitobans. Where do we draw that line, as the member for Dauphin says.

I believe that the government was on the wrong side of that line a few months back when they chose to not adopt the amendments that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) had worked so hard at bringing before the committee. Why would they do that? Is it because of their philosophy of maybe Hobbes, of man eat man, or whatever philosophy it might be, let the strongest survive?

Consumers have to pay the price at whatever expense. Why did they not agree to what we felt were very reasonable amendments? It is unfortunate, because the people who have lost, as a direct result of them ignoring or intentionally deciding to vote against those amendments, were the consumers or, to be more specific, the employee who has been hurt the most, the employee who unintentionally does something that could come back to haunt the individual, through a lawsuit, Mr. Speaker, to no real fault of the employee. All that we were doing was seeking some type of protection for the employee, and what is wrong with that?

I do not want to defend those employees who intentionally go out there in a dishonest fashion and sell to consumers items that are not what they are set out to be. I do not think anyone wants to defend that, at least I can say that in terms of my colleagues at the very least, and I would like to think all members of this Chamber.

What this bill will do is put more of an onus on the advertisers, and there is nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong. Advertisers have a major role in putting out the message of all consumer products to all Manitobans, and they have to take that role very seriously because many consumers will go to a store, they will buy a widget after reading an advertisement in the newspaper or listening to an ad on the radio, and those advertising agencies have to be responsible. I think, in most part, Mr. Speaker, they are responsible. That is to their credit, but at times there are some things that some would put a question mark on.

The member for St. Boniface talked about cigarettes and advertising of cigarettes. He raises some valid concerns, and that is not just to be negative on cigarettes. There are other items. We see scams going all of the time. Every year it seems that we hear of some senior who is being taken advantage of through advertising or through some type of direct sale where there is what I would classify as unmoral dealings. These are the type of deals that governments should try to minimize. There are ways of doing it. Part of those ways is to ensure that advertisers are responsible in advertising those consumer products that all of us require, Mr. Speaker, in order to buy, to purchase and, in fact, to sell.

It also deals with the right of the director to refuse a complaint. We had some concern with the director being able, in his or her chair, to say no, I am not going to deal with that complaint. There were no guidelines that were set in terms of what the director could say no to.

In asking the questions to the minister, the minister was unable to defend, in our opinion, the reason why it was necessary to have such an open clause that the director would be able to say no.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain circumstances, no doubt, and the member for St. Boniface pointed out some of those circumstances where the director should be able to say no.

We are willing to recognize that fact, but those should be spelled out in guidelines or regulations. The minister, at the time, did not say to us that in fact we have the regulations ready to be put in place that would ensure that the director does not have that wide range. We did need to have some type of assurances that in fact the director could not say no to the person who is walking in off the street, and for whatever reason, maybe it could be a personal vendetta, who knows?

This is something that we felt was essential, and had the government of the day said that they have the regulations, these are the regulations that we would be putting forward and would have demonstrated or showed it to our critic, we could have then possibly agreed with the government to withdraw that particular amendment, but for whatever reasons, the government decided not to do it. They decided to go on their own way and vote outright no against our amendments, good, liberal amendments that would have made the legislation

better, amendments that the member for St. Boniface put a lot of work into, Mr. Speaker.

Through our research people and the efforts and consultation of the member for St. Boniface, those amendments -(interjection)- The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, filibustering. Mr. Speaker, I am trying to emphasize the importance of this bill, and I trust that many New Democrats will speak and support this bill. I will be disappointed if they do not, but I will be more disappointed if the government does not have the tenacity to stand up and defend their actions---

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will have two minutes remaining.

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, May 2, 1991

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