



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 23, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Adeline Sobie, Michael Sobie, Jeff Sobie and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Pauline Pikel, Tracy Heppner, Eta Meinders and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of L. Lanigan, M. Bisson, B. Halaiko and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize health care services.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of A. Lalonde-Muise, C. Irwin, Linda Gail Bucholz and others requesting the Premier and Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Leanne Chirnecki, Tanis Olson, Lisa Hoppenheit and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Kathryn Grant, Sandra Elder and Sandra Unrau and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Victor Gerbasi, Jean Gerbasi, Joyce Luff and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1335)

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Seasonal Camping Fees

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes? The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS seasonal camping has provided an affordable form of recreation for many Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has announced increases in seasonal camping fees of up to 100 percent; and

WHEREAS this huge increase is far more than any cost-of-living increase; and

WHEREAS this increase will lead to many people being unable to afford seasonal camping.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

* (1340)

Home Care Services

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of tabling the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba 1996 Five Year Strategic Plan.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 202—The Home Care Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that leave be given to introduce Bill 202, The Home Care Protection and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant la protection des soins à domicile et apportant des modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: With the introduction of this bill to protect home care, we hope we will be able to draw a line in the sand and indicate that privatization will not be a way of life in Manitoba concerning home care.

As services have been deinsured, as hospital beds have been closed, as Pharmacare has been cut, as eye examinations have been eliminated, we have seen an erosion of the universal principle of medicare in this province. As such, programs like Home Care have become even more important to replace the programs that have been cut by the members opposite.

Home care is not protected under the Canada Health Act. This bill will bring home care under the same kind of protection in the province of Manitoba as is afforded other aspects of medicare in this country. It will say no more privatization, no privatization of home care. It will say no user fees in home care, and we hope by introducing this bill and passing this bill in this Chamber we can not only protect home care and medicare as we know it but we can go on to try to build the the best health care system in this province, and not unimportantly, it also, we believe, will help to end the strike situation we face today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Agreed?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

* (1345)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon twenty-four Grades 5 and 6 students from Ralph Brown School under the direction of Mr. Paul Dobson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

We have 18 adults from the Salvation Army Literacy Program under the direction of Mrs. Emily Dalton. This

school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization—Cost-Effectiveness

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

Dr. Evelyn Shapiro, a member of one of the government's committees on home care dealing with the demonstration project on cost-effectiveness on home care, has compared the costs and quality of services in communities such as Quebec City, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Her studies have concluded that the current system in Manitoba is cheaper than all the other systems across the country and also has the advantage of providing better quality home care services in our province for our people.

In light of the fact the Premier has made a number of statements about how much money we may or may not save, and in light of the fact the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) said he would not save any money with his contracting-out privatization-profit plan, I would like to ask the Premier: What numbers does he have to justify his decision to proceed with privatization and profit in home care?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, without in any way entering into debate about all of the various issues that are involved, nobody is suggesting that our home care system—despite the fact that the appeals panel has received, since its inception, hundreds of complaints and has had to deal with them, we still believe that it is an excellent system, but like anything else, we also believe that it can be improved upon.

It is a very important part of the proposal, that we should not allow those who depend upon home care to be able to be used as pawns in a process whereby a monopoly group, which currently delivers the service, can have such total control over it that they can deny service to those in need. That is a very important part of our desire, to ensure that we provide for the needs of those

who depend upon home care, that we provide the services when they need it, as they need it, and to the highest standards that we can afford.

I would not begin to compare the system against that in British Columbia in which user fees are charged for home care. User fees that, I might say, were recommended in a study that was conducted for the New Democrats in 1987 by Price Waterhouse. It recommended that we introduce user fees. That was what the New Democrats' study recommended. They also recommended that certain services be, in a sense, deinsured in home care. That was a recommendation by the New Democrat-commissioned study as well.

Those are not things that we would consider. What we do want to do is ensure that we can provide the services with the flexibility and the opportunity to have as broad as possible a choice within the system to ensure that at all times we can meet the needs of those who depend upon the system, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the Premier never answered the question of where the \$10-million so-called savings was going to appear from his ideological decision for profit in home care.

I would like to ask a further question in light of the fact that Dr. Shapiro's cost studies were quite remarkable in terms of the advantages of the existing system. I would like to ask the Premier, in the Home Care Demonstration Project documents tabled in this Legislature last week there is an evaluation grid that compares seven criteria on cost, availability of service, flexibility—some of the things the Premier was just talking about in terms of the advantages of this system—can the Premier indicate on that grid what system was evaluated to have the most cost-effective components to it? Was it the existing system or was it the privatization profit system as being proposed by the existing government under Appendix 1? I will table that for the Premier's attention.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member opposite continues to refer to profit in the system and that is what seems to drive his ideological difficulty with this move. This is an opportunity to provide competition in the system. It will provide an opportunity—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate between members.

Mr. Filmon: It will provide an opportunity for organizations like VON, who have served the system well for two decades, to continue to bid on their aspects of the system that they have done so well and to continue to provide the kinds of services that are external to government, so that it is not just a monopoly government bureaucracy that can decide whether or not it wants to provide the service, or when the union leaders decide they want to withdraw the service they leave those most vulnerable with no other alternatives. That, Madam Speaker, is inexcusable. That is something that we want to correct so that the system will always provide for the needs of those who require the services when they need them, as they need them and to the highest standards possible.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the Premier did not answer the question again about cost-effectiveness and criteria and studies.

I would like to then ask the minister responsible for the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) a question. In his budget he says: We estimate that the changes and the privatization of home care might save in the medium term close to \$10 million.

Of course, we have had the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) say it would not save anything. We have had the Premier say it will save \$10 million. We have the Minister of Finance saying it might save \$10 million.

Did the Minister of Finance have available to him the Dr. Shapiro documents on cost and effectiveness? Did the Minister of Finance have available to him the qualitative studies and any other studies when he put that number in the budget, and can the Minister of Finance table today the numbers that would allow us to arrive at a figure in his budget or did he just take this out of the thin air like the Premier obviously has done in terms of the answers to questions?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we rely on the officials of the Department of Health to develop the estimates that are provided to Treasury Board and, ultimately, to cabinet and this Legislature. I

want to make the point that the member deliberately does not wish to understand what has been said. What has been said is, there is \$8 million more in the budget because despite achieving savings within the system by reducing the unit costs of provision of services, we know that this is the most rapidly growing area of our population, and that the demand for services in home care is growing more rapidly than the demand for any other services in our health care system.

The numbers of units of demand for service will continue to increase year upon year, which means that in and of itself would deem that we have to spend more money to provide the service. However, if we can continue to find ways of doing it more effectively to meet the needs of those who depend upon those services, we can reduce the unit cost and it would not increase as rapidly as it would had we not introduced those better measures into the system.

Home Care Program Privatization—Patient Exploitation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, Dr. Evelyn Shapiro, last week, indicated that one of the very worst aspects of the government's privatization plan is that private companies will be encouraged to sell unneeded services to the vulnerable and the sick.

Can the minister indicate today, if this privatization plan should go forward, what mechanisms and regulations will he put in place to protect the sick and vulnerable from exploitation?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, Dr. Shapiro also raised questions about user fees. Maybe Dr. Shapiro read the Price Waterhouse report that the NDP commissioned.

If the honourable member is worried about overservicing then I would like to refer him to a report commissioned by his colleagues in the Doer-Pawley government called the Price Waterhouse—

An Honourable Member: Last week, it was Pawley-Doer.

Mr. McCrae: Pawley-Doer, Doer-Pawley—I am not sure who was really in charge there. In any event, it is a moot

point because the people of Manitoba threw them all out of office.

I would refer the honourable member for Kildonan to the Price Waterhouse report commissioned by the New Democrats which calls for user fees and cuts in services. In that report, it draws attention to overservicing, which the honourable member seems to be talking about here today.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, is the Minister of Health aware that some We Care employees get paid a commission to sell more services to patients when they visit them? What is the Minister of Health going to do about that?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we have a set of services that are provided which are decided upon after appropriate assessment by professionals working for the Department of Health. If people want more services than that under the present system, they can access that by, for example, paying the Victorian Order of Nurses extra dollars for those services. There is nothing going to be different in the future.

The honourable member and his colleagues talk a lot about these changes as if there had never been purchase-of-service arrangements in the past. The VON, their services have been purchased for all these years, the nursing services. Recently, the VON accessed—was a successful bidder for a home I.V. contract; Central Health Services is a provider of service under a purchase-of-service arrangement; FOKUS, Ten Ten Sinclair, same idea; Community Therapy Services; the H.I.D.I. Qu'Appelle Project.

* (1355)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the Premier, since the minister is unable to answer the question. What is this government going to do to prevent the exploitation of the sick and the vulnerable since companies like We Care pay a commission to their employees to sell extra services? What are they going to do about that, Madam Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we are not about to learn too many lessons in exploitation from honourable members opposite. Right now, as we speak, all of the people they claim to be working for, the union bosses and

their people, are presently exploiting the people of Manitoba who are clients of the Home Care program. They are using them as pawns. In fact, they are being used as hostages in this whole discussion. So I am not going to take too many lessons on exploitation from the honourable member for Kildonan.

Independent Schools Funding Formula

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

According to the Winnipeg Free Press, in 1985 the present Minister of Education claimed that rapid increases in funding to private schools have a serious effect on the public schools. She opposed this, a policy which she claimed drained students from a public system already suffering from declining enrollment.

Could the minister tell us today why she has changed her mind on what is a fundamental issue of public policy?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I do not have the 11-year-old Free Press in front of me, but I will say this: I have always maintained—I maintained then—I believe that was the year I was president of MAST and speaking as MAST president it must be MAST position, and the member I hope would do that. But I also say that it is also a consistent thread of thought that I held then that I hold to this day, and that is that if independent schools accept funding from the public, they must become more like public schools, and indeed that is what we have done. We have nonfunded schools, completely nonfunded, not a penny of government money, and they then are truly independent because they accept no government funding.

But the member knows that as the independent schools have accepted public money, we have insisted that they hire certified Manitoba teachers, follow Manitoba curricula, take Manitoba standards exams, and save the system \$8 million a year by virtue of paying a user fee for the privilege of religious rights.

So I am consistent, Madam Speaker, then and now.

Ms. Friesen: What the minister missed of course was the selection—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wolseley was recognized for a supplementary question which requires no postamble or preamble.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister intend to expand private schools in Manitoba at the same rate as they have been expanding in the last five years, and that is 16 percent over the last five years? Is that her policy for the next few years?

Mrs. McIntosh: Again the member credits me with a tremendous amount of power and I thank her for it, but I do not start up private schools, Madam Speaker.

The member knows that over time it used to be that in all schools, for example, religious exercises were common at the beginning of the day. There are a number of changes that have occurred in schools, such as the elimination of that right, unless there is some very intense petitioning that goes on and certain percentages and all kinds of red tape to go through. As those kinds of things have increased, many people—and 85 percent, to be specific, of our private schools are religious-based schools where people who can no longer get in the public system those kinds of scripture readings, Bible readings, the Lord's Prayer, those kinds of things—are starting up their own schools so that they can have a value-based system. Eighty-five percent of our independent schools are in that category.

We believe in choice for parents. We believe that if they accept public funding, they must abide by our rules but they will be allowed to have those components. In the other 15 percent, Madam Speaker, we have all-girls schools, all-boys schools, gender-specific schools. I am sorry they do not want those people to have that choice. They pay for that choice, they abide by our rules.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, would the minister explain why she continues in this House to refuse to table the new agreement that she has made with private schools which will increase their funding by 15 percent this year at the same time as the public schools have received a minus 2?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I will be very happy to provide that agreement for the member. She knows all the content of it because I have been quite open about it.

If she wants the papers themselves, I can give her the papers themselves, but they will just confirm what I have already told her, that we will be moving to 50 percent of the cost per pupil of public schools. When that 50 percent is reached it will remain forever there. It will go up or down as the cost per public-school student comes down, and she assumes they will not but I know boards are trying valiantly to have those costs contained. Through new efficiencies we are hoping to introduce in the system, we hope with them those costs will come down.

That 50 percent, Madam Speaker, of those funded schools—and I continue to stress that we have many nonfunded schools as well—of those people who accept partial funding of their schools in return for complying with all our rules and regulation, except for being allowed their particular religious freedom or gender bias, whatever it is, we save the people of Manitoba \$8 million a year. That is a substantial saving that if we had to take from the public system, we would not have enough to go around.

* (1400)

Winnipeg Adult Education Centre ESL Funding Reduction

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Recently, staff at the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre were told that there had been a significant cut in their English as a Second Language budget. The impact of the cuts by both the federal and provincial governments will likely result in the layoff of 10 to 12 staff and the loss of English as a Second Language programs that will have an impact on 1,200 to 1,500 students.

Will the minister tell the House why he cut the funding for English as a Second Language programs by \$141,000?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, the program that the member refers to of course is funded by both the federal government and the provincial government. I can confirm that there has been a

reduction of \$215,000 from the federal government going into this program, but I would also point out that there are no waiting lists for the ESL program at the present time.

Mr. Hickes: Can the minister explain how this cut and past cuts will improve the access ability and quality of service to new citizens who want to come to Manitoba?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, as I indicated, there has been a downsizing of the contribution made by the federal government, but I would also point out again that there is no waiting list in the ESL program with Winnipeg No. 1 School Division. Also, there are other institutions at the same time who are offering programs.

Mr. Hickes: Madam Speaker, can the minister explain how he expects to attract more immigration when he is cutting services to those immigrants who wish to come here, when we read in the paper that Manitoba needs immigration for the garment industry and other work in Manitoba?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, again I would say that he should be talking to the federal government and perhaps his Liberal friends sitting next to him there, that the major cut in funding was by the federal government.

I would also point out that the member has indicated in his question he is aware of the fact that there is a reduced number of immigrants coming to Manitoba in the last couple of years, and I would repeat again, there is no waiting list for services for English as a Second Language.

Home Care Program Privatization—Provincial Standards

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The privatization of home care services, quite simply, is going to see the profit factor brought into home care services and there will, in fact, be less money that is going to be going towards home care services. These profit-oriented companies such as We Care are in fact going to have to do one of two things, either cut back on services or decrease the wages significantly. Both will have a very negative impact on the client.

My question to the Minister of Health is, will the minister share with us what his department is doing to ensure a provincial standard for the delivery of home care services into the future, and table those appropriate documents that will ensure that standard is maintained?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the standards expected of any care providers will be part of the tender documents that come forward so the honourable member will be assured that standards that exist in the program now will continue to exist. You cannot argue that the best system in North America has no standards, because it does.

Privatization—Minimum Wage

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, to that end then, I would ask the Minister of Health if he is prepared to incorporate into those standards some sort of a provincial-wide wage scale which will ensure a basic salary to those individuals providing that service.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member has not yet taken a realistic view of this or a number of other important health care issues. I have asked him during the process of the Estimates, for example, when we were talking about changes in our hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg, for him to play that constructive role that he wants always to play and to tell me how many hospital beds, for example, too many do we have, and depending on which question he was asking or which answer he was giving, it was anywhere from 100 to 700 beds that he wants to close. Well, that is the kind of thinking we get from the honourable member. That is quite a spread and it says to me that ideas like the honourable member's would need to be looked at extremely carefully before they became the policy of the government. This is the same honourable member that wants to have, for those bidding on contracts, a playing field which is not level.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the construction industry is something which the Minister of Health could look at, and the question specifically to the minister is, why will he not consider allowing for some sort of provincial-wide salary for individuals who want to participate in health care services through his form of privatization of home care services, given that other industries such as the construction already do this? Why will he not consider that?

Mr. McCrae: Well, let the honourable member share with us what he thinks that floor or maximum or whatever it is, should be.

Indian Birch/Shoal River Communities Meeting Request

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on November 17 the communities of Indian Birch and Shoal River were shocked to learn of the death of their friend and relative, Darren James Mink. They were further shocked when the Crown attorney stayed the proceedings dealing with this case on April 4 without any explanation.

Madam Speaker, the communities of Indian Birch and Shoal River are very concerned with this. They have no answers and they are concerned—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): It is the idiot over here, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Regrettably, the Speaker heard the remark, even though it may or may not be on the record. Those are the kinds of remarks that I have insistently implored the members to cease and desist from using because they are exactly what provokes debate and cause disturbance in the House. I wonder if I might request that the honourable member for Inkster withdraw that remark.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the remark.

Madam Speaker: I appreciate that. I thank the honourable member for Inkster. The honourable member for Swan River, to pose her question now.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, just as the authors of the AJI report concluded that the justice administration was not delivering justice to Manitoba's aboriginal peoples and MKO has written a letter to the minister, which I will table, raising their concerns, I would like to ask the minister if she will, after Question Period, meet with the representatives of Indian Birch and Shoal River to discuss with the representatives of this band their concerns that they have with this case.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, let me say, first of

all, that I empathize with the family and with the community. I understand they have travelled quite a long way. However, I would like to tell them that this case is now under active investigation by the RCMP. They are continuing their work in relation to this case. As a result of the continuing police investigation, I am not able to meet with the community because I must avoid at all costs any appearance of political interference.

However, I understand earlier today they had a brief opportunity to speak with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Prosecutions and I extend that offer again. A meeting with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Prosecutions, to make sure that they are completely up to date on the status of the case and what is happening, is still open to them.

I would also say, Madam Speaker, that this government has made a very strong commitment to victims. We understand that there is concern about victims in this case, and make the commitment that the family and the community be kept up to date at all parts of this case.

Darren James Mink RCMP Investigation

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I would like to take the opportunity to thank the minister for giving that direction. I would hope that her deputy minister would also be able to meet.

I would ask the minister if she would request the police force, since they are making a further investigation, if this investigation can be made of urgent priority so that justice can be done and people in this community will not have to deal with the heartache that they are dealing with now.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I have been informed from my department, again, that this case is under active investigation, that it is certainly receiving very significant attention from the RCMP at this time.

* (1410)

Release of Court Transcripts

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Since the minister has been so co-operative, I would like to ask if

the minister will follow up on the request of the Mink family and release the court transcripts of April 4 so that the family will know the details of why the charges have been stayed.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, certainly I am happy to look at what is available to be released. I also understand and am fully up to speed on the case myself, but I believe that the assistant deputy minister in charge of Prosecutions will be able to provide the family with significant amounts of information and the community to their satisfaction and we will arrange for that after Question Period, if that is the time frame.

Domestic Violence Sensitivity Training—Prosecutions

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

Last week the minister claimed some superior knowledge about domestic violence. I wonder if the minister would tell us whether superior knowledge about domestic violence issues has also been imparted to all her department's prosecutors through special training, as recommended by the Pedlar report in 1991.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, we certainly do believe that training and information in the area of domestic violence is important, and it is certainly my understanding that there has been training offered in the area of prosecutions. If the member has any additional questions in that area, though, I know we can cover that in the Estimates process which will be coming up fairly shortly for Justice.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister then, who has insisted on at least seven occasions in this Chamber that all her prosecutors receive training in domestic violence, tell us whom we are to believe, her or the two prosecutors assigned to the Roy Lavoie bail hearings who both under oath in answer to the question, have you had any special training in domestic violence, said no? I will table the testimony, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, the member well knows that we do have a special court which deals with domestic violence issues and that there is special training for those

prosecutors who are working in that area, and available to others as well. Now, whether or not those two individuals have in fact received it or received it lately or what the question was, I will have to look at. But it has certainly been a commitment on behalf of this government to deal with the issues of domestic violence with seriousness, and let us make no mistake, it was this government that set up the Domestic Violence Court. It was this government that introduced the zero tolerance policy. It is this government that continues to work with the community in the areas of domestic violence.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, would the minister tell us whom we are to believe, her or a total of three prosecutors, including the head of the Family Violence Court who confirmed under oath that even all the prosecutors in the Family Violence Court have not had special training in domestic violence issues? Who is not telling the truth?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, again, it is certainly my understanding that that training is available for our prosecutors in the Family Violence Court. The member is referring to conversation or testimony which I have not had the opportunity to look at in any context whatsoever. It is certainly not the first time that the member has tried to bring forward something suggested to be a fact and find that in fact it is not a fact at all.

Madam Speaker, I will certainly look at what the member has brought forward. I know we will have further opportunity. I also say, again, it was this government who set up the inquiry into the deaths of Rhonda and Roy Lavoie. It was this government who took all of these issues seriously. We have said there is still more to do, and we will continue to do it.

Mental Health Care Housing

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I have raised in letters and in the House concerns about this government's move to place mental health patients into elderly persons' public housing—in the words of the staff with the Housing Authority—where the staff do not have the training or resources to support these tenants. I want to ask the Minister of Health or the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) to explain how they have responded to these issues.

To quote the Winnipeg district officer who has said: It is acknowledged that these applicants have a need for safe and affordable housing, but unfortunately once housed with the Manitoba Housing Authority their problems become our problems. Staff involved can be—simply with the daily assurance—an extreme crisis intervention situation which may take staff hours to resolve and a large—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member raised this question before. I told her I would get the answer and make it available to her. I am in the process of doing that.

Ms. Cerilli: I would like to ask the Minister of Health or the Minister of Housing how their departments have responded to the concerns raised that—again, I quote: The concentration of individuals with mental health disabilities living independently within our buildings has—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member quickly pose her question.

Ms. Cerilli: To answer the concern that these buildings for public housing are the potential to create many institutions as replacements for the major health facilities now in the process of downsizing or closure.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, I can give assurances to the member for Radisson that I will be in contact with the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), as we all do from time to time, to make sure that we are giving the same answer to the member for Radisson and that the information that the Health minister is bringing forward should be brought forth. We will address that to the member for Radisson.

Ms. Cerilli: I would like to ask the Minister of Housing to explain how these mental health outpatients could have been transferred to the Manitoba Housing properties without having the proper supports there first, and how many people have been affected by this?

Mr. Reimer: I can give assurances to the member for Radisson that those concerns will be brought forth in correspondence and in conversations with the Minister of Health.

Manitoba Telephone System Privatization

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, across Manitoba thousands of Manitobans are speaking out urging the provincial government not to privatize MTS. Forty-seven councils ranging from R.M.s through to the City of Brandon are to pass resolutions opposing privatization, and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities has now passed a resolution which has made it very clear that they oppose the privatization of MTS.

I would like to ask a question to the Minister of Rural Development and the minister responsible for municipal affairs, whether he has communicated to his colleague the Minister responsible for MTS the fact that many Manitobans, particularly in rural and northern Manitoba, want to keep MTS publicly owned.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I can tell the member for Thompson that I converse with municipalities almost on a weekly basis, I guess. I meet with the executive of both MAUM and UMM on a monthly basis. In our conversations we deal with a lot of issues that relate to municipalities and a lot that have to do with other departments as well. At the same time, we encourage and there has been a door open to each and every minister. The executive of the municipalities has indeed met with many of our colleagues in cabinet and do so on a regular basis.

Mr. Ashton: I have a further question to the Minister responsible for MTS.

Since clearly so many Manitobans not only are opposed to privatization but want to make sure this government will give them a chance to have a say, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for MTS, will he now commit publicly to what many Manitobans, particularly in rural Manitoba, are asking for, and that is the chance to have a direct say in the future of their telephone company? Will he give that assurance today?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that those

councils that passed the resolutions, who forwarded them to me, received a response from me in terms of the circumstances we face. I can also assure the member they never responded back again to say that there was anything wrong with the response we gave them. So the communication process continues to go on.

Winnipeg Art Gallery Board Appointments

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Recently the public has learned that the executive director and board of the Winnipeg Art Gallery made a decision to lay off several staff members, that many of the remaining staff members are dissatisfied with management and their working conditions, and that both the Manitoba Arts Council and community artists have unresolved disagreements with the gallery. Each year, particularly now that several capital projects are proceeding, the province gives millions of dollars in taxpayers' money to the gallery.

I would like to ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to confirm that, despite these disruptions and despite the fact that government puts millions of dollars of public money into the gallery, he has appointed only one of a possible three board members and therefore compromised the process of public accountability.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I would point out to the honourable member that the board of the Winnipeg Art Gallery is comprised of people elected at their annual meetings, appointed by the city and also appointed by government. Certainly, arts groups from time to time have some financial issues to work their way through. I have tremendous confidence in the board and management that they will be able to do this.

As I indicated to her yesterday, she might want to take a broader look at the arts in Manitoba, and I would refer her to an article in *The Globe and Mail* which highlighted Manitoba as the jurisdiction in North America that had the most vibrant arts community and the most successful arts community in North America.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Resignation Request—Deputy Prime Minister

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, today is a historic day, for it was on this day that the Bard, William Shakespeare, was born. Anyone living in this wonderful land of Canada recognizes the name Shakespeare and is aware of the contribution he has made to our literary heritage. He was a philologist, that is, a lover of words. I wonder will history ever produce others who, like Shakespeare, can work magic with words.

Today, Madam Speaker, I announce a contender. In addition to announcing the birthday of the Bard, I announce the birthday of those who wax eloquently with words, the Liberal Government of Canada. I recall during and after the last federal election that members of the Liberal Party of Canada campaigned on the promise that they would abolish, and I use the word "abolish," the goods and services tax.

In fact, Madam Speaker, on several occasions the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, Sheila Copps, said that if the GST were not abolished she would resign. Today, on the same day that the Bard was born, the federal Liberals have succeeded not in abolishing the GST but in harmonizing it with the provincial sales tax of our three Atlantic provinces.

Abolish, according to the Winston dictionary of Canada, means to do away with, to put an end to. There is nothing of abolish in the word "harmonize." I am sure that the Deputy Prime Minister would agree with me that Canadians have a right to hold their elected officials to promises that say if such and such does not happen, they will resign. It takes a lot of courage to make a promise like that. Let us be perfectly clear. Ms. Copps said on October 18, 1993, she would resign if the GST were not abolished. Today, the GST was harmonized with the three Atlantic provinces. It was not abolished; it was harmonized. So today, I respectfully ask the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada to keep the promise she made to Canadians and resign, effective today.

Grand Medieval Feast Dinner—Clifton School

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, April 17, it was my pleasure to participate in

the Grand Medieval Feast Dinner put on by the parents, teachers and Grade 5 students of Clifton School. The gym was transformed into the Great Hall of Clifton in the kingdom of King Arthur. There was dancing, jousting, singing, jesters, magic, drama, fire-eating dragons slain by St. George, support from Len Udow of the Artist in the School Program and a sumptuous feast.

This wonderful evening would not have been possible had it not been for the hard work and co-operation of the parents, students, Bob Hinthier, the Grade 5 teacher, Tanya Patience, the student teacher, and principal Fatima Mota, who spent many hours, in addition to their regular work, creating, rehearsing, sewing and cooking so that the Grand Medieval Feast Dinner would be a success.

Here is a perfect example of how our public education system can and should work. Let us hope that these events that bring the entire school community together continue to take place. Education is much more than book learning. We must ensure that our public school system continues to include parents, students, teachers and administrators. If we do not support every element of this delicately balanced system, we will all lose. Thank you.

Canada Post Layoffs—Rural

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, on the weekend it was reported in the Winnipeg Free Press that Canada Post will lay off a yet-to-be-determined number of people at more than 100 rural post offices located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario. Some 35 communities in rural Manitoba will see their post offices affected.

One of the communities impacted is located in my constituency in the town of Stonewall. As all members know from comments I have made in the Legislature, Stonewall is a vibrant and growing community of over 3,000 and counting, and it has been the fastest-growing community in Manitoba for the last three years. Its economic strength has been witnessed during the past couple of years, 1994 and '95, with 257 building permits issued, resulting in approximately \$11 million of investment locally, and the move by Canada Post to reduce their deficit on the backs of Manitoba's rural communities is unjustifiable.

The result will be, according to the president of the Manitoba branch of the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, a delay—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Gimli. I wonder if those members who are holding private meetings would do so in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Helwer: —in service to rural communities as great as three days, much to the surprise of the federal government. Rural Manitobans do receive important mail. Many businesses, schools and individuals rely on Canada Post to deliver in a rapid manner, and a delay of three days can have an immense impact upon a person waiting for that important letter, notice or package. A great deal can be lost during the course of three days.

As well, it was further reported in the article that the rural reduction of post office hours and staff could merely result in an increase in the city of Winnipeg workload, therefore offering no savings to Canada Post and further frustrating its customers.

While our government, through recent budget initiatives and the rural task force, continues partnering with rural Manitoba to develop communities in which people want to live, work, and raise a family, the federal government appears to be deserting the rural communities throughout Canada.

I am especially disappointed with the federal Member of Parliament for Portage-Interlake, who has allowed this to occur without any visible attempt to intervene on his constituents' behalf. Representation such as this fails to serve those who have elected their Member of Parliament.

Today, I have written to the minister responsible for Canada Post in order to express my views on their ill-thought decision. I have further requested that their department fully review their reduction and necessity. Thank you.

Manitoba Telephone System—Campaign

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Across this province, thousands of Manitobans have joined the campaign to

save MTS, to save our low-cost, efficient, publicly owned phone system. Now we are seeing that they had the support of rural and northern councils, including the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities which passed a resolution on this issue last week.

Madam Speaker, I would like to read into the record some of the councils that have spoken out in favour of saving our publicly owned telephone system. They include: Oak River, Minitonas, Pine Dock, Hamiota, Brandon, Dauphin, East St. Paul, Gladstone, Springfield, Grandview, Grey, Woodlands, McCreary, Mountain, St-Lazare, Rapid City, Pelican Rapids, Coldwell, Snow Lake, Saskatchewan, Cross Lake First Nation, Nelson House First Nation, Fisher Bay, Leaf Rapids, National Mills, R.M. of Russell, Grand Rapids, Glenboro, Grahamdale, Rosedale, Selkirk, Morris, Carberry, Rivers, St-Pierre-Jolys, St. Francois Xavier, Cormorant, Piney, Brokenhead, Ellice, Fox Lake First Nation, Fisher River First Nation, Fulton, Killarney, North Cypress, and Archie.

Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba are speaking out. They want this government to save MTS. I, today, speak out on behalf of many Manitobans, including the 47 councils that have passed resolutions and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities. The message to the government is, do not sell off our phone company; keep MTS publicly owned. Thank you.

* (1430)

Maples Collegiate Conference

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank the students and staff of Maples Collegiate for allowing me to participate in their harmony through diversity conference. This event was held on April 17, 1996. It was a student-initiated project that set aside an entire day on an issue that the students had identified as being very important to their school and community. The exchange of ideas that took place was just another example of the extremely positive influence that young people from all backgrounds and histories can have on their community when given the chance.

There was a host of people from all ethnic communities that were together, including teachers, students, staff, community members, to make the conference a success. A special mention about the efforts of Jennifer Harvey, the student organizer, and Chuck Duboff, the teaching

staff event organizer, should be made to recognize the time and effort they put into the event.

It was, by all accounts, an outstanding success. In discussion with students, they conveyed a feeling of satisfaction that they were able to bring together so many people to support and work towards the goal of racial and ethnic harmony. Their only disappointment was in their inability to get the message to a larger audience.

The lack of media coverage, especially from television, was a disappointment. Students were disappointed that their school would be swarmed with reporters if there was a gang problem or any event that could put young people in a negative light. The media must balance their coverage of our communities. We cannot accept the constant portrayal of young people in a negative light. Young people add to the quality of life in our community. They are a source of vision and hope.

Jennifer and the Maples Collegiate Unity Group are representatives of this thoughtful and energetic community. These young people should be recognized for the benefits that they bring to our community.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

* (1450)

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 La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Health.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): 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 Education and Training.

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 34 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the minister a few questions regarding the general policy of Estimates so far, but before I do that, I want to be sure that the record shows that Question Period ended at 2:30 and it is now seven minutes before three. I just want to make sure that is on the record so that we know how much time we have taken to get started here, if the minister would like to respond.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for being here 10 minutes; I thank him for pointing out that I am 10 minutes late. I say 10 minutes because when I left the Chamber, the Education critic for the NDP was still deep in conversation with people in the Chamber, and I took the time to go to the washroom and exchange books. I presume that is why the Education critic is not here herself yet. She may be trying to do the same thing.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairman, my questions deal specifically with how the minister sees the role of the school principal playing out over the next period of time in relation to the document, enhancing—I always mix it up—Enhancing Accountability: Ensuring Quality, that is it, and just generally the policies of the government and how she sees the role of the principal developing.

We had a little bit of a discussion on this last fall with Bill 5 and with Bill 6, that was voted on in the Legislature. Maybe the minister can refresh my memory, quickly. Has Bill 5 been proclaimed? If it has not been, is there a date at which we can count on Bill 5 becoming proclaimed?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, Bill 5 has been proclaimed and the regulations are being drafted. The roles of the principals are outlined on pages 16 and 17 in *Renewing Education: New Directions*, the action plan document.

Mr. Struthers: I would like to thank the minister for that. As a school principal in a small school before I became involved as the MLA, I had some concerns then at the direction that the role of the school principalship was headed. My main concern was the overburdening of the administration on any school, in particular the small schools. The trend that I see happening right now—and many school principals and educators out there have pointed to this—is to take the school principal out of the role of administrator and more into the role of teacher.

The problem with that kind of a trend is that if you end up being a three-quarter time principal and a three-quarter time teacher, it does not add up to a hundred percent. What I noticed in my role as a school principal in those days was that no matter how much you tried to free up the principal from administration to become more involved in the actual teaching of subjects, somebody had to perform the duties that were once the school principal's duties of administration.

Fewer and fewer vice-principals are out there available to help school principals. The trend there is to move more towards head teachers who will simply replace a principal when they are not in the school at that time. I am really very much worried that we are overburdening the administrative staff of our schools, and I see the trend happening more in the small schools in rural areas where staffs are being reduced and principals are being asked to take on more and more of a teaching load.

Is that a direction that the minister sees continuing in education or is there a better way? Does she have a better way of setting up the role of the school principal?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, nowhere in our indication do we see that principals are being asked to teach. Looking in the document, we indicate that we are designating principals as the primary instructional leaders in schools and state their fundamental responsibility and roles to be the chief educational leaders of the school and administer and manage the school. Those two seem, to me, to be intertwined in such a way that they really cannot be separated, because if the whole business of the school is to teach, then managing and administering the school has to ensure that teaching occurs. That does not mean that the principal himself or herself has to do the teaching but has to ensure that teaching occurs and, of course, the other part of that is that learning occurs as

teaching occurs, which is the whole business of the school. It is the end product, and as the chief person in the school concerned about the end product, to us, seems logical.

I am, for clarification, wondering if the member could indicate, does he believe that principals should not be involved then in ensuring the excellence of teaching in the schools but should rather just be setting the timetables? Is that what you are asking me to decide between?

Mr. Struthers: Being a school principal is not quite as easy as what the minister has just indicated. It is not an either/or between setting up timetables or providing instructional leadership. It is just not that simple.

What is happening in education, given a \$15-million cut, is that small schools are ending up with fewer people to teach the courses. As a result, many small schools end up without a guidance counsellor and many small schools end up using their principals as teachers. Now all the fancy words in the document and all the assurances of the minister does not change the fact that \$15 million was cut out of education and has forced many school divisions to reduce the number of staff that they have, forcing a lot of small schools to take their principals and use them as teachers and cut down on the amount of time given to school administrators to administer the school.

* (1500)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the member that it is not that simple. That is why I was asking the question, because I thought in the original question he was implying that it was that simple, that they could be that easily separated. I agree with him, you cannot separate. That is why I indicated in my first response that they are intertwined. To me, they are irrevocably intertwined; those roles cannot be easily separated. I am pleased that he and I do agree on that.

I indicate as well that the role of the principal is very important and very significant, that effective principals are absolutely essential to effective schools. All of the studies that have been done on effective schooling, all of the five principles of effective schools that have evolved over time from a wide variety of sources—and I have them framed and hanging in my office—say, rule one, that you have to have an effective instructional leader in the

school, and that is the principal. Those are internationally known principles for effective schooling by which many jurisdictions abide.

There is a leadership role for the principal. There is a role as an instructional leader. That does not mean they have to do everything themselves. We talk about collaborative approaches; we talk about advisory councils, school plans, teamwork, a team with a leader. A lot can be done that way.

We acknowledge the role of the principal is not an easy role. We know that many principals put in very long hours, that they do not go home at 3:30, that they stay. They have things they need to do, which is why they are in a different category in terms of pay, benefits and so on.

Our job as government is to assist principals by having sample school plans, for example, for them; professional development opportunities which we have put in place for them; clean and well-written curricula frameworks; help on how to involve parents; ideas on integrating subjects; and primarily, the ability to inspire and enthuse teachers to reach higher and higher heights of excellence; and to ensure that where teachers are having difficulty or slipping behind or maybe not performing to a level that is really good for students, that they are there with assists, with counselling, advice and methods to help that teacher ensure that the end goal of the school—the reason they exist is to ensure that students are able to learn—is met.

The member made reference to the \$15 million taken out of the system this year. I ache for that \$15 million; I want it back. I wish it never had to be spent on seven or eight days' interest on the debt that his party left this province. I always feel a little bit that I am the recipient of a lot of chutzpa when I hear the NDP, as opposition, indicate that it is my fault that we do not have enough money to fund education to the level that we would if we did not have the debt that they left us. I say that not as any criticism of this current member because he was not part of government when they did that to Manitobans, but we all live with the results of it.

The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) indicated about Brian Mulroney, and I concur because I well remember the year that we were promised \$138 million from that particular Prime Minister and had it clawed back at the last minute and sent us scrambling back to the

drawing board frantically trying to figure out where we would find the money that we were expecting. We are seeing that now doubled with the current federal government. Those decisions to not try to borrow our way out of debt are long-term decisions that we believe ultimately will stand us in good stead.

The day that the debt is gone will be a red-letter day. I hope I am still here to enjoy that day in 29 years now when Manitoba becomes debt free and we have picked up \$650 million worth of interest payments that we could then put back into education or leave with the families. It will be a day that I am happy and I believe will be a day that he will be happy too because it means that our children will not have to live with the difficult kinds of decisions that governments today have to make. For those of you who have small children, I hope in 29 years when they do not have to be burdened with this debt that you will give passing credence and acknowledgement to the hard work that this government is doing right now to try to stretch the dollars so that our children and grandchildren—well, my children will live in debt, but I hope my grandchildren will not.

That is just an aside to the member's aside, but basically the answer to the question on principals is that the role that we outlined for them is a role that is one that is shown to be a necessary role. I appreciate that when you seek to achieve excellence to this degree, it is challenging and it is hard work. We know many principals who are rising to the challenge with great gusto and enthusiasm, and I am familiar with a few who wax quite eloquent on the thrill with which they have embraced these changes. Others will not be as thrilled but I take heart from those principals who say, as they have: Wow, I love this, this is great, things are really humming in our school—and they have embraced the changes with enthusiasm.

Where the principals have been positive in their attitude, by and large, they are having wonderful things happen in their school. We could hold up specific schools for examples.

I hope that school boards will continue, as they have in the past, to provide vice-principals where they are required. I do not discount what the member says, that some boards may not be. He has been in the position.

He does know the challenges. He speaks from experience. I acknowledge his experience in this area, and I am listening to him because he has been in the field and he does have that experience.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the minister for the answer, including the aside. It amazes me, though, as a—still with two days to go, I am still a rookie MLA and I have learned a lot over the year, especially how quickly Tories jump the ship when we start talking Brian Mulroney. Ever since 1993, we have been watching a steady stream of people disassociating themselves with the former Prime Minister and it is kind of funny to hear that.

The other thing that I find quite entertaining—and I will tell the minister that I am perfectly willing to stand up and claim all those big bad deficits that the NDP seem to have racked up over the years, if she would stand up and take credit for some of the big deficits that the Filmon team racked up over the last eight years in government, \$819 million which they would not even claim a couple of years ago, \$762 million the year before. So I would appreciate if the minister was going to tell the story, she would tell the whole story, even though it was an aside and had nothing to do with the specific question I asked on behalf of some of the school principals in Manitoba.

A couple of things I would like to agree with that the minister said in her answer, though. I think there are a lot of schools humming along, as she put it. I think in my own riding I can name you a whole whack of schools that are doing some very positive things. I was in Ochre River School just on Thursday and was just absolutely delighted to see the activity going on there, and a lot of that credit is due to the woman who is the principal of the school working in co-operation with her teachers.

* (1510)

What I do not understand though is why this government would want to throw cold water on that kind of progress by cutting \$15 million out of the budget of Manitoba Education when they are running a surplus of \$120 million, they say. Now, education surely has contributed something, I would think, unless the minister disagrees with this, but I would think that education has contributed something to the growth in the province that has produced a \$120-million surplus, very modest growth

in the province compared to other provinces, nothing to write home to mother about as far as growth goes, but, yet, if education has something to do with producing any kind of growth in society, it would seem fair to me that we should be returning some of that money to education to help our kids.

I also want to point out that when I was involved in administering a school, one thing that was very clear to us—this is several years ago before the current minister was Minister of Education—was that the number of professional development opportunities for administrators was down, but contacts with principals today tell me that the situation has not changed, that professional development opportunities continue to decrease because of the cutbacks that have been initiated in Manitoba to the tune of \$15 million.

So I would like to throw a few of those comments out there and get some reaction from the minister on them, and I look forward to her asides again. They are very entertaining.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if we are entering into a whole series of asides, but it is okay. I think there is a genuine question about how money is spent for education in the questions that were just put forward.

I have to indicate in an aside, because I find it fairly amusing that the New Democrat opposition continually tries to imply that we are only now trying to dissociate ourselves from Mr. Brian Mulroney when maybe he did not read the papers or watch television at the time, but he may recall that the biggest fights in Canada took place during Mr. Mulroney's time between Gary Filmon and Brian Mulroney. They were quite public and they were quite open and they were quite known and they were the subject of many headlines that it was well known that the provincial government in Manitoba and the federal Government of Canada simply could not tolerate each other's positions and policies, and that was during the era of Brian Mulroney and Gary Filmon. So to say that we are now trying to dissociate ourselves from a man whom we never associated with in the first instance is kind of ironic. I would indicate that we—[interjection] Well, you know what, we have had some very good relations with certain people in the federal government at this current time.

We are very distressed with some of their priorities, but we do understand that the federal government is finally attempting to get its financial house in order, and we know they have to do that because they are in the same situation Manitoba is in. We would wish that instead of cutting all their own departments by 2 percent and cutting funding to the provinces for health and education and family services by 35 percent, that they would flip those percentages, but, nonetheless, we know they are trying to get a handle on the debt, and while we disagree with their priorities, we do agree with their premise.

The member made reference to the fact that under this provincial government there have also been years of deficits. I do not want to belabour the point, but I must address the question because it was posed. I do not want to leave it on the record unchallenged. That is not my style, as the member knows, but the member is also fully aware, or at least their Finance critic should be fully aware of Manitoba's circumstances over the last few years and Manitoba's finances over the last few years.

There have been no annual, double-digit revenue increases for this government as there was for the previous NDP government. If we had been receiving double-digit increases in revenue in any one of those years, we could have done a great deal with it, but we are not receiving that as the Pawley government did. We are receiving something quite different. We are receiving transfer cuts that are brutal and devastating.

I believe I have mentioned before that the magnitude of the cut we will experience next year is equivalent to the entire operating budget of the University of Manitoba. I can say, as Minister of Education, thank God I share that cut with Jim McCrae. But Jim McCrae, as Minister of Health, has no great joy in sharing that cut with me, because if I say, Jim, you take that cut in its entirety, he closes down five community hospitals in Winnipeg. That is the magnitude of the cut.

We are not going to close five community hospitals in Winnipeg, and we are not going to close the University of Manitoba. We are also not going to go to the people of Manitoba and say give us that \$220 million the federal government has chopped away. That is very applicable to the education topic, because it is the question the member asked as to why we are cutting money out of Education. This is the answer. This is why Education

has received a 2 percent reduction, which is far, far less a reduction than it would have been had we passed on the full impact of that federal cut. That is last year's cut. This year's is \$116 million, which is devastating in and of itself.

The member indicated, well, you have \$120 million in surplus; why do you not take that and give it to Education?—was the question he asked. I draw him back to something that has been mentioned in the House, and I wonder if the member has any flooding in his area. I know the member from Transcona (Mr. Reid) spent a lot of time talking about flooding in his area. I wonder if last year, in the member's area, if there were any forest fires. I wonder if the member has, in his community, experienced any forest fires or any flooding, if he would like the government of Manitoba to assist in some way with that. And if he would, I wonder if he would like us to have some money available to assist with those types of things. If he would like us to have some money available, then I ask, from whence does he think we should take it? From whence do you think we should get that money to fight forest fires and floods? [interjection]

Well, so, from the petroleum grant, says one member. We could start off on that topic if we wanted to, because I have a lot of feelings about the types of things we need to do with our money to ensure that we have things such as reduced aviation fuel tax, so that we can build a hub of transportation in the aerospace industry in Manitoba, the mining incentives we put in place which has resulted in tremendous exploration and discoveries in the North—which I think the member might be pleased about—creating new job opportunities, a direct result of those incentives which then will put more money into our economy so that we will not have this dilemma of decreased revenue, but rather increased revenue from private sector sources.

Government does not create wealth. Government creates circumstances so that the private sector can generate wealth, and then hopefully that wealth becomes available some day for things like education. So I think the \$120 million which were placed in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund for use when revenues fall below our best estimates, and that fund cannot compensate for reductions in federal funding. We are trying to set program expenditures at sustainable levels and not to

maintain them at unsustainable levels as happened in the past, which explains the debt now carried by Manitobans.

We have got \$648 million in public debt servicing cost, and we cannot use that money to sustain education, unfortunately. So if we take the pieces of money we have that we need to have set aside for unexpected events or for sudden drops in revenue and use it for something else, then when those circumstances come, as they surely do—during 10 years of government we have flooding, we have forest fires, we have sudden drops in revenue through things like transfer cuts, et cetera—I think we do have to be prepared to deal with those items as they come up.

Perhaps we could call it an emergency fund. Maybe that would be more palatable. Maybe it is the semantics of saying a stabilization fund or, as the member for the Maples (Mr. Kowalski) says, election readiness. To me, if that money is needed this year because of forest fires or any of those things and we use it for those things, it automatically then becomes not an election readiness fund.

* (1520)

This was part of our promise when we ran. We promised that we would do this. People elected us expecting that we would do this. This was the No. 1 issue in the election campaign, and it was the No. 1 mandate we were given, to come in with a balanced budget and to ensure that we would not have to be caught short and that we would be fiscally prudent and have sustainable program expenditures.

I, like the member, wish we had a lot more money for education. If I had my wish we would have so much money flowing into education. But I know at the same time that I want to see those hospitals kept running, and I want to know if there is a forest fire that we can put it out. I want to know that if someone is without—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Struthers: I said I enjoyed the minister's asides. I did not enjoy them so much that they would take up all her time though and not answer the question.

The question was directly having to do with administrative professional development days being on the decline. I think what the minister needs to understand is that while in her reports and in her studies and in the group that went around the province talking with people, a lot of nice, fancy words were said but, at the same time that you talk about school principals becoming instructional leaders and team builders and all those things, you are taking away the very opportunities for those administrators to learn and to put into practice what they learn in the classrooms. I would like a quick, direct answer to that question.

At the same time, and connected with the role of the school principal, I am very concerned about how small schools will be affected when we move towards a system, if we move towards a system, where there is more choice amongst schools within divisions such as the one which I represent and the kind of protections that there will be for the very small schools out there in Manitoba that I think are one of those schools that are humming along, that the minister and I agreed on here a few minutes ago.

I want to kind of get an idea of how she sees protection developing for these small schools and if there are some regulations that she sees that she can put forward or are there regulations now that she can table having to do with the protection of small schools when we go towards these larger divisions in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member asks some very good questions about small schools and the time that principals have to continue to grow and develop themselves.

We have a small school funding formula. We have had it in place for some years now. Small schools do receive preferential funding. Because they have, we put them on a lower divisor. They receive a greater amount of funding per student to maintain them. That is something that has been in place now for some years, specifically targeted to small schools and to small rural schools and to isolated schools. That, we believe, is one way that we can ensure that small schools survive, particularly in remote areas where it is difficult to bus children long distances.

We are also looking at a variety of ways to pool resources and dollars for professional development. The province has established a minister's advisory committee

for the implementation of educational change—horrible title; great group. This actually was at the request of MTS, MASS and MAST who asked if they could have a committee to advise the minister on things they saw happening as educational change was implemented, where they felt they could make suggestions for improving the way that was happening. I agreed to that. On that committee, we also have two educators-at-large and two parents-at-large, and they meet regularly.

You may have noticed a few changes being announced, for example, in terms of the time lines for implementing some of the new curricula. We have extended some of those time lines a year, a few changes like that which have come directly out of that committee's recommendations. I chair that committee myself so I am present at the meetings and hear the dialogue directly. The two educators-at-large on that committee happen to be principals. They are principals-at-large; one rural, one urban. The MTS has indicated that they too will be appointing a principal through the society who will be an official MAP person. The other two principals are just at-large principals; they are not officially selected by MAP.

That kind of input I think will be very helpful to address the very kinds of concerns the member raises as principals assume new roles, which will be new not for all, because some principals are already doing these things and have been doing them automatically, but as we say, we want all of them to do them. It will mean for many a change in the way they perform their duties. So we are looking for feedback from that advisory committee specifically and from others as to their thoughts and ideas.

We are looking at pooling resources in terms of dollars to look at regional professional development. A number of things have been happening in that particular venue, not just with the teachers and principals and superintendents and so on, but with school trustees. School trustees are beginning to look at co-operating in ways that were unprecedented many years ago, and regional professional development is one of them. The department is looking at providing a summer institute for professional development for those educators who are interested. Many educators, as the member knows, do avail themselves in the summertime to take upgrading or training of some kind, and it seems a perfect time of the

year to do professional development, when schools are closed. We are also looking at some evening programs that might be possible in terms of professional development, not just for principals but for other educators, as well, but specifically if you are talking about principals, those are some of the things that we are looking at.

Did I answer your question or was there another component I missed?

Mr. Struthers: Just the area on small schools that I was asking.

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, the funding formula does take into account schools under a certain population and provides them extra funding so that they can be well-maintained. As well, there has been a lot of dialogue about the type of learning that takes place in small schools. Sometimes you will have a multigrade approach or a multigrade setting. I was talking just yesterday, because I regularly visit with schools and parents and teachers, with some people who are parents of children in Hutterian schools. Those are traditionally very small schools. Indeed, one of the schools that we talked about in depth has really picked up on distance education—as they only have 11 high-school students in that school—as a way in which they can see being able to deliver cost-effective, full courses.

Distance education and all of the components that go along with that are ways in which we see small schools, particularly in more remote settings, ultimately being able to deliver the full range of programs even into the post-secondary settings if all our articulations continue through as planned. Distance education, in some respects, is still costly, but we are working at bringing those costs down and achieving some modest success.

At the present time in bringing costs down, we have recently added CISCO. We have agreed to provide all the routers for technology and distance education at a 30 percent discount to schools in Manitoba even if they only buy one. That is a bit of a breakthrough that has been accomplished through MERLIN in attempting to persuade regulators, federal authorities and manufacturers that there should be a special rate for education, and the

CISCO venture is the first indication that industry is moving to make substantial discounts for education purposes.

We also have set up, and it is beginning to function now, the computers in the schools program, again, part of distance education which should assist particularly small schools. We are seeing computers that are being donated from the federal government and other sources, that as companies upgrade, we get the used computers which are still relevant. They are still relatively new but not brand new.

We can go more into distance education, I suppose, on another line because I do not think it is right here, but it is one of the things that we feel will assist small schools.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Last night, I attended at the Manitoba Teachers' Society building, along with the NDP Education critic, to meet with the Winnipeg Teachers' Association council meeting, and we were invited to give some feedback on the document Ensuring Accountability. It was mentioned that the minister last night was meeting with the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and Henry Shyka and others to discuss the document. I wonder if as a result of that meeting there has been any change in either MTS's position or any agreement was ever reached at that meeting last night.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chair, although I have been responsible for setting up these meetings for dialogue between trustees and teachers I myself was not present at that particular meeting last night, although I have been present at an earlier gathering of those groups. Teachers and trustees, I am encouraged to note, are discussing with each other aspects of the accountability document to see if they have common threads that they can agree to, and it would be wonderful if they could. I am pleased that they are dialoguing. We are facilitating that dialogue as government and with them we are exploring ideas, looking for mutual understandings and mutual views.

There are not any concrete outcomes right now, but they are talking, and that is encouraging. Government is sitting at the table with them and hoping that they will be able to find a vehicle that is fair and balanced for teachers that will satisfy the dilemma in which trustees find themselves, and government would be absolutely

delighted if those discussions resulted in that outcome. But we do not want to apply pressure or pre-empt any discussions that are going on between the groups. We are encouraged that they are talking, we are encouraging the dialogue, we will do whatever we can to assist in the possibility of a common consensus being arrived at. Beyond that all I can say is that the dialogues will continue and we will see where they take us.

Mr. Kowalski: I think I understand that the minister did not meet with Linda York and Henry Shyka alone, but I am not too clear if someone from the minister's staff met with them last night and I am not too clear if someone from the minister's staff is facilitating meetings between the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees.

Just so I will not have to ask the question again, if that is the case, is the minister's department acting as mediators, conciliators in this process between the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the scope of bargaining and the arbitration process. Is that the intent of these meetings?

(Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairman, just to take the member back a bit, and I will answer his question, I am pleased to answer his question. I thank him for his interest in the topic. We did attempt a year or so ago to bring both parties together to discuss this topic and to see if there was some common ground. Those talks really went nowhere. We only had two meetings, in fact, they were very long meetings, but nothing happened at them, nothing, and so government then proceeded to put out a discussion paper and try to seek some feedback, some ideas, some suggestions, that might be helpful, that could be a springboard for discussion. That was the discussion document that has caused so much controversy. It was not intended to create controversy. It was really intending to lay on the table those concerns that trustees had expressed over the years and seek feedback or ideas or views on those concerns to find out if anybody had a magic solution or if they could serve as a springboard for discussion that would spark ideas and generate dialogue.

The conversations that we have been having lately, the member is correct in that as I indicated yesterday and on

Friday, I have ongoing dialogue with the union executive and with the trustees' table officers. I have ongoing dialogue with them on a constant basis about these problems and these situations. We have come together, the three of us, Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the government of Manitoba to dialogue on these issues. We are not there as government to facilitate or mediate. We are there as full partners in terms of the concern.

* (1540)

Government is co-ordinating the meetings, but co-ordinating simply by virtue of saying, look, we will assume responsibility for setting dates and ensuring that everybody is available to come, and one of us will chair the meeting just to keep the dialogue flowing to say whose turn it is to speak and so on. But we are not there as mediators or facilitators. We are there as partners in education. Those are essentially tripartite meetings, but they are informal; they are loosely structured. They are simply opportunities for dialogue, and I indicate that I am impressed with the courtesy and forthrightness with which the parties are talking about very sensitive issues. As I indicated, it is not always possible for me to be personally present. I was with the group last week, I believe, but last night I was not able to be there, although government representation was there. Similarly, the president of the MTS may not always be able to be there in person, but the essential point is that dialogue is occurring in a tripartite way, in an informal, positive way, on these issues.

Mr. Kowalski: Thank you. The minister has made it very clear to me what is occurring now, and I thank her for that. What I am not too clear about is, first, there was this, some people called it, Carlyle commission—whatever name you want to give it—that was doing this task before. You talked about the two meetings. By someone's judgment, I do not know if it was the minister's or another person's, the meetings were not productive. They were stopped. I do not know whose decision that was, and maybe the minister would like to comment on that. Then the document came out as a response to the lack of productivity from those meetings. Now what I am not too clear about—then there were the public hearings. These meetings now that the minister is talking about, when did they start? Did they start during the public hearings or after the public hearings? When and how

many meetings have there been, how regular? The minister has indicated that the president of MTS was there and table officers from MAST. Who from government has been going to them? How often are they, and when did they start?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: I have been encouraging the two parties to sit down and dialogue since well before the hearings started when the committee stopped meeting the—let us call it the Carlyle committee, why not, everybody else does. Poor John. He was selected to chair the committee and so somehow that has lapsed into the vernacular, but it was not John's committee. It was not really the Carlyle committee, but for want of a more appropriate term.

During those two meetings it became very clear that there was not going to be any movement taking place, and so we decided to proceed with getting out of the discussion document and trying to find ideas from other sources, but just because we were doing that did not mean that we wanted trustees and teachers to stop talking to each other.

If you visualize it this way, you bring two parties together and you realize that you run the distinct possibility of sitting for several years, periodically for three or four hours, and essentially indicating that nothing is going to happen. So as I indicated, we then went out to see if we could get ideas and suggestions from the field on a discussion document but, still, all through all of this, we have always hoped that the best solution would be for trustees and teachers to get together.

Even before the hearings started I was saying, if you can ever get together and formulate some common ground, then that would be great, that would be the best solution but, if that is not going to happen, and we do not see it happening, we will proceed along this course because we do need to get some ideas, some suggestions, some discussion going and try to address this problem.

If the final decision as to how to address the problem has to be made by government in isolation, then we will address the situation in as fair and balanced a fashion as we possibly can, but it sure would be helpful to have

those directly affected part of the process, and so people came out to the hearings and expressed their feelings.

We did not get a lot of new ideas or suggestions during the hearings from the union. We basically were just told that our discussion paper was not very good and that the status quo was the best solution. Well, that did not give us a lot of ideas. We did get some ideas for change from trustees but they were already giving us ideas for change. We did get some fairly reasoned responses from people who were neither teachers nor trustees but, throughout all of this, there has been a desire on the part of both teachers and trustees to resolve this in an amiable fashion. So they expressed a desire ultimately to re-establish dialogue, which I am delighted to see as a thrust, and so with that expression of, let us get together and talk, government has agreed to co-ordinate meetings and to be partners in the meetings because, as government, we too have an interest in seeing a solution that will come out that if it is to be imposed on a system will be a solution such that we will not have either party coming back to us in just a few years saying that we have imposed a system that does not work well for one of them. We want a system that works well for both of them so that we do not have any more ongoing complaints that the system is tilted one way.

I think they are really listening to each other. I do not know how many times they will meet. I will be present, as I am able to be present, but we have indicated that our keen desire is to have MAST and MTS talking, and government will be at the table. Whether it is going to be the presidents of these organizations every time and the minister every time may not always be possible because our schedules are such we do not want to be saying you cannot have a meeting because so and so is not available tonight, but there will always be representatives from those three parties at those meetings.

Mr. Kowalski: So just briefly, how many meetings since the end of the hearings have there been, and how often have you met? Is it once a week? Is it once a month? Is it every two weeks, and how many meetings have you had since the end of the hearings?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have had meetings myself with both groups, but this tripartite group has met twice. They met this week and last week. The future meetings are sort of being set. People get together. They talk for a few hours.

Then they say, when do we meet again, and they set a date for when they are all free. It is just sort of going along without a regular schedule, but, because it is very informal, it is not being set up as a really structured high-powered thing. These are just people talking about a mutual concern.

Mr. Kowalski: From government, is there anybody other than the minister, any other cabinet ministers? Has the Premier been involved in either one of those two meetings?

Mrs. McIntosh: I want to stress that these are informal kind of off-the-record sort of get-togethers. These are not big, formal, high-profile type meetings. We were having about four from each group there each time we meet, and there will be some threads of consistencies. There will be certain people from government that will be there each time just for the thread of consistency.

Certainly, I do not want to make them seem bigger than they are because I do not want to have people putting pressure on the fact that people are talking, I guess is the way I am phrasing it, because, when people sit down to quietly discuss concerns and see if they can come to some sort of resolution, that is often something that is better kept low key and not made into sort of a pressure-packed situation. If you think I am answering carefully here, I am, and that is why. I do not want this suddenly elevated into a big circus of activity that will make members suddenly feel they are unable to relax and just chat over coffee, which is, while they are serious in their discussions, they are not frivolous dialogues by any stretch of the imagination. They still are quiet.

The Premier is certainly aware that people are meeting and talking, and I believe, like me, that he is pleased that that is occurring. I do not know if that gives you enough information or not.

Mr. Kowalski: The specific question is, has the Premier been at the two meetings that the minister referred to? Has he been at either one of those meetings?

Mrs. McIntosh: The Premier himself has not been at either of those meetings.

Mr. Kowalski: I will get away from the line of questioning in regard to those meetings. Just generally, I listened with great interest to the questions and answers

between the NDP Education critic and the minister in regard to this document, and one thing that the minister repeatedly said was, what is wrong with asking the question?

I would just like to raise the level of argument or the level of thinking about this. What profession would not be defensive if we questioned their rate of pay, whether it be a deputy minister, if people said, are you being paid too much? If you asked a police officer, are you being paid too much? If you asked a politician, are you being paid too much? If people talk about a Safeway clerk, what is their hourly rate, people become defensive. I would like the minister to acknowledge, that is a natural tendency in human nature, when people have to defend what they are receiving, that there will be a defensiveness there, an understandable defensiveness.

Mrs. McIntosh: I acknowledge the correctness of the member's statement in that people do become very apprehensive if their salaries are made known. I think those of us who live under the public spotlight can get a sense of that because our salaries are always being held up to scrutiny. I think one thing I have indicated to teachers when I have talked to them, and I had mentioned it to the principals when I met with them, but they did not I think take too kindly to my comment, although I meant it kindly when I said, you need not fear disclosure.

You are paid with the public's money. The public has a right to know how their money is being spent. It happens to us as politicians. Our money is known. Our wages are known. Our benefits are known. What we spend on lunch is known. Those things are all public.

* (1550)

When you are first exposed to it it is a funny feeling. You feel very exposed but, then, after a while, after the first two or three times of people saying, oh yes, I know what you make and I know every penny you spend of the public's money and I know how much you paid for the sign on the outside of your office and I have a right to know because it was paid for with the public's money, once you get used to it you start to think, yes, they do have a right to know. It is their money.

You get to the point where you feel very obligated to say to people, yes, I put a sign in front of my office and it cost X number of dollars and I put it there so you would

know where my office was. You start to then think about the money that you have and how you spend it because you begin to see it as the people's money that is being given to you for a service provided. After a while, it just stops bothering you. It just does not bother you anymore. Certainly the deputy minister on the panel hearings, I think, got it every meeting, you know: Why do you make so much money? You make so much money. You make more money than me. You know, of course, that anytime anybody who makes more money than you earn, it is too much money. That is a rule I learned when I was little. Anybody who makes more money than you earn earns too much money, and anybody who earns less than you should work harder. Those are the sort of generic human nature things that float around in society. It is the nature of human beings to think that way. It is the old Biblical parable about the—well, I will not go into the Bible stuff.

But I mentioned this to the principals in much the same way that I just mentioned it to you and said, I realize it is disconcerting for you to have your salaries made known and to have the question asked: Is this deemed to be the right amount for the service you get from this particular system? I realize that is something that is hard to ask, and then I made the mistake in that thing of saying maybe my hide is a bit thicker because I am a politician, and I am used to being yelled at. That is when the principals took my comments not as well, because they thought I was saying that they should get a thicker skin, which was not my intent at all, at all. I was simply trying to say it is not so bad. Like, come on in, the water is fine. It will be all right. Do not worry about it. You may find that people say, \$70,000 for a principal, hey, given what he has to do, that is not a bad salary for a particular school, a specific school.

So I appreciate that teachers did not want to have their salaries made known or the average salary made known or the comparisons known, nor did they want to have the question asked, is this the amount of money that you think teachers should earn? Although we did not ask that specific question, but they were questions that alluded to aspects of it, I quite agree. I think teachers need not fear that kind of exposure, that kind of questioning. I think, personally, that anybody who earns money from the public purse should have that known to the public who pays it. I think that is responsible and accountable, and I think, once people experience it, they will find that it is not really so bad. It is a question of getting used to it.

* (1600)

Mr. Kowalski: It raises a couple of questions. The first part of that about the minister's belief, and I think it is true, that many people believe anyone who makes more money than them is making too much money, but how does that speak to one of the parts, one of the options here, about a referendum if that is a basic premise of human nature that anybody that makes more money than you is making too much money? I believe that that is a natural tendency in human nature. Then what are we saying, that teachers will have to make less money, the majority of people in a school division, to win a referendum for a pay raise, because that is on her premise? I believe her premise is correct; that is what follows.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member gets right at the heart of the issue. That is exactly what we wanted to hear from people, how they thought about those questions. The referendum example was put in there because it is done in many jurisdictions, that it had been suggested as a way in which teachers' salaries could be determined. So we listed, and we said quite clearly that what we were listing were possible alternatives that people might like to consider. We asked them to comment on those suggestions. We took things that were happening in other jurisdictions and said, okay, here is what they do in Boston. What do you think of it? We were really hoping that people would tell us, just as the member has, what they thought of those so we could take all of those ideas or thoughts or opinions, views discarded, views accepted, views modified, and decide which ones to throw on the editing room floor, which ones to build on.

I find it interesting, though, in something the member has said, the revelation that came in his words. By the way, I want to backtrack and say, when I said, you know, of course, that everybody who earns more money than you earns too much money, I was not reflecting my own personal view. As I indicated, that is how society feels. The member then indicated that that would be a good reason for not having a referendum and possibly he is very right in his response. But he also went on to say, are teachers then going to have to take a pay cut if that goes in, and the assumption in his question was that teachers make more than the constituents they represent. If you are worried that a referendum would mean that teachers

would have to take less pay because people will not vote, people think that those who earn more money than them earn too much, inherent in your question is the acceptance in your mind that the teachers' salaries would be higher than the majority of their constituents and I think that is interesting in and of itself.

What I find very interesting in all of this, I think the referendum idea has pretty well being at the public hearings responded to in the negative by not everybody but most people who commented on that option and that was feedback that we were seeking, but interestingly enough about a month before the discussion paper came out or several months before, the Manitoba Teachers' Society had done a survey and they had then held a press conference based upon the survey and made a great case of saying that 60 percent of the people that they surveyed would pay higher taxes for quality education, for improved quality of education and they brought that to me and said, you see, they are willing to have taxes go up to pay us more. I said, but your question said they were willing to pay more taxes for improved quality of education. Do they mean by improved quality of education increased wages for teachers? At that time the society felt very definitely that is what people meant.

So the referendum idea came up and I said, well, a referendum would give you a marvellous opportunity to get your raise, because if you believe as you told me a few weeks ago you believed absolutely that if we went to the people and asked them, would you be willing to pay more taxes for higher wages for teachers, you believe that that 60 percent indication for improved quality meant that you were quite willing to go to the people, but now that you find out it might actually happen, now suddenly it is not really a fair way to do it. I am not disagreeing with them on whether a referendum is fair or unfair, I was just thinking the flip-flop on the position was dramatic, instant and hilariously funny to those who were watching from the outside. The mad scramble to suddenly say, no, no, no, the survey, we did not really mean what we said, we did not really want you to go to the taxpayers because those were quotes that were being made to us. If you think we are not worth more money, why do you not go ask the taxpayers? When we said maybe we will, there was apoplexy taking place amongst the people who promoted that from the Teachers' Society.

So we backed off the idea of going to the people to ask their opinion pretty quickly, but at the same time so did

trustees and so did a large number of the populace. So the referendum idea, I come back again to the member to say, when he assumes that we are promoting any one of those proposals over another, or when he assumes that we are even promoting any of those proposals, he makes a wrong assumption. What we did was put out a discussion document, very clearly called discussion, said the system we have been told is broken by one of the stakeholders in it. We need to fix it. Here are five proposals. These are five alternative ways to resolve disputes when they occur. Do you like any of these models? If so, which one? If you do not like them, do you have any other models that you could offer to us or suggest to us? That was the context in which they were put down, and I think it needs to be emphasized quite strongly that that was the context. We did not go out and say, hey, let us have a referendum. We did, however, say could you please tell us what you think about referendum, because some are telling us that it works in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Kowalski: I think if the minister checks the Hansard tomorrow, I would like to know where she could find any indication that I presumed that there was one favoured proposition in that document over the other. I think there is a big leap there by the minister.

Secondly, the minister was talking about, in my question, surprise that in some jurisdictions teachers would make more money than the majority of people in their constituency. In parts of the city of Winnipeg, in certain wards, that would not be a surprise whatsoever. In many rural communities that would not be a surprise whatsoever.

I have looked at the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics breakdown of economic levels in different parts of the city of Winnipeg, in different parts of Manitoba, and the education levels quite often follow the levels of income. So, in some areas of the city, the number of people with below Grade 7 education are probably the same areas where the mean income is below the poverty line or close to it. So, no, I am not surprised, and I do not make any apologies about that assumption. Yes, that would happen.

One forum I had for teachers, talking about this document, a teacher talked about living in a rural community and being the highest paid person in that

community. But that person was also the most educated, was a professional, had gone to university for a number of years, and I do not think she should make any apologies for being the highest paid person in that community.

No, I think the premise that human nature indicates that anyone who makes more money than you is making too much money is correct and would cause any justified increases to a teachers' pay to be voted down by an electorate who do not make as much money.

* (1610)

Once again, my line of questioning started with: What is wrong with asking the question? As I said, everyone is defensive when they are asked to justify what they are already receiving. Public servants—right now public service, whether it be health care workers, police officers, teachers, I guess the public recognition of them has become in vogue to denigrate their service.

I will not once again quote from the Minister of Agriculture's Budget Debate where he discounted teachers, health care workers, police officers, by saying they do not create wealth; they are consumers of wealth. I think he is just echoing comments made by many people in certain sectors of society right now that would like to make it a shame to be a public servant. I am a public servant. I do not think that my contribution to society is any less than the miner, which I have been, to the construction worker, which I have been, to the factory worker, which I have been. I do not think that because I am a public sector employee and that my income comes from the public purse means that there should be any more disclosure than anybody who works in a factory, who works in a mine, who works anywhere else.

Public service is an honourable profession. I know that the critic here would like to ask some more questions, and I have to make a few phone calls, so I will end my comments at that point.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for his comments. I would just like to start off by saying, without checking Hansard I can assure him that he is correct in that he did not imply in his original question that I was favouring one alternative over the other. So if anything I said

contradicted that, I apologize because I know he did not say that. I do not have to check Hansard to know because I remember what he said.

I also want to indicate that his rationale against referenda is sound. The rationale that he presents in opposition to referenda as a final solution, in my opinion, is sound rationale, and rationale that has been provided by those who took a look at the alternatives and said, do not like this; do not like that; here is the flaw. Looking at the pros and cons and advantages and disadvantages, that was one disadvantage pointed out with referenda that I accept as being a sound rationale, so I appreciate his feedback on that.

I also want to stress, just in response to some of the things the member indicated, this issue is not about whether or not teachers should be fairly paid. I mean, they should be fairly paid. There is no disputing that and never has been any disputing that. The question is, how will the rate of pay be determined in the future?

I think some people either unconsciously or deliberately have been out there saying that the issue is something other than simply that. They are saying government is going to break contracts and roll back wages. That has been put in writing and circulated. Completely untrue, and nowhere is it referred to in the document. Nowhere. So those kinds of myths and dishonest statements falsely put out and consciously distributed have done immeasurable harm and perpetrated by people who claim that they care about teachers.

I found it interesting that giving the document cold to someone who had not read it and had not been subjected to the discrediting comments about it, people would read it and not be necessarily threatened. They might not like some of the questions, but they were not agitated. But those who had been told first, I am going to give you a document to read and when you get to this point, interpret it this way, became agitated before they even got to those paragraphs.

So I wish to stress that the issue is not about whether teachers should be fairly paid. They should be. The issue is about how the rate of pay shall be determined in the future and not about changing anything that people currently receive. That has never been said. Nowhere in the document are those statements made. Anybody who

tells you they are in there is telling you a lie. They may believe the lie, but it is a lie nonetheless.

So referendum was one way that has been used in other jurisdictions, apparently to the satisfaction of those jurisdictions. Here in Manitoba when we ask the question, is it workable, the member's response is a typical response, and that is what we needed to hear, how people feel about these issues. Thank you.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My questions are going to be related to the issue of the boundaries review process and the pending recommendations from the Norrie report.

Education is changing and has been over several years. I think there is a consensus that change must indeed occur. In several areas, I commend the department's work. I am concerned about the amount of supports that are available. I would like to see greater investment in public education. These are not huge surprises. I have seen school divisions go through many painful years of downsizing when needs have actually been increasing.

So it has been a very hard time for schools and children within those schools, and, on top of all of this, is Boundaries Revision. For most children, this has little to no impact. Imagine the amount of administrative headache in consolidating Winnipeg 1's policy manuals shrunk down to virtually intelligible text so that they could be put into two large binders, merged with Seven Oaks or with St. James. The idea of the negotiations required and the administrative headache is just immense.

Not only that, but you are looking at all kinds of other implications that involve a huge amount of time and effort that many people have to be convinced will actually improve students' education. I know that last year, when I asked a series of questions, my impression was that the minister was going to use reason, understood that at a time when school divisions virtually have no extra time and money to do something which is basically administrative, that she would give it due consideration.

Up front I would like to say that I, as one, appreciate the second round of hearings. People did have an opportunity to resubmit, and I believe there were over 600 submissions. Now we are looking at coming to a conclusion. Can the minister tell us as to the status of that report or those recommendations?

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate the point the member is making because those are the kinds of considerations that have been put forward to us since the second round, since they came back in December with the second and final report. Those kinds of comments are ones now that have been sent in to the department. I do believe that we have now received about all that we are going to receive in terms of information on boundaries. There was a great outpouring of correspondence that came about after Christmas as people took a look at the final report and wanted to make comment.

* (1620)

So we still do not have a final decision. I still am expecting that we will have one this spring that we can announce to the government MLAs in the opposition, and I apologize that I do not have a specific date that I can provide. We have been going through all of the correspondence and examining all of the points that are raised and looking at cost versus savings and trying to get a handle on all of those things. At the same time, school divisions are writing to tell us of co-operative ventures they are embarking upon with each other, and I find that very encouraging.

What I can tell you is this. We have a couple of school divisions that have indicated they would like to amalgamate, and they are ready to go. We have some divisions that are pondering the pros and cons for themselves of a marriage of sorts. We have others that have said that they really do not wish to amalgamate, period, and so that is the range we are looking at. It will be a difficult decision. MLAs have been talking to their constituents, and I know the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) has relayed to me concerns that her own constituents have had, particularly in the Brooklands area and places like that. All of those concerns are being looked at seriously.

Ms. Mihychuk: One of the things that the Norrie commission really did not spend a whole lot of time on was the cost analysis, and since that time, I am aware that the government has received some submissions.

Will the minister tell us what cost analysis studies they have commissioned, and which ones they have received voluntarily; for instance, the St. James one, and I know that they have received others. Perhaps you could share that with us.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member references the St. James-Assiniboia analysis, and, indeed, we have had that one. MASBO, which the member will know from her days as a school board chair, but for those who do not know is the Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, did some figures for us. They took some examples around the province and did a scenario of what they anticipated might happen in those particular jurisdictions if amalgamation occurred. They chose one in the city, one in rural Manitoba, one of the new larger configurations. Some school divisions are still having, or have had, public meetings to gather more views, and we are still occasionally hearing from some of those as they come up.

We are doing our own internal looking at the finances, and basically what we are doing is analysing those submissions that are being given to us by other jurisdictions, just to go through with people who understand finances their analysis to examine how they came to their conclusions and to look at any other facets of those that we feel we need to or to seek out verification of some of the figures contained in them. That is an ongoing process. We are still doing that. It is one of the reasons we have not quite concluded this study because MLAs will come in from the field and say things like, you know, my constituents say this and this about costs, and then we will have our own financial peoples go through and check those out to see what integrities surround them, and then add that into the big mix.

Internally, as I say, we are doing our own studies of the finances. External, we have had the two that I have just mentioned, MASBO and St. James, plus the Norrie report had itself some financial studies contained within it that we are also looking at. Then we will receive from time to time correspondence from people who—they are not real studies in the true sense of the word, but where they will make commentary. Well, Ingrid Zacharias, you remember or you may be aware of, people like that who have come forward to indicate that they believe this and this and this will happen with money. So we are looking at all of those, too. We are making sure everybody gets their case looked at, and we may not agree with all of the cases, but we are certainly looking at them.

Ms. Mihychuk: The minister mentioned the St. James School Division's report and MASBO's report but did not mention the Nicholl report. Was that a report

commissioned by the department, by the Norrie commission?

Mrs. McIntosh: Dr. Nicholl was commissioned by Norrie. Norrie commissioned three: Dr. Glen Nicholl did a study on funding and what the funding formula would look like or could look like; Dr. Tim Ball was the other one, and he did finances from an urban perspective, and then Dr. Rounds, who did financial commentary on rural issues. Those three people, Dr. Richard Rounds, Dr. Glenn Nicholl and Dr. Tim Ball, all have expertise in these types of areas.

Those were part of the Norrie commission report itself.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister share with us now the total cost of the Norrie commission? She did give us a report last year. I appreciate it. There was considerable information. Now there has been a second phase, so we would like an update.

Mrs. McIntosh: I could tell you the ballpark figure is about—we will give you more than the ballpark—almost \$700,000, just under \$700,000.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister share with us her perspective of the St. James-Assiniboia cost analysis? Would you consider that to be an accurate reflection of the cost of amalgamation? If I recall, they looked at salary settlements that were midrange and estimated that overall expenditures there would cost \$7 million dollars approximately to amalgamate St. James-Assiniboia—and Fort Garry, is it? What is the perspective of the department on that report?

Mrs. McIntosh: I first of all would like to thank the member for the question. She and I both have commonality of interest here in that we both represent either in part or in whole the St. James School Division. I felt that the report that was given us was typical of the thoroughness and the research capabilities that St. James shows. They do this type of thing extremely well.

* (1630)

Part of the problem we are having as we go through and study all of these reports is, depending upon the

assumptions made, one could predict more or less different outcomes, and this is one thing that is making our study of these issues so time consuming.

St. James School Division has made some assumptions in the preparation of their research. Of course, you have to because you do not have a known thing against which you can measure; you have to make sort of your best guesstimate as to what you anticipate decisions will be. MASBO did the same thing, as did some of the other people like Rounds, et cetera, who made reports to us.

I think the St. James board, if they are assuming that it will be similar kinds of trustees with similar goals, making similar kinds of decisions to what they are currently making, that those are likely outcomes. If those assumptions hold, then indeed costs could rise if there is no action taken by a new board or by government or by whomever to direct the outcomes to be different than those assumed.

So will new boards always allow costs to rise to mid or high range? Hard to know. Will all programs that are currently in existence remain? Hard to know. [interjection] Well, the member indicates probably, and I think based upon observation in some areas that is a correct statement to make. I think they have identified the kinds of questions that need to be asked, and at this point, I do not want to pre-empt future announcements we might be making, so I am finding the question a difficult one to answer. I think they have done an excellent job on their analysis. If their assumptions are correct, then they have certainly done their figuring in a way that would show those results. If the assumptions are altered by luck or by conscious decision, then the results could change.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, can the minister assure us that whatever changes there are to boundaries will have no additional costs incurred with that report?

Mrs. McIntosh: Again, it is a difficult question for me to answer because we have not yet made a final decision as to what we are going to do with the report. I always, over time, when asked a question like that, respond with, I can never guarantee anything, and that is I think a truism that we accept.

You think you can guarantee things, just like Chretien thought he could guarantee to get rid of the GST; and he

did not. I guess I could say this, we embarked upon this study—and this may be the way that I can answer accurately without making promises. I cannot predict a speculative, hypothetical thing. When we went in to do the boundaries review, we did it for several reasons: one, it was a timely thing to do; two, there was predisposition in the populous to see such a review done.

We also were looking for two things: one, would there be any way that we could improve service and quality by amalgamation; and, two, would there be any way that we could make everything more cost-effective, either incur some cost savings or prevent the future escalation of costs? Those were questions that we take very seriously.

If, at the end of all our deliberations, our lengthy deliberations and studies on this topic, we conclude that quality or costs suffer, we are not bound to change for the sake of change. We are not afraid of changes is quite obvious I am sure. We can face change bravely and boldly if we think it is needed, but change for the sake of change has never been our style.

One thing that I am encouraged to see, as I indicated earlier, is this renewed interest in co-operation that boards are showing. Many boards were already showing tremendous co-operation with each other, but they are going at it with a vengeance right now. I said to a reporter, I do not know how much they have saved us already by this. Norrie has probably already paid for himself by virtue of this vigour with which people are examining ways they can work together and save costs. In fact, the chairman's division, I was apprised of—the chairman may be interested in knowing—many of the things going on in his division by his board with neighbouring divisions on cost sharing, joint purchasing and so on. We will see where that leads us, and we will continue on with our deliberations. We will endeavour to be as wise as we can be and to not delay too much more, although we do not really feel that this is one that we should be rushing at if there is still more information coming in. It has pretty well dwindled off now though.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Minister, we know that the Norrie commission's recommendations would reduce the number of school divisions fairly dramatically and logic brings, too, fewer trustees. Ultimately we would have more citizens represented by fewer trustees, and that is a concern to many.

Is there any indication, and I would like to suggest that we have seen other models where we have the amalgamation, that in fact you have fewer representatives that are locally elected and accountable through open elections every three years for the most part but that their stipends or their salaries will be related to the size of their constituency? So many of the cost analyses, or let us say some of the savings assumed, are based on fewer trustees, therefore less money for these trustees.

I would just argue, or I guess ask the minister's opinion, when we look at larger boards like Toronto, like Winnipeg No. 1, you see fairly larger salaries. The concern is that you have less representation and much higher paid politicians then. Is that what the citizens of Manitoba want?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am taking that as a comment to put into our bag of things to consider. I accept it as such and know what the member says to be true because I recall amalgamations where that very thing did happen. So I thank her for that comment, and we will consider it.

* (1640)

Ms. Mihychuk: I would also ask the minister to look at other jurisdictions that did go through this. I know that other provinces who have not actually moved on it have done cost analysis. When we are looking at salary levels it seems to me that the record has shown that we actually tend to settle at the higher level, and that is a serious concern. Perhaps not for part of my constituency which is in Winnipeg No. 1, but for other school divisions that would have to then meet those levels will have a significant impact on costs.

I appreciate you are still under consideration and hope those comments also will be taken with serious consideration when they make the decisions.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for that. We have indeed been examining the situation in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Alberta where amalgamations or changes have occurred, and that has been part of our study here internally as well.

Her point is well taken. I think examining how it has worked in other jurisdictions is of assistance in the decision-making process.

Ms. Mihychuk: I thank the minister and agree with her that we must not rush into it. The previous Minister of Education seemed to be a little bit more adamant on this subject than this minister, and I am glad that we are having a little bit of time for a second thought. But it does create still a little bit of concern out there. I know school divisions are getting employees transferring, for instance, into other parts of the school division in anticipation. Although I do not want to suggest she should rush into anything, because I do not want anything rash to be done—that due consideration be given to school divisions which are still being impacted by the Norrie commission, and I thank the minister for her consideration.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am aware of the concern that boards experience as they wait. It is difficult to wait, and some boards have indeed been holding off making certain decisions because they are not certain if there is going to be amalgamation proceeding or not. We are conscious of that sensitivity and, as I indicate, we hope to be coming forward this spring with a decision that will enable them to be able to start making decisions again and trying to walk that fine line between taking enough time to make sure we have done what we need to do without holding the whole system up with the sword of Damocles hanging over its head forever. So, again, your concern for the time lines is well put and accepted.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I wanted to come back to the Enhancing Accountability document. The minister had been talking earlier today about the—and emphasizing her understanding that there is no intent in this document to roll back, as I understand her to say it, to roll back the existing wages of existing teachers. That was the understanding that she left with me.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not know if I phrased it that way, but that was the intent, yes. We are not planning to roll back; we are not planning to open contracts. There is something that went around saying that the government of Manitoba intends to break contracts and roll teachers' wages back and that is just patently false.

Ms. Friesen: One of the concerns that has been expressed has been about the future of the profession and the proposal that people believe is in this document for a lower starting salary for teachers. Can the minister

comment on that? How does she interpret this document and this discussion being framed by the government?

Mrs. McIntosh: Just before we begin that, would the member be good enough to read the quote she is referring to into the record so we know what it is we are discussing?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, that is what I am looking for at the moment, but what I was conveying to the member is something that has been discussed I think by many people, raised by many people at the hearings, is the comparison of starting salaries for a variety of professions and, by implication, the suggestion that starting salaries for teachers could be/should be lower. So I am looking for the minister's response to that, in a sense. What did she intend in this document to suggest for discussion?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: I, Mr. Chairman, indicate that is why I need the quote, because I know those rumours are floating around and they need to be based on something. I am happy to give my position on it, but I think first of all we need to know what the quote was that sparked the rumour so that it can be noted. I find it interesting whenever I ask people to tell me where in the document they find this, they usually do have a tough time finding it.

I think there is a quote in there that makes reference to an example, that if we took what the MTS advocates is the starting salary and actually had it be the starting salary, there would be a lot more money in Manitoba. If the member is having difficulty, I think I could point out to her the one that is under controversy.

On page 20, and I believe this is the quote because I have heard people reference this and from this quote they have extrapolated and begun the rumour that people then took as fact and responded to. In fact, I have received many letters from people who said how dare you say that my salary as a beginning teacher will be rolled back to \$22,000. For the life of me, I could not find that anywhere in the document. Then it was pointed out that it was from this quote that they extrapolated that assumption, restated it as fact and then scared the daylight out of all new teachers. It says, the different

salary maximums of the various classification levels have a significant financial effect on the delivery of educational services in Manitoba. For example, if the maximum salaries for teachers was the maximum of class for a salary range, overall expenditures on teachers' salaries in Manitoba would decrease significantly. There is that quote.

Then there was another that said that another classification—that is the next page—another classification-related issue that would appear to need to be examined is that of the level of pay for new graduates. If the salary maximum for existing class when levels were used, the starting salary of new teachers would better reflect hiring rates for other professionals, et cetera.

I quote those two comments to indicate that I have been informed that those were the comments that sparked the rumours the member is referring to. Ironically enough, for many years I have heard repeatedly from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, teachers start at \$22,000 a year; that is Step 1, Class I. When the public is told how poorly teachers are paid, that figure is always widely quoted: teachers start at \$22,000 which is Step 1, Class I. That is what a lot of people out there really believed. Over the years that message has gone out that that is what teachers start at and teachers are very poorly paid. I think the union did a very good job promoting that as what the public should be led to believe is actually what teachers were making. Now, Step 1, Class I is \$22,000. The difference between saying that is what teachers start at and that is what the salary level is, is simply this: There are very few, if any, Step 1, Class I teachers teaching in the public school system in Manitoba. I doubt that there are any at this point. There may be a few in remote locations.

Because a Bachelor of Education is now required, teachers start at Step 1, Class IV which is \$32,000. This comment which perhaps needed clarification around it should have had some words inserted in it to make its meaning more clear, because it says—and here are the words that should have been in—if, in fact, teachers did start at Class I as the MTS proposes, the starting salary of new teachers would better reflect hiring rates for other professionals. The rest of the sentence stands as is. But nobody asked for clarification on it because the document was treated with suspicion, and people were prepared to read the worst into it immediately without asking for

clarification. The opposition was only too happy to run with that and promote it, as well, without asking for clarification, which I am pleased has finally happened.

The other statement, as indicated, is the corollary of the other. If Steps 1, 2 and 3 are no longer used in the public system, then maybe everything should be renumbered. That would not necessarily change the amounts here, but, when people talk about the maximum teachers—and you will hear it said very frequently that teachers earn \$51,000 or whatever, which is their average rate, and the implication is left that there are no teachers earning \$60,000 or \$70,000. Of course, we know that is not true. If the range was the range that is currently assumed to be the range by the public, then we would not be spending so much money on teacher's salary. Also, the other thing to consider when all of these examples are given is that they are examples of things that could happen.

* (1650)

If you are talking about costs, I could say just as easily as this, some other figure, plug in some other figure, plug in some other class, plug in some other step, and the document might have been more easily understood if there were a series of examples rather than just one. If there had been a series of examples saying the statement that is here, if the maximum salary was the maximum for Class 4, expenditures on teachers' salaries would decrease significantly. If the maximum was the maximum of Class 7, and all teachers were able to rise to it, overall expenditures would increase. I mean, we could have put several examples in this document. They are not here. I do not know if that explanation gives you any clarification around these examples, which are examples that are put in there simply as examples. There could be others. They are also in there to reflect what are generally used as examples in the field by people who say teachers have to start at \$22,000, and they never rise above \$54,000. That is not true, but that is what people generally thought because the minimum of Class I was used and the maximum of Class 4 was used traditionally when people talk about teachers' salaries, and they are not. If those were the true figures, there would be a lot more money in the system.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, well, I think the assumptions that people drew from the examples that were given was that the government was looking at the

prospect of a classification system which began with graduates at \$22,000, which is what it says on page 21. If the salary minimum of existing Class I levels, i.e., \$22,000, were used, the starting salary of new teachers would better reflect hiring rates for other professionals, would allow for more years before the salary maximum is reached.

That is what the government is in this example suggesting be considered for new graduates. Then what people had on the previous page was a discussion of maximum. The existing Class 4 salary range would be the proposed or prospectively proposed maximum salary for teachers. So it seemed to me that that was the framework that the government was establishing and that people drew from that, it seems to me, reasonably logical conclusions that that was a salary framework that the government was looking for. They were looking in this document for a way to reduce the overall allocation of money within the education system that would go to teachers' salaries, and this was one way of doing it that they were suggesting. Again, I ask the minister, is it not the case that in this document the pay for new graduates is being suggested as \$22,000, and is that not a change from what would now exist, because the Class I salary now is not for graduates but is for the old system of certificates? So is it unreasonable for people to have drawn that assumption from this kind of a framework?

Mrs. McIntosh: If someone were reading the document literally, yes, it would be very unreasonable to draw that assumption, because if you read it literally and you read what it actually said, rather than make an assumption as to what it said, you would not draw the conclusion the member has just done when she said as she did, she said that on page 20, we were suggesting that \$22,000 should be the starting salary. Now, could you please tell me where we are suggesting that, because what I see in reading this is an example. I do not see a suggestion, I see an example.

When it says, another classification-related issue that would appear to need to be examined is that of the level of pay for new graduates, if the salary minimum of existing Class I levels were used, and that is an example and then there is a statement, the starting salary of new teachers would better reflect hiring rates for other professionals, and that is true, and I do not see in there the government of Manitoba is suggesting that teachers'

salaries begin at \$22,000. I do not see that phraseology in there, so you ask me, is it unreasonable for them to extrapolate that? It would be unreasonable if they read it literally the way it is written and interpret it word for word as written, yes, that would be unreasonable. If they read it through a cloud of suspicion and negative assumptions, then that would be probably expected.

Now, I guess the word "if" to me is usually followed by, for example—if, for example—and I come back to the fact that traditionally over time we have always been told that the salary minimum for teachers is Class I, so when you talk about it and they say, if indeed the salary level that is always quoted as being the real level were actually the level that were used, there would be a very different reflection, and a lot more money in the system.

It does not say, if the salary of Class I was used, the starting salaries had better reflect, therefore the government is suggesting that we do that. It does not say therefore this is a proposal that we are putting forward, as we did in the first part of the document we put forward five proposals. Nothing else in the document—and I will give you this answer that might help clarify it—the first five proposals are proposals of alternatives that people are free to consider and make comment on, modification on. They are alternatives that can be considered, the government is not married to any one of them, is completely prepared to examine other ideas for the dispute resolution mechanism. The rest of the document has no proposals. I believe I have said this before. There are questions, there are examples, there are complaints, questions and complaints that are being put down almost verbatim the way we have been hearing them over the years from trustees, and examples that are examples intended to have people see a scenario other than the one that exists so they can have something in mind to compare the current situation with. So there are no preconceived notions. There is no hidden agenda. There is no proposal. There is no suggestion. There are simply questions, complaints and examples.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, in effect, what the minister is saying on page 21 is that this fourth paragraph should have ended with a question mark. The government would like you to consider the level of pay for new graduates. Should the salary minimum of existing Class I levels better reflect hiring rates for other professionals?—question mark. Should the existing Class

I levels of \$22,000 currently used for certificate teachers be now applied to new graduates?—question mark. Should we be creating a system to allow for more years before the salary maximum is reached?—question mark. Is that what the government is essentially saying when these should all have been questions?

*(1700)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we were hoping that by putting down the complaints and the comments that trustees have had over the years, along with examples, and questions that we had been asked, people would be able to evolve their own questions, their own examples, their own thinking, their own ideas. If they could look at an example and say, oh, that example makes me think of a question, and here are several questions or other examples that I can compare this to. This is a discussion document. It is intended to be a springboard for discussion to spark thinking and to encourage dialogue. The member can rewrite it any way she wants, but I would suggest that I think that the statement there, if read correctly, on page 21, says accurately, displays accurately the current situation versus a contrasting situation, and, from that then, the reader can also develop other comparisons.

The reader can say, okay, if I start with a salary minimum of existing Class I, then there would be a better reflection of other professionals. If I go to Step 2, Class I, what would happen? If I go to Step 3, if I go to Class II, what would happen? The reader then can go through the other examples that in many cases automatically spring to mind when the example is given. In the document on page 24, the member should read a very, very important point, which is a positive point which received very little prominence, but I think it is a critical point, where it says: A major purpose of this paper is to initiate open discussion regarding these issues.

I think that is a very important point. There is another very important point contained in that same paragraph. Alternative suggestions are invited. That is to the alternative proposals, the first five put out for the dispute resolution. Another important line on that page is: This process of review, discussion and feedback should allow for the development of a teacher collective bargaining process in Manitoba that meets the legitimate interests of all parties to the process.

I think that is very important. I had indicated the other day that I wondered if we could have phrased these issues in any way that would have made them more acceptable. I pondered aloud that I think no matter how we had phrased these issues, the reaction would have been very much like we received and it would only be a question of degree. I think all of those who are decision makers surrounding this area are beginning to believe that no matter how the issues were portrayed, there would be objection and there would be anger, because taboo topics have been brought out of the closet and put on the table to be examined. We are asking for creative and critical thought. These are sacred cows that have never been allowed to have that kind of creative, critical thought in public since the 1950s.

I find that the first time you say you are going to look at something that hitherto has not been allowed to be looked at, there is panic as people adjust. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) earlier asked if by indicating what teachers made we should not be surprised that that would be upsetting to teachers to have their salaries made public. Indeed, that was not surprising, because we do understand. I indicated to him at that time that we do understand the first time things are made public that it is a new experience in many cases, it is a bit nerve-racking, you are suddenly under scrutiny, but that it need not be a fearsome thing, it need not be something of which you should be afraid.

We have all around this table had an independent commission decide our salaries, and that was a subject of much debate. Members around this table had their allowances and all the things they do printed in the newspaper for all to see and for all to discuss. Editorials made comments about how we are paid and whether it was being done correctly or incorrectly or whether it was too much or not enough, all of those things.

I would imagine that if some of you were going through that for the first time, when that commission was doing its work, that it would have been upsetting. Those of us who have sat around school board tables for over a decade had to discuss and debate and vote every year in public on our salaries and then have people scream and yell at you because you are getting paid, because a lot of people thought the first time I was on a school board that trustees were volunteers. In fact, I did too. It was just great getting that first pay cheque. I did not realize until

halfway through the campaign that you got paid, and I was pleased about that, because I felt that there should be a honorarium attached to that work. So I was pleased, but probably never would have introduced it as a topic had there not been an honorarium already there, and that is the nature of the self-consciousness when you suddenly see yourself as the person being discussed. I would encourage people to step back and pretend it is not them. I have found that I have been able to.

Throughout my years on the school board here, I have had no say on the salary because we turned it over to the public to decide, but I would sit at the school board and say, okay, if this were not me, what do I think this position is worth? What is the position of chairman of a school board worth? What would I be willing to pay as a taxpayer for any individual to fill this role? What do I think needs to be paid to make sure that we can get people doing it, and where is the fine line between just enough and not too much? I would then pretend it would be another person, and it made it so much easier to make the decision.

Teachers, of course, cannot make decisions about their own salaries. Unfortunately, boards say, neither can they. When I was getting questioned earlier about why there was no money for education, I have to indicate that money for education is up by about \$100 million from 1988, when we first took office. Now, I grant you, the last year it was down and the year before that it was a freezing and the year before that it was down, but in the years before that it was high enough that over those years it is about \$100 million more than it was when we took office. That is not a decrease, that is an increase overall, but costs have escalated and, unfortunately, the highest costs escalated are the salaries.

Even though teachers will say, yes, but this year we are finally accepting freezes, which boards have been trying to get for 11 years, it does not take into account the vast number of teachers who still get annual increments. They get the automatic annual raise, and they get it automatically. Find me someone who has not received it. It is supposed to be called a merit increment, but it is given automatically, and that has led to increased salary costs. Those are just real things. There is nothing personal in any of this. Those are just real facts with which the system has to cope, and I think they are coping very well, those boards.

* (1710)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The minister's time has elapsed.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, my question some time ago dealt with an attempt to assist the minister to make clear to the general public what it was she had intended in this document on page 21 by suggesting that if the salary minimum of the existing Class I levels were used, the starting salary of new graduate teachers would be \$22,000. The minister said that this was for discussion, and I attempted to put this in the interrogative so that it would more clearly establish the kind of questions the minister had wanted to raise.

The minister essentially argued, in response, that people must evolve their own questions, I think—I am reading from my notes—and that they would evolve their own examples and, yes, there were other examples that could have been given, but people could develop those from their own experience, I guess. So the rest of the minister's discussion to me, Mr. Chairman, did not seem relevant, and I thought that I had indeed attempted to assist the minister to put those questions that perhaps the framers of this document, the authors of this document, had perhaps not put as clearly as the minister would have liked them to have put or to have offered as many examples.

I wanted to ask the minister about quality, two sections to this argument, Enhancing Accountability: Ensuring Quality. Could the minister reflect for us on what it is in this document that she had hoped to get across about quality and about the ensuring of quality?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I will come at it from the member's perspective initially in that the official opposition feels very, very strongly that in order to make education better you have to put more money into it. That is a basic premise of theirs: if you put more money in, it will be better.

We have not always agreed with that. We do not necessarily believe that throwing money at a system will automatically improve the system by virtue of the money being thrown. However, if we take the member's premise that putting more money into a system makes it better, then trustees are looking at ways to make the money they

have got to go further, which is the extension of either having more money or better use of the money you have.

Trustees claim that they are having a difficult time containing the escalation of costs, and that as costs continue to escalate they have fewer and fewer dollars left to do things, such as connect to the Internet or programming initiatives. One of the things they say that they cannot contain, or the only thing they say they really cannot contain, as their biggest cost item, is the continued escalation of teachers' salaries. That is the basis behind them feeling that they either need more money or more control over the money that they do have.

They asked if we could put in a system that would ensure that they can have some control in the final decision as to what teachers' salaries will be, and that they not have it taken away from them completely in an arbitration setting, and that they not have to be bound by a precedent set in another division which may bear no application to them. They say that if they could get a handle on the escalating cost, then they would not have to do as they have indicated they will have to do otherwise, which would be to lay off hundreds of teachers.

I think in terms of ensuring quality, the member and I would probably agree that laying off hundreds of teachers does not ensure quality. Enabling trustees to get a handle on their escalating costs so that they can avoid massive layoffs would probably ensure quality by having more capable professionals retained in the schools rather than someplace else. We also take a look at ensuring that the public system is accountable, and accountability is extremely important to us. We feel that trustees want the same accountability that MLAs have in that they want to be able to be directly accountable for their decisions, one of which, of course, is setting the budget and dispensing the money that they collect from taxpayers. Taxpayers demanding accountability from trustees have said, we want to see a higher percentage of the money that you take from us go to programming, go to equipment, go to those kinds of things rather than escalating cost attributed to salary. So trustees have asked for that accountability as a way of ensuring the public of quality and accountability.

We also want to have some questions asked and answered, if possible, by people who work in the field or who are associated with the field or who pay for the field,

about performance evaluation, about what you get for the money you pay. We know right now and we talked yesterday about the physical education department head who gets a degree in business accounting to run the summer store at the lake. Should that department head get a bump up in his classification and a raise in salary because he got that business accounting degree?

I am asking the question; I am not giving an answer. It is a question that has been asked innumerable times, more times than I could ever begin to count for years and years and years. It is a question that I know teachers have heard over and over. I know trustees talk about it endlessly, ad nauseam, in fact, and those kinds of questions need to be examined in terms of quality.

Certainly, any education you get is going to improve the quality of your teaching, but the word "sufficient" put in the question is, I think, important. Is there sufficient benefit to justify taking more money to give to that one teacher who has a degree that is not directly applicable to education but which will have some minimal benefit? Is there sufficient benefit to do that for a whole host of people if it means that you cannot afford to hire five or six more teachers that you would like to have to ensure the quality in terms of class size, in terms of being able to mix and match personalities in the school. Where you have a school that has a variety of people at various grade levels, it is easier for the student to be matched with a person where there is good personal interaction. If there are not enough teachers available, if the board cannot afford to hire as many because they are paying a few people a lot, so they cannot hire others, then opportunities for the student become more limited.

So we ask that question. It may be that the answer to that question is yes, there is sufficient benefit in a phys ed teacher having a business accounting degree to warrant putting him into another classification. I think the question is a legitimate one that has been floating around for years, and I do not know why anybody would be nervous about sitting down to discuss it. I think it is a good point for discussion, and I think all of those who care about education and its relevancy to the classroom should be eager to enter into discussions on topics such as these because they get right to the heart of what happens in a school.

* (1720)

Teachers, as I indicated earlier, get an automatic increment for a number of years in their schools until they get into a new classification, and then they begin the process again. Then the question is asked, should teachers have to demonstrate that they are worthy of that increase? Should they have to have a performance evaluation before they get a merit increment, or should it just be automatically given because they have been there another year?

I was interested very much that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has very strong feelings. As a member of the NDP official opposition, he put on the record very clearly the other day that experience could mean one more year of entrenching bad habits, and one more year of being in a job does not necessarily make you better in the job. It could make you far worse because you have built bad habits that you could have a harder and harder time undoing. The NDP opposition put that on the record as their official position the other day very strongly and very clearly, so I know that they appreciate this question being in here for discussion. We just put it out for discussion; he came to a conclusion and stated it in Hansard. We just wanted to discuss it, but it is good to know how the NDP feels about that point. We wish we knew how more people felt about it.

Ms. Friesen: A number of things I would like to pursue with the minister there. One, of course, is her recognition that the layoff of 600 teaching positions under this government, indeed, has affected the quality of education. A second thing that concerns me is the minister's belief that trustees are not accountable. That one I find very puzzling. Does the minister not believe that trustees are accountable at election time and at meetings with their constituents for the way in which they spend the money, the way in which they make decisions? Most board meetings that I know of are quite public meetings and the way in which they are accountable for decisions.

The third element, I think, of her response dealt with an area that we have been over before, and that is the issue of sufficient—the word "sufficient" in the proposal or the suggestion or the area for discussion, whatever it is the minister wants to call it—for additional education as an element of improving the quality teaching. The minister made reference to a whole host of people who are in this position who have asked this question before; it has been an age-old question, she said. If that is the case, I am a

little puzzled as to why there was not more evidence, not more discussion in the paper about the number of teachers in Manitoba who have in fact taken additional degrees which were or may not be relevant to the kind of job that they are expected to do within the classroom, within the school or within the school system.

The example the minister gives, and she is very careful to use one from another jurisdiction, and it is a single example of the phys ed department head with Business Administration. Although we had the discussion yesterday where it seemed to me that an entrepreneurial division, an entrepreneurial principal, would find some very significant ways in which to use that unusual combination of education. Nevertheless, let us let it stand as an example of what the minister is trying to argue.

So as an element of quality, I want to pursue that particular angle since it has given much discomfort and much concern to many of the people who presented to the commission. I think there are two elements that I want to pursue there. One is, why is there not more evidence of how this is happening in Manitoba? How many people are there across Manitoba who have degrees which are not considered or could not—let us say, put it at this broad-as-possible perspective—be considered relative to the job they are doing in the classroom and yet are receiving additional pay for that? I think that is one element of it.

I think the second element, when the minister puts emphasis upon the word “sufficient,” really what we are doing here, what she is doing here, is saying that this is a judgment call, and she has asked for discussion on that judgment call. If I could put the question to her: Who does she believe should be making that determination of sufficient, and is she suggesting, is she in a sense saying that there ought to be a system, or one thing that we should consider is that before teachers embark upon a new course of study that they obtain a recommendation or an assurance from their school division that this is a course of study which will benefit them in the classroom?

So it is a question, really, of both process and of who determines this, and on what kind of broad basis was the minister laying this out as a major cause for concern in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before I recognize the minister, I would just like to say we have about two and a half to three minutes left.

Mrs. McIntosh: I will try to make my answer considerably shorter than some of my earlier ones.

I will just indicate—she asked, does the minister not believe trustees are accountable?—they are held accountable at election time, and that is my entire point. No, trustees are not able to be accountable for certain aspects of their job. That is the whole point; that is the entire point of this discussion paper. Legally, in law, in reality, in every way, trustees are not able to be accountable in certain aspects of the role they are obliged by law to fulfill. It is a paradox and it needs to be addressed.

If they cannot be accountable for the biggest budgetary item they have and yet are being accountable for that very budget item, that seems to be directly contradictory. You said sufficient as a judgment call—I agree with you. You asked, who should exercise the judgment as to what is sufficient? I believe the school trustees should and, again, that has backed the whole point of this paper. It is what it is all about. Is there sufficient benefit derived from the current way of compensating teachers? Who should be accountable for that?—Trustees. Who is finding it impossible to be accountable for that? Under the current laws that bind them, school trustees. I believe school trustees should be the ones to decide what is sufficient benefit for services rendered for wages paid, and yet in many instances, they are not allowed by law imposed by the province upon them to decide or to use the judgment they were elected to use to decide what is sufficient benefit to get for services rendered for wages paid.

You have asked why there are not more examples or evidence of teachers who have relevant or irrelevant degrees. I come back to why are there not more examples on the—if we did this and if we did that kind of things. This maybe does not have enough examples in it but it was not intended to be a full discourse with all worldly examples included. It was intended to be a springboard for discussion and that is told in the documents. It is a springboard for discussion. The examples are held to a minimum perhaps to the distress of those who read too much into the few examples that are in there, but it was

not intended to be a thousand page document. It was intended to be as brief as possible.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The minister will have roughly seven minutes to complete her answer when we return tomorrow.

The time being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. We are on resolution item 1.(b)(1), and the item before the committee is the motion of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): I too would like to put a few remarks on the record with regard to this motion by the honourable member for Kildonan suggesting to this House that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has been less than kind in terms of the home care people and the clients that are out there, in the best interests of providing the service to them.

Mr. Chairperson, I represent a constituency in Sturgeon Creek that has one of the highest populations of seniors in the entire province. It really troubles me to see what the honourable member and his colleagues are trying to impose on the public and the society in terms of Manitoba when we talk about health care. The issues that we are facing today in terms of the home care issue is not an issue of privatization or cutting salaries as the honourable members across the way would like us to believe and what they would like to communicate to the media, which seems to be prevalent when you look in the media today, that those are the issues.

I think really it is a philosophical difference that we will always have between the official opposition and this government. It is one of competition versus monopolies. I think the monopoly that is in place today has failed. The example that it has failed is because the people who are there within the monopoly to provide the service to these vulnerable clients, many of them that live in Sturgeon Creek, that service has been withdrawn by this monopoly. That really concerns me, and I think what we have to do as a government—and we have all been elected

to do this—is to provide the service to those people whom we are elected to represent. That is why I stand here in this Legislature today to do that very thing.

But it seems that there are some mixed messages in terms of the honourable members across the way, because I do not really believe they are speaking from their hearts when they talk in reference to those people whom they say they are representing, as to the clients who are in need of this particular service. I do not really believe that is their utmost purpose, and when they stand in the House and speak about those people, they speak about other people, people who are heading up the monopoly and would like to use these clients that are in need of this service and hold them in less desirable situations than they should be.

What we look at here, Mr. Chairperson, is in the constituency of Sturgeon Creek. I dare say that there are a large number of those people who live in Sturgeon Creek who are affected by this. But I have had the experience over the last week or 10 days since the strike of April 16 when these people, in their wisdom, withdrew the services to those vulnerable people, went on strike on the 16th of April. The government put in place an alternative opportunity to provide the service to those people and that has been working. It has been working extremely well, and I commend the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and this government for the effort and the initiative that they have taken and the responsible care that they are providing to all of these vulnerable people who are less able to look after themselves.

I think it has to be put on the record that it is the Manitoba Government Employees' Union or the association that voted not to strike—57 percent of those people voted not to strike—because it was only 30 percent or something to that effect, 40 percent, that actually voted and there was an 80 percent vote that was given. They said that 80 percent of the people who voted, but there were only 37 percent or 57 percent of those people who did not vote. I think that is something, that they are representing the minority over there in terms of this issue. To me, I am representing the people of Sturgeon Creek, a high population of seniors and a growing number of people who are going to want to have that service in the years to come.

* (1440)

I think that what we are doing as a government, we have to expand on the home care service that is available and improve on the system that is there. If we continue to do what we have been doing over the last number of years, the home care system is going to be in absolute chaos because of the numbers that we are going to be dealing with, and when you consider what we have done here in the last eight years that we have been in government in putting from \$38 million, we have increased that home care budget to \$91 million. But yet the number of clients that that amount of money is serving and providing service for, the number of clients has not increased. I think that, again, is a message that the public is not maybe aware of, that we have to try to find better ways to do this.

You know, the honourable members talk about the matter of privatization. This is interesting, that the privatization that they talk about, they do not take into consideration that we had people who were in private business before, and that is the Victorian Order of Nurses, the home intravenous therapy program. The department has funded St. Boniface General Hospital for the co-ordination and delivery of the home intravenous therapy program with the VON, and they were the successful bidders.

The Central Health Services is another that have been given that private opportunity to invest and to work in the Home Care program. Ten Ten Sinclair, the department has a contract with Ten Ten Sinclair Inc., which is a private nonprofit agency to co-ordinate and provide personal care service to 60 residents of the four Fokus housing units and the two cluster housing units in Winnipeg.

Community Therapy Services, the Luther Home, the H-I-D-E Qu'Appelle Project, and we have another one, the self-managed care, in addition to the department contracts with 53 individuals under the self-managed care program.

Mr. Chairperson, I think that since 1988 the fact that we have increased the budget from \$38 million to \$91 million tells the story here as what our commitment is to this Home Care program. I think that if we are going to improve on this system, we are going to have to have the competition within the system in order to make it work better, because I firmly believe, being the entrepreneur that I am, being in the free enterprise system that built

this country, that this is the best way to go, and the best opportunity is right now in terms of serving those people who are the most vulnerable.

The replacement workers that are going out, I have had good reports from the people, the clients that are in vulnerable situations, that they are very pleased with what kind of service they are getting. I think that what we have to do is to exercise a little bit of patience, because in the long term, this system is going to be far better off than what we are experiencing now and what we have experienced in terms of the complaints that have been coming forward from the Home Care people, the clients that have had difficulty for whatever reason. Those things could not be addressed under that monopoly that we have in the system today. I support the minister, and I support this government in the initiative that they are going forward on this Home Care program. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Mr. Chairman, I was just advised a few minutes ago that our public service here in Manitoba voted 57 percent against a strike. I understand that there are still some news conferences going on with the MGEU, and clearly we are going to have to examine the situation.

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, while I appreciate the minister making an announcement, I do not see how the minister's statement has any relevance whatsoever to the motion that has been brought forth by ourselves that we are debating in this Chamber relating to the censuring of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) concerning his handling of home care. I know that the minister is anxious, and I am not trying to take away the minister's opportunity to make a statement, but I think this is the inappropriate forum given your directive earlier in this committee on relevance concerning topics.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Chair, I think the important point here is that the context in which the issue is being debated, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has moved a resolution about plans for home care. Part of the result of the proposed plans is a strike, which has brought into question a lot of issues and

brought to the debate a lot of issues about home care. That strike takes place in the context.

Those people who are on strike are employees represented by the Manitoba Government Employees' Union. Many of the services that are filling in are also offered by MGEU employees working for the province. Bringing that information to this debate is extremely timely to set the context for what is happening in the province on home care from which the member's motion flows.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable members for their advice, but the honourable member for Kildonan does have a point of order. I would ask the honourable minister to refer to the motion within his statements. This is not the appropriate time.

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Mr. Toews: I think that it is very important in the context of this motion to understand that it is not just a minister who acts by himself or herself. A minister acts in the context of the Civil Service, of the public service and the public servants that work around him. The public servants in Manitoba have demonstrated over and over again that they are up to the task of meeting the challenges of Manitoba. When they are met with concerns, when they have concerns, they exercise their responsibilities in a responsible way.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) relies very much on those public servants in the same way that any minister in this House relies on public servants. Those public servants who support the programs that the government puts into place in the best interests of all of Manitobans, these public servants put their time and their effort into these programs. Not always do they agree with the government. Sometimes the public service has concerns about the way certain things are implemented but ultimately the public service will, I think, as demonstrated in this particular situation, the fact that they voted against a strike when health services are already under pressure shows the very responsible way that they are willing to undertake the challenges that meet Manitobans today.

When we talk about a minister's actions or a minister's policies, I think that has to be seen in a much broader

context. I know that yesterday I led certain comments onto the record, and I, as the Minister of Labour and also as the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, have a responsibility to the Civil Service. I have a responsibility to the public at large. I feel it very important when called upon to ensure that public servants who wish to continue their work should make sure that they understand that the government supports them.

* (1450)

If employees in the Department of Health say even if their membership is on strike that we feel dutybound to continue to take care of those who are sick and vulnerable, we as government should be sure to commend them for their performance. This is a very important issue for many of these people in our health care system, people who carry out the day-to-day policies of the minister whose actions are being put under scrutiny. These people are put under tremendous pressure, and yet for moral reasons or other reasons, they feel compelled to come to work and to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

I note that in the MGEU's material which was given to people before entering into the strike vote, they asked this question, and I think this is very timely in the context of this debate. They asked, will the government not welcome a strike since it would save money? This is the union asking this question. Will the government not welcome a strike since it would save money?

The union's answer, of course, is strikes reflect badly on the government's ability to manage. If MGEU members go on strike, the government will come under pressure from Manitobans who are affected by reductions in service. Unlike in Ontario, MGEU members are not obliged to provide essential services during a strike, essentially saying, turn your back on the poor, turn your back on the vulnerable. That is what these public servants were being advised to do.

You know, the public service, they read this material. They looked at the tremendous pressure that they were in from a union driven by ideology, a union that did not care about who is vulnerable, who is sick, but the union membership said to its leaders, no, it would be irresponsible to go out at this time.

Sometimes we underestimate the intelligence of the public, and we should never, never do that. We have to be responsive to the public, and we have to be responsive to the public service, because these are the voices that ultimately put us on this side of the House. We recognize that. These are the voices that are now telling us, we have not gone on strike. We want to work with the government in resolving this very, very difficult situation, and I am saying to you, Mr. Chairman, if the rank and file of the union are saying, let us work with the government to resolve these problems, then where are members opposite? Where are members opposite?

If the rank and file are saying, there are problems to work out, and we will deal with them in a rational way, we as government have an obligation to say, let us work together, and I call upon members opposite, where are you? Where do you stand in resolving these problems?

Mr. David Newman (Riel): Mr. Chairman, this is a great day because the public servants of this province have stood up as individuals severally and made a statement in spite of all the efforts of both the official opposition—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe you just ruled that—on my previous point of order, I asked what the relevance was. I do not want to take away a member's right to comment, but we are dealing with a resolution in this Chamber dealing with the home care issue, and the member, like the previous member, is starting off dealing with a matter that is not relevant by any stretch of imagination with the home care situation. The fact that a particular strike vote has or has not taken place with respect to the public servants' union is not relevant to the issue at hand.

Mr. Newman: This is directly relevant, Mr. Chairman, to the motion which is talking about the failure of the Minister of Health. The failure that I am talking about is that these allegations are absolutely false, and the failure is the failure of the people making those allegations to back them up.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I thank the honourable members for their advice. On the member's point of order, at this time I would have to rule that he

did not have a point of order. The member had just started to speak, and I do not think he had gotten into full swing yet. I think we will give him the opportunity to get into his speech, and if he is not relevant at that time, I will rule him out of order, but we will give him that opportunity.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Riel, to continue.

Mr. Newman: What I want to do is to put the motion to condemn the Minister of Health in a historical context. You know, we are focusing on what seemed to be immense crises of the day inflated often by the rhetoric in this Chamber. But, if we go back to the days of the Depression and the days of the Second World War and what I am reminded of every time I look outside and see the floods and see what is in the media, the flood of 1950, and all of those challenges of those days that I know my parents were involved in dealing with, taking years of their lives to participate, investing their time and their resources and energy constructively to deal with the forces of nature and the forces of evil in countries throughout the world, the forces of an economy beyond control—and I say years of their lives, maybe 10 years, maybe 12 years in some cases.

Then we had the days of the '60s and the '70s when we had medicare and pensions and the Canada Pension Plan in 1966 coming into being. We had a social security network built up in this country, the envy, in many cases, of the world, but never did we fully until recently recognize, I guess, the cost of that and the tremendous privilege of having it, because now we are looking at to what extent we have to go to preserve it and we are making huge investments in time and energy and money to do that. You know, it was back in the '60s, too, that the public sector started to be given the right to strike and the right to lock out. They were able to hold the public up to ransom. What we must recognize, we as honourable members, I submit, is, we must recognize that we have a responsibility in this Chamber and outside the Chamber to educate people, to inform people with facts, not to try and sweep them up in negative emotion generated by leaders of interest groups and the like, interested in resisting change and perpetuating a status

quo which can no longer be supported by thinking people.

* (1500)

If you look at the Canada Pension Plan as an example, a plan that was never to go beyond 5.5 percent of contributions, this year we are at 5.6 percent. It is projected to go to 14.2 percent by 2030. We know we have to change. We have to change for the sake of the younger generation who are going to contribute to that. Are they going to support the baby boomers and others to the degree to which we have become accustomed when they are taking more than twice as much out of their disposable income to pay for it?

We have to look at these things. We have to look at the health care system, as is being done in this home care situation. It is not a failure, submitted. All honourable members should see this initiative dealing with home care as another one of those kinds of necessary things to build a stronger and more viable system that respects consumer choice, because that is what has happened. We have come of age when, rather than government and government employees and those dependent on government directly coming first, the taxpayers and the consumers come first, and that is being demonstrated in this home care situation.

The failure that I am submitting is at issue here is not the failure of a Minister of Health, is not the failure of the initiative. It is the failure of honourable members opposite, the Liberals and NDP, both to stand up and lead, to stand up to resisters to change, to stand up for knowledge, to educate union leaders and employees and seniors and generally the people of the province about relevant facts and trends and responsibilities.

Challenge people to be better, to change, to adjust. Do not diminish them by allowing them to manipulate you so that they can be less than they can be. I submit the honourable members opposite are diverting with a motion like this, diverting attention from the real issues. They are not focusing on quality care, the best way of delivering services, freedom of choice, the best use of taxpayers' money. The goal of the motion ultimately is to remove an effective minister with the real interests of people at heart and who because of his effectiveness is doing a job. They want to remove success.

The failure to stand up to union leaders for a moment, why are union leaders doing this? I submit, they do not want workers to have freedom of choice of unions. They are protecting the monopoly. They do not want to lose dues, so they protect the monopoly. They do not want to have to go out and recruit and retain new members in competitive enterprise organizations, so they protect the monopoly. They prefer to deal with a monopoly, one employer owned by taxpayers and managed by government, rather than businesses which compete against one another and strive each to be better and more cost-effective. Ample protection exists under labour laws for workers who want union representation and union rates. This has nothing to do with what they assert as union undermining or union busting; to the contrary.

Speaking about the New Zealand situation, Mr. Douglas was quoted recently as saying, too often in government policy we are locked into the means of delivery of the programs, and we lose sight of the end goals. We get captured by people maintaining the programs in their narrow focus, and we lose the overall picture. This is particularly true in social policy. He pointed out that we place higher moral value on protecting the rights of poor-quality teachers—this was referring to New Zealand—than we do in protecting the rights or the impact of those poor teachers on the 20 or 30 children being taught by them. In his view, competition beats a controlled monopoly and regulates markets every time. The only time the government has the right to spend a dollar of your tax dollars is when the government is spending it better and more effectively than you can. Otherwise, you should be making the decision to spend that dollar. Otherwise, he felt tax dollars are wasted, and the waste always impacts on the poor in society.

What is this all about, this reform? TQM is an example of what is happening in the private sector. If you translate that in here, you ask questions like, will the response time be faster than competition? Do you have the capacity to take on new products and services? Is your customer satisfaction higher than the competition? Do you have effective and efficient business process throughout your organization?

I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion, and I hope all honourable members will take to heart

their need to be leaders of the people out there who are looking for leadership. Thank you.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to participate in the discussion in committee here today of this resolution moved by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

It is interesting to observe at this particular day of debate that the party that has put forward this resolution has seemed to abandon the field to make its case in this House. Speaker after speaker today has come from the government side because opposition members, members of the New Democratic Party, have not been prepared to come here today to make their case. This is the place where that case is to be debated and to be made, and I think, Mr. Chair, that is most indicative of the substance behind their argument.

They have made this debate into one that is really not dealing with some of the fundamental issues, and I would be the last person to condemn a good debate on home care if it were truly a debate that had to deal with the issues that are faced by government in the delivery of service, on finance, how does one expand, customer need, rather than a debate on rhetoric, fear, ideology and support for particular vested interests in the labour movement.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Chair, what I have seen time and time again in Question Period, day after day, on the same issue is members of the New Democratic Party continuing to try to manipulate this very important issue, and it is a very important issue, worthy of great public debate, but they have attempted to manipulate that even with their language. One day they talk about privatization. When we point out that privatization also involves deliverers of care such as the Victorian Order of Nurses, the words change, and now they are "private, for-profit." Again, just making the point that any negative words, any type of connotation that they can put that somehow implies that people are going to be cast out on the street, will not get proper care, will have miserable home care workers and not have services, is the image they are trying to cast, and that is not what this debate is about at all.

It is not what it is about at all, Mr. Chair, because anybody who is sincere in studying the issue of home care

has to acknowledge that the home care system is facing a major, I would say, fork in the road. It has the potential for great expansion. The whole thrust of this government, which has been fought almost tooth and nail by members of the New Democratic Party, and I must say not by members of the Liberal Party. The former member for The Maples, Dr. Cheema, was very supportive of the initiatives and he gave us some very good caution and care and points to be concerned about in his discussions in this Chamber, but members of the New Democratic Party have opposed absolutely every major change that health care has to face, and they have done it, I believe, purely on the grounds that they are opposition and their role is to oppose blindly without thought or reason.

Where are we coming from? We know that we have made great changes and technology has resulted in great changes, where our hospital system today is able to deal with people in expensive hospital beds far faster with far better results. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has pointed out on a number of occasions, I think it is Victoria Hospital now does more surgery than ever before, and two-thirds of it is on a day basis. Only one-third has an overnight stay, and that is a complete reversal from just a few years ago.

So that has meant a greater and growing demand for home care services in our province. So we have to look at, how will the home care system adapt to that?

In the time allotted to me I want to talk a little bit about my constituency. In my constituency there are many seniors who use home care. I have a large number of seniors, particularly in the retirement areas of the beaches and around Lac du Bonnet as well as in the town of Beausejour, and I can tell you, the home care workers who deliver that service in a variety of different methods now are by and large very, very good and do an excellent job, and I commend them for their efforts. They are very dedicated.

* (1510)

But one of the ongoing complaints that I get from seniors on a regular basis is the wish for many seniors to be able to obtain additional services that we in government do not provide, cannot provide and, they would even say, should not provide. I hear it time and time again, particularly in the area of cleaning, that many

of the seniors in my constituency are looking for someone who they can trust, are happy with, know who will do additional cleaning for them at certain times of the year, who will maybe pick up groceries for them. You know what they tell me? Even the poor seniors in my constituency tell me that they are prepared to pay for that service.

If one simply looks at the growth in home care and where we are going with home care and the seniors and the customer base that is using it, which has been an expanding customer base, there is a growing and even, I would argue, there will be a huge demand in the future for additional services. Can we provide that as government? No. How can those services be provided efficiently? They are not going to be provided efficiently and in a cost-effective manner if we have two services coming into people's homes. They are not going to be able to afford that if you have one government worker coming in to bathe you and then another worker coming in an hour later to provide you a particular cleaning service or additional service.

The efficiency comes in the fact that one person can come in and provide you with the whole range of services that you want, government insured and funded services, as well as the additional services that you want to buy. Can government put that together? Absolutely not. Government does not have the capability to provide those kinds of massive additions in home care, in just organizing it efficiently, that the market, the people, the customers, the consumers, the constituents of mine and of the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) want, need and desire in the days ahead.

Mr. Chair, I am looking forward to the kinds of changes that are coming in my constituency. The Minister of Health has indicated that home care is one area that is going to come under control of our local boards.

I can tell the member for Kildonan, if he would have a realistic conversation with people about this issue, that in my constituency there are groups already who are looking at, with the health district, being able to take over that Home Care program. Home care workers are interested in that in order to provide the expanded services.

I believe when we see this kind of system develop in our province, we see this happen, the fear that home care

workers' salaries are going to be lost and diminished and all these things will be for nought, because, quite frankly, those additional services, the efficiencies of that, will ensure that home care workers receive reasonable remuneration for the work that they do. But it means that more services will be offered.

The member today did raise one concern about people who may not have the competence to know whether or not they really want a service or if they are dealing with someone who has a great deal of pressure, and, yes, that is a concern. That happens now all the time in the province in home construction and renovation and other things with seniors, and, yes, that has to be addressed and dealt with. But is that a reason to throw the future away; to throw improved and efficient service away; to throw the meeting of customer needs away, simply because of a concern that some people might end up being forced to purchase services that they do not want? We have to address that issue, but that is not a reason to throw away the better system.

Mr. Chair, I think anyone who examines this in a thorough and complete fashion will come to the conclusion that there are lots of opportunities out there for everyone to benefit. We as a government are putting more money into home care this year, not because it is going to fund the profit of companies and all of those kinds of things. It is there because we need more home care. The reforms we have brought in as a government, through two ministers of Health, mean that people are getting more care in their home rather than expensive institutions.

By the way, that was opposed in every practical move by members opposite. So they cannot have it every way in the world. They have to get into the 1990s; they have to realize that the world is changing, and that you have to adjust your structures and methods to meet that change, and not entrench themselves in methods, whose ability is no longer adequate to serve the needs of the times. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I want to spend a few moments putting a few comments on the record. To put it bluntly, I am going to make these comments because I am incredibly disappointed by the attack of the member for Kildonan on our Minister of Health, on the government,

and really, in a broad sense, an attack on all the care providers in health care who are not members of a union.

I think the member has really got a very narrow view of health care in this country, in this province. Health care came in a number of years ago, has been expanded, and we all believe very strongly in the principle of universality, that everybody should have reasonable access to essential health care.

Over the course of the last 10, 15, 20 years, the base of health care provided, so-called free, from the taxpayers' pockets has expanded dramatically. Along the way, the cost of delivering the services the people want and need and should expect in a country that is No. 1 in the eyes of the United Nations has expanded.

We cannot go on forever throwing more money into health care. I defy the members opposite to find one province, one jurisdiction in this country that does not say that and believe that.

The NDP in opposition in Manitoba are trying to avoid everything that is going on in this country. Obviously, they are going to now be looking at what is the impact of the vote today, which said 57 percent of MGEU does not want to strike, a tremendous slap in the face for the NDP in their approach here and the union leadership in Manitoba in the broad sense of delivery of government services, but specifically to health care.

The NDP governments in Ontario did not listen to the people, were defeated. In Saskatchewan they listened to the people and followed the same agenda we are on here and were re-elected. British Columbia is in a quandary right now, whether they will or they will not; they are drastically trying to change the direction under a new leader. These are the realities of the world. The public is a lot smarter than the NDP gives them credit for. The public has been very adamant that we want the best health care we can afford, as broadly based as possible in the context of universality.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

We have delivered on that, and we have worked aggressively through two ministers of Health to be able to deliver the essential services of health that the public wants and are affordable to the taxpayer. Members opposite totally and utterly reject that approach. They try

every means possible to denigrate the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and it is certainly culminated in this resolution put on the floor by the member from Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

It is astounding that they put the resolution forward and do not have the courage to stand up and debate it. Maybe it is because the press are not here, maybe it is because their union friends are not sitting upstairs, but it is appalling they would bring it to the House and not have the courage to debate it—courage, not to debate it. If the member from Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) wants to debate, I would gladly sit down. If he would just indicate now he wants to speak, I would sit down, and he could stand up and speak. We will get a change to vote on it, do not worry, but the member opposite should have the courage to at least stand up and debate it. They had the courage to bring it forward. Did they think somehow it would not draw our attention, that we would not stand up and talk to it? It gives us the perfect opportunity to talk about the system we have, how it has developed and the essential decisions that have to be made to keep it healthy.

Clearly, in our economy in Manitoba and in Canada, choice and competition are wanted by everybody. People do not want to have one grocery store; they do not want to have one place to buy a car. They want choice; they want different colours, different models. Competition creates efficiency. Absolutely anybody out there in the real world will tell the member that. If you did not have choice, you do not have as effective a service or as efficient a service or as cost-effective a service.

Any element of competition brought in will improve the level of service to the client, and that is the bottom line to us, must improve the level of service to the client. We are not here to guarantee jobs; we are not here to guarantee salaries. We are here to be sure we maximize the ability to deliver the services needed to the clients at large in the process of home care. And the argument is obvious. We talk in favour of the client, we say competition and choice of service provided will allow that client to have the best, most cost-effective, responsible service possible within the available dollars.

* (1520)

The members opposite are arguing not for the client. They are arguing strictly job security in a monopoly and

a salary. They are prepared to have their union members walk away from their clients, walk away, that is the ultimate disrespect for the client, to take that position and to come to this House and argue every day that we should throw money at the problem instead of finding a constructive solution that allows responsible people to deliver the services.

For the members opposite to say that only members of the union of MGEU can deliver those services, that is irresponsible. That is denigrating all those other service providers out there who are responsibly day in and day out delivering services to their clients because they care. They are still out there doing it today, and to them I want to say, I highly respect what they are doing, they have successfully done it over the course of time and I know they will continue to do it in the future.

I wish the members opposite would get off their hidebound approach of being deliberately driven by the unions and start to respond to what is good for the clients in the province of Manitoba. You cannot throw money at solutions anymore. They should have known after losing three elections in a row that that cannot be done. The public will not put up with that. This is not the day and age for that.

Mr. Chairman, this debate is essential to have at this time because we are on two totally different tracks of ideology, theirs on a tired, old, worn-out, backwards-to-the-future kind of approach, that monopolies can exist and monopolies are effective. The public at large is saying, that is not so, it is not cost-effective, it is not efficient in terms of creating an innovative way of delivering services.

We have some 17,000 people out there receiving some form of home care. That is a lot of people, and it is a good service because it allows health care to be delivered more closely to where the individual wants to be involved, and that is in their home. They want to be there. They do not want to be tied up in an institution until they absolutely have to be. They want services close to home. It allows people to get out of the hospital sooner and be in the home environment, which is much more comfortable than staying in the hospital.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am really disappointed in the attack that the opposition is taking on our Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae), on the government and all the service providers out there who are currently doing their job. If the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has any courage to stand up and debate this, I would be interested in hearing from him, because that—

An Honourable Member: That is unparliamentary, come on.

Mr. Findlay: Well, how many members opposite have stood up and debated on this particular motion when the members opposite brought it forward? Okay, none. I take it the answer is none. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would ask the honourable members to try and maintain debate. I know that the honourable minister is tending to almost bait the opposition into this debate. I am trying to choose my words carefully right now. I would ask the opposition and the minister to speak to the motion before us.

Mr. Findlay: I accept the Chairman's caution. I might do that once in a while, yes, I am sorry. The fact of the matter is, if you look at private service providers or competition in home care, seven out of 10 provinces are doing it. It is not like we are an island, isolated, and we are doing something that is totally untried anywhere else.

The member has asked for studies. The only real study is when you are out there doing it, and if seven out of 10 are doing it, I do not know that that is sort of breaking totally new ground. It is a matter of getting on, be sure we deliver the services to the people in their homes, and the members opposite are saying, no, we should pull the workers out of those homes. We are saying, get them back there. I wish they would see the light and say the client is No. 1, because that is the way we view it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I welcome the opportunity of rising in this debate and dealing with some of the comments made by members opposite. I am tempted to respond to some of the illogical statements, inconsistent statements, that I have heard in this Chamber by members opposite, and I listened very attentively and very carefully, and I have been astounded at the inconsistencies and lack of logic that I have heard from members opposite.

I want to again in the course of this debate inject a little bit of reality to members opposite, and by virtue of—[interjection] The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) says, that is a good thing, and I am glad the Minister of Health is paying attention, because what I would like to do, Mr. Chairperson, is discuss the genesis and the reason as to why we are having this debate today, the reason why there is a strike going on in Manitoba today and the reason why the public of Manitoba has risen up in opposition to what the government and the minister is doing.

Mr. Chairperson, the Minister of Health signed off a document under his signature, sent it into cabinet, had it approved by cabinet—

An Honourable Member: Did it have all the pages in it?

Mr. Chomiak: And it had all the pages in it, Mr. Chairperson, Treasury Board submission, December 16, 1995. What did this policy say? Let me point out—I am not sure the backbenchers have had opportunity to review this document, the cabinet document, but what did it say? It said divestiture of all service delivery. Now let me halt at this point. It is government policy to divestiture of all service delivery in Health.

Now, Mr. Chairperson, where is the justification? Where are the policy guidelines? Where are the reasons why the government has decided to do this? There are none. We have been sitting in debate for two and a half weeks in this Chamber, and the minister and the government are yet to table one document supporting their position. They are yet to table the opinion of one expert supporting their position. They are yet to table one study supporting their position. In fact, to the contrary, every study that has been forwarded in this House has said no to privatization. Every document that has been tabled has said no to privatization. Is there any question why we doubt the minister's policy, and any question why we should question it?

Mr. Chairperson, I dare say the backbenchers who have not had an opportunity to review this document ought to spend some attention on it and ought to spend some time reviewing this document.

Now, Mr. Chairperson, let me again review this cabinet document that set out the privatization policy.

Let us see what it says. Over and over again the minister insists that we are making up this user fee issue, and the minister talks about user fees across the country and says, there are no user fees in Manitoba. What does the cabinet document say? Let me quote from it, What Will Be, Services To Be Categorized. That is, home care services will be categorized. Core services, government funded. Core services, government/ customer share costs. What does that mean? Let me repeat: Core services, government/customer share cost. It does not say, government funded. It says, government/customer share costs. That is called a user fee. Now the minister can call it anything else that he wants to. He could call it a partnership fee. He could call it a tax when, in fact, it is a tax, but the minister's own cabinet—I note the minister is holding up the Price Waterhouse report, and I am glad—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has the floor at this time, and I would appreciate it if we could have a little bit of decorum.

The honourable member for Kildonan, to continue.

Mr. Chomiak: I have told the minister that we ought to bring his own officials in. He has an implementation committee for the Price Waterhouse report, I informed the minister in this Chamber for the first time. He is now aware we have an implementation committee, and I have urged him to bring his committee, his members in, so we can discuss the Price Waterhouse report.

Returning, Mr. Chairperson, to the substance of my comments, why does the government cabinet document state: Core services, government/customer share costs? It is because the government intends to impose user fees on the home care services, and they cannot deny it because it is in black and white in the cabinet document, signed by the minister, approved by this government.

So that is what we are debating in here. We are debating (a) why the government decided to privatize home care and precipitate a strike and put us in the terrible situation we are in; and (b) what that document says.

Further, Mr. Chairperson, that document states that there is going to be established a Crown corporation, a

home care agency that is going to be responsible for coordinating the service. What activities is this coordinating Crown agency going to undertake? Research, technology, evaluation, assessment, care planning, and telemarketing.

Mr. Chairperson, probably the first time in Canadian history that a government, Crown corporation to do home care, is going to be undertaking telemarketing, and the minister has yet to deal with that Crown corporation, which he indicated, by the way, in one of the local papers, that it would be set up. In fact, funds were allocated last budgetary year and this budgetary year for the establishment of this Crown corporation. So what we are debating in this Chamber is the government's program to privatize which they have been unable to justify, unable to account for.

* (1530)

They can try to attack the unions, they can try to attack the patients, they can try to attack the caregivers, they can try to attack the opposition, but the reality is, it is their policy, approved by this government and this cabinet in this document.

An Honourable Member: This is a good policy.

Mr. Chomiak: If it is a good policy—the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) says it is a good policy—then justify it. Come forward, show us your studies, show us your documentation, show us the justification for why you are taking a system that has been recognized as one of the best in North America, turning it on its head and precipitating all of the difficulties.

It is astounding to me how members opposite can try to debate in this Chamber without dealing with the fundamental issue of privatization, why they are failing to talk about their own cabinet document, their own submission, the very document that has precipitated the circumstances that we are in today.

Members opposite talked about the provision of home care by rural caregivers. The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) talked about groups being anxious to take over the provision of home care in his own constituency. It is clear—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Things have been going real well in the committee for the past two days. Those members who want to carry on their conversation across the way, I would appreciate it if you did so out in the hall or the Loge so that I would not be interrupted when I am listening to the honourable member's presentation.

Mr. Chomiak: Aside from trying to justify their cabinet document and aside from their lack of any support for this, there are many questions that members opposite have to answer. They have to answer why the We Care presentation in 1994 by Ron Hoppe exactly mirrors the government proposal in this cabinet document. They have to answer that question. They have to answer why they are going to take public money and allow public money to go to profit making companies, take money from direct caregiving and give it right into the pockets of profit making. They have to answer the question that I asked in Question Period today as to why people who carry out home care for We Care are out selling extra products and get commissions for selling additional. They have to answer that question.

They have to outline for us what standards, what regulations they are going to put in effect and in place if they should go ahead with this foolhardy scheme to privatize home care. Until members opposite are prepared to justify and defend their own cabinet document, until they are prepared to answer questions with respect to home care, until they are prepared to actually deal with the facts, all we are going to hear from members opposite is attempts to defend a policy that is indefensible.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have a little bit of time this afternoon to speak against this motion, to speak against the ideas which have been put forward by members opposite who clearly want to preserve a monopoly only, who have an objection to any kind of competition, who have an idea that there should not be competition in any way. They do not want competition in services to home care. They do not want competition in schools. They do not want exams. They are just totally against that in any form whatsoever.

Mr. Chair, as I said, I do not support this motion. I am astonished by the lack of understanding by members

opposite. I am astonished by the fact that they do not seem to be in possession of the facts, and that is a great concern, because they go off and they talk as if they know what they are talking about, and they continually miss the point.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), I believe, certainly deserves our support and also our respect for the way he operates as Minister of Health in this province. First of all, he is a listener, and, Mr. Chair, I think that it has been very clear as we have watched media reports, as we have talked to the Minister of Health, that he has been available to people across the province to explain the conditions and concerns about our health care system, the continually rising costs of our health care system and that some steps must be taken to look at continuing to provide that service and not have costs run totally out of control. He has met with groups across the province, and I believe that his style has been one which has been a very thoughtful style. I believe his approach has been one which is very personable to the people of Manitoba.

But, Mr. Chair, the question is, somehow the members opposite seem to think that these concerns about costs of health care, providing health care, are strictly within Manitoba alone. They need to open their eyes.

This is what astonished me, that somehow they have not understood that across this country, every province across this country is facing concerns about the provision of health care and is having to look at ways to do this in the most efficient way where the health outcomes are the No. 1 issue, where the client is the first person to be thought of. When I listen to the members across the way, it does not seem to be the health outcome that is a concern to them. It does not seem to be the comfort and the emotional security of the person who relies on home care that is important. It, instead, seems to be a philosophical idea that they cling to which has really nothing to do with a person. Mr. Chair, this government has understood that we are, in fact, dealing with people, that we have to provide the best service for the people of Manitoba and that we are, in fact, dealing with individuals and not just ideas.

Mr. Chair, one of the ways that this government has looked at the changes in health care is to say that people really do not want to stay in institutions for a long time,

and, in fact, they need to move from institutions and would like to move from institutions into their homes and be provided with a home care system. There are lots of reasons for that. If perhaps they had the opportunity to talk with people, people could tell them that first of all, they are more comfortable in their own homes. There is a reason they do not want to be in institutions. There is an emotional security in being with those things that you know about, being in your own home and not being in a place that seems to be in many cases strange, and there is a lot of technology that a lot of people, particular seniors, do not really understand.

People seem to just do better. They seem to heal faster and with an aging population have a much greater level of comfort and hopefully maintain better health, because they are, in fact, within their community. In order to do this and to allow people to have the opportunity of home care, Mr. Chair, I think it is very important to understand the financial commitment of this government, because this government has never walked away from making sure that the financial resources were in place.

I just would like to stress that since 1988 until now the home care budget has more than doubled, that it has moved from \$38 million to \$91 million. That is a significant contribution. As I listen to members across the way, I seem to always be hearing them talk about reductions, and I have to say, where have they been, because there is no reduction when you talk about such a huge and steady increase, a very significant contribution from this government.

Mr. Chair, I am not only speaking about the financial contributions. I would like to speak about the plans that this government has put in place, because this government has said that the monopoly alone is not the way to do things, that there must be some competition within the system. So government introduced a plan to have a competition in approximately 25 percent of one part of the city of Winnipeg.

Now, if you were to believe the members opposite, you would somehow think that this was a plan that applied everywhere and everyone should be thinking about this when, in fact, the plan applies to 25 percent of the city of Winnipeg. Those are the facts. They are not the facts often put forward, but they are the facts of the plan.

The other part of the facts is that it is no cost to home care clients. There has been some question put forward by the other side. I just heard to member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talking about user fees. User fees have not been part of this government's plan. User fees were part of a plan put forward to the NDP government, and we have an idea of where it may have gone had they been in government, but user fees are not part of the plan of this government.

* (1540)

Also, there is no change in services. Somehow people have been led to believe that there is going to be a change in their services. Talk about frightening people in their more vulnerable moments, as individuals who require home care. The other side has engaged in a campaign to frighten people, to make them feel more vulnerable and to not give them the true facts which, if they had them and which when members on this side have the opportunity to speak to people, were able to allay a lot of those fears and allow people to be more comfortable.

But what has happened? Our plan has been put forward. Our plan has been very clear, but the other side has tried to present facts which are not the case. So what happened, Mr. Chair? Home care attendants went on strike. Home care attendants went on strike on Tuesday, April 16, and our concerns about that strike are that we see that they, in fact, have engaged in a profession which is a caring profession, which is a direct-services-to-people kind of profession but, because of the union direction, because of the union concerns, these individuals have now gone on strike. Those individuals who depended upon them every day—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. If the honourable member would like to put some statements on, he may want to reserve them until the time that he has the floor.

Mrs. Vodrey: I think it is very important to note what has happened. Let us think of the people. When the home care attendant went away and went on strike, there was an individual who was sitting at the other end who was left and did not always have all the facts, because members from the other side do not want to talk about it. It is up to this side of the House to make sure that the appropriate facts, the real facts, get out so that those people are not frightened. Some of the home care

workers, as was mentioned by our colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), do not want to be on strike, they do not want to be away from their jobs, they do not want to be away from the clients that they would prefer to be working with. Some of them are afraid under these circumstances to, in fact, go and be with their clients.

Mr. Chair, I want to say that a number of these of home care workers are women. Members across the way are always asking about sensitivity towards women. My concern is that a number of these home care workers who are women feel frightened to go and actually be with their clients, because they somehow have the opinion that they are then, you know, the union who has given direction, that they should not in some way balk at that direction. That is intimidation, and that really concerns me, for workers, people who have a direct service to people, people whose work and profession is a nurturing profession.

So I remain concerned about the clients. I remain concerned about those workers who want to continue to work. I want to put forward on the record the facts of what this government's plan is. I want to continue to provide support to the Minister of Health as he works in a very difficult area to make sure that the facts get out on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Chairman, I would just like to put a few remarks on the record in opposition to this motion moved by the opposition. I would like to start out by first saying that since I have come to this caucus that I have had the pleasure of getting to know the Health minister and I have the very highest regard for the minister. I think that he is a very sensitive, caring person and only wishes to make sure and ensure that the health care system in Manitoba is there now and in the future for all Manitobans to enjoy. I think that this period of time in his life will go down in the history books as one of the most important eras in Manitoba history, because 20 years from now we will still have a health care system that we can enjoy.

We have a good health care system in the province. We have probably some of the top acute care systems. The personal care system is also tops, and the home care system. We are not really taking really major issue with the home care system in terms of what our proposal is. If you want to take a look at the resolution and look at the

word "recommendations" in there, we have made recommendations. The recommendations are to go ahead with a 25 percent contracting out of services in the city of Winnipeg only, with all the quality and maintenance control in there by the province still in place. Nothing is going to happen in rural Manitoba. So that is part of the recommendations that we are following and implementing.

I would also like to add that I have had some personal experience with the use of government home care and with private care. In this regard it happens to be an uncle of mine that required the care. I would have to say that the honourable member opposite talking about home care workers being on a commission to get more services is totally untrue. These people sat down with all the family members and my uncle and worked out an agreement that was suitable to all of us and no way did they try to sell extra services to us, and we only chose those services which we felt were appropriate for the case. So that is totally untrue.

The direction we are heading is in fact that we have always been after the federal government to try and balance their books. Well, they are heading in that direction. But they chose to see fit to cut the health care transfers to the provinces, and now we are feeling the pain of that cut, you know. They should be making the cuts in other areas where we have duplication of services. We have mentioned that to the federal government many times, that they should be doing this.

So in order to be able to address this situation where we are working with fewer dollars in the health care system, it means that we must change to meet the future needs of this province in terms of health care. But why are we suggesting the details of contracting out of services? No, we are trying to attempt to introduce competition for 25 percent of home care services only within the city of Winnipeg. There will be no cost to home care clients—no cost to home care clients—no change in services provided and, most importantly, in the area that I represent in the constituency of Morris, there is no change in rural or northern service delivery.

Also, another thing to keep in mind is that seven out of 10 provinces have already moved to a mix of government and nongovernment provision of home care services. Seven out of 10 provinces also charge user fees. User

fees are not being contemplated in Manitoba, now or in the future.

But let me share some numbers with you and then beg the question. If you take a look at the Home Care budget and the services provided—I know that the honourable Minister of Health put these numbers on record in Estimates, but I think that it bears repeating them.

In 1988-89 the budget for home care in Manitoba—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am trying diligently to hear the member from Morris, but the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) seems to be heckling his own speaker, and I wish that you would call him to order so that I could actually hear the member from Morris deliver his comments.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Yes, Sir, I do apologize to the honourable member for Kildonan, and, certainly, if my friend and colleague from Morris felt that I was interrupting him in any way, I apologize to him too because I certainly was not making any comment about the very fine presentation being made this afternoon by my colleague the honourable member for Morris.

It is my understanding that the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Reimer) with whom I work very closely in matters related to home care and others—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Enough has been said on the matter. The minister has apologized for speaking.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We will carry on with the honourable member for Morris.

* (1550)

Mr. Pitura: As I was indicating, I think it bears repeating some of the numbers that were brought out in Estimates a few days ago, that in 1988-89 the budget for home care in Manitoba was \$39 million in round

numbers. The number of patients on home care was 23,403, and the number of unit services was 3,398,819.

If we follow that for the next year, 1989-90, the budget went up 8.2 percent to \$42 million. The number of patients declined by minus 2.1 percent to 22,922. The units of services went up 3 percent to 3,500,213.

In 1990-91 the budget for home care was increased 20.6 percent, up to \$50,890,000. The number of patients on home care was 24,022, or an increase of about 4.8 percent. The number of units of services was 3,868,329, or an increase of 10.5 percent, but still probably not in line with the 20.6 percent increase in budget.

In 1991-92 the budget went up 11.6 percent to \$56,783,600. The number of patients went up 4.6 percent to 25,116. The units of service were at 4,187,310, or an 8.2 percent increase. Everything is going in the right direction.

In 1992-93 the budget was increased again by 10.7 percent, or up to \$62,837,000. The number of patients went up 3.2 percent to 25,909, and the number of units of service went up to 4.4 million, or about 5.6 percent increase.

In 1993-94 the budget was \$64,201,700, a 2.2 percent increase. The number of patients was 25,121, down minus 3 percent. The number of units of service was 4,079,569, minus 7.8 percent, and the budget went up 2.2 percent.

In 1994-95 the budget was set at \$66,172,000 or up 3.1 percent. The number of patients again declined minus 1.4 percent to 24,774, and the units of service went up 3.8 percent to 4,235,028. In '95-96, Mr. Chairman, the budget is set at \$82,572,300 or a 24.8 percent increase. The number of patients went up to 26,129 or plus 5.5 percent. The units of service were 5.5 million approximately, which was an increase of 30.7 percent, the largest increase in the number of units of service supplied in the whole program.

Now, Mr. Chairman, here are the interesting numbers, is that the budget went up 111 percent, the number of patients went up 11.6 percent, and the number of units of service went up 63 percent. The cost per patient in 1988-89 was \$1,667. The cost per patient in '95-96 is \$3,160

or an 89 percent increase. Now, if we project that over the next ten years, we would have 52,000 patients on service through this program, and if we extrapolate that, our budget would come out to something like \$310 million in 10 years time. Can we afford to pay that kind of dollars in terms of budget over the next while?

So for every patient added to the system since 1988, Mr. Chairman, which is 2,726 patients, we have added \$43 million. The dollars spent per patient added is \$15,980 per patient added to the system. So then the question begs itself. It says, if the opposition is saying, well, why change anything in the system, we have something good, I ask the question, why not? We have to try a new approach to the way home care is delivered. If we do not try that, even in the small amount of contracting out at 25 percent of the services, we will never be able to maintain the system.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): This is a pleasure for me to stand up and put some comments on the record regarding the motion that was put forth by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) in what he words as a condemnation of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) for his failure to provide any research or recommendations.

I would like to say that these are interesting times to stand up in this House and talk about what is happening, because, indeed, these are changing times. I guess what we have before us is a change of philosophy and the resistance to change for the sake of the status quo and the fact that the opposition is of the opinion that the status quo is a way of doing business and that we should not be tampering with anything that looks at a different approach or different priority of spending that we are bringing forth.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) brought forth his budget just a very short time ago, and we all had a chance to stand up in this House and debate that budget. One of the lines in the budget that was brought forth was actually an increase of funding to Home Care. As was pointed out by a lot of my colleagues in the last little while, we are looking at a budget now that started back in 1988, I believe, of around \$37 million, and just recently we passed a budget that brought the figure up

to—not brought the figure, but it has steadily crept upward to where now we are talking about \$91 million in our Home Care budget, and this was a figure that was brought forth of \$9 million, I believe, which was an \$8-million or \$9-million increase in the Home Care budget, and it was the opposition that stood there and voted against this increase.

They voted against it, Mr. Chairman, and now we stand here in the House again talking about them saying that we are cutting back, we are changing the direction, we are rejigging the formulas and all these other types of accusations and the fact that this government does not have that type of care and concern for home care and the people that it is serving.

As Minister responsible for Seniors I have the opportunity to meet with seniors on a very regular basis. In fact I put a high priority in meeting with seniors and seniors groups of all sorts in all areas, whether it is here in Winnipeg or out in the rural area. Seniors in general are saying that they are concerned about government. They are concerned about the spending of government. They welcome the idea of a balanced budget. They welcome the idea of the fact that we are now looking at bringing our house in order regarding the spending and the priorities of what they as senior citizens have grown accustomed to and what they have grown up to adopt in their lifestyle of being accountable and approachable in their finances. They now see this as a welcome change in government which we have embarked on. They recognize that in this government that our priority has been over the years and continues to be funding in health.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Health consumes the largest portion of our budget. In fact, I believe here in Canada our percentage is the highest of any province in Canada in our commitment to health care here to the citizens of Manitoba. So the commitment is there. The commitment is growing. We now spend over \$1.8 billion in health care, and a large portion of it is in our seniors population because, as we are all aware, this segment of our population is growing. As the Minister responsible for Seniors I take very seriously the fact of being in contact with seniors to get their input, to get their views, along with the Minister of Health. We have had the opportunity to tour facilities together, to talk to groups together, to get an input from

the group as to what their concerns are. This is an ongoing dialogue that I feel is not only necessary but is something that we as a government have to continue.

I was just recently out at a function down in Steinbach, a seniors meeting, and this was just two days ago. The topic of home care did come up, and the seniors there were wondering what was happening and where this government was going with home care. When I talked to them and I explained to them that what we are talking about is a contracting out and a prioritizing of funding in Winnipeg only, and in Winnipeg it is not necessarily all of Winnipeg, we are talking about 25 percent of the home care market, a lot of them expressed surprise. They thought, from what they had been reading in the paper or what the fearmongers of our opposition have been saying, is the fact that we are looking at the so-called whole home care project, whether it was in the city of Winnipeg or whether it was in the rural areas. So that was one area that we cleared up with the group that I was talking to down in Steinbach.

At the same time I had the comment made by one of them saying that we do not like the idea of some of these city—I will use her words specifically because they stuck in my mind—she said, we do not like the idea of some of these city goons coming down to the rural area and telling us that we have to be on strike.

* (1600)

These are not my words. I say, these are not my words. I will emphasize that. This was conveyed to me by an older lady in this group that said that this was what she resented very much, that they were coming down into her rural town—I will not tell you the town that she was from, but she was not from Steinbach; she was from another town—saying what they should be doing to their home care people and the people that they looked after. She was very upset about that connotation that they were being dictated by someone from the city, as she called it, telling her what she could or could not do with her patients. So I was kind of surprised at this type of commentary that came out from this lady.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

So, Mr. Chairperson, these are areas that we as a government should be aware of in trying to come to a

resolve on what direction we are taking. It is an evaluation. It is a prioritization of funding. There is an accountability that has to be brought into the fact that the people, not only in home care but the taxpayers of Manitoba, are asking us to be aware of where the money is going. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) and the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) recognize that their departments, which consume the largest portion of our budget—and the fourth largest consumer of funding, if you want to call it, in our government, is debt. That is the fourth largest department within our government.

So we—[interjection] Is it now No. 5? Eric moved it to No. 5. Pardon me, I thought it was the No. 4 department. Maybe, with all our prudent management and our efforts that have come forth in the last while in our management, it is starting to come down in the budget. Maybe you are right; as one of my colleagues has pointed out, it is now department budget No. 5. You see, it happens so fast sometimes, you do not recognize all these things. That is how fast this progress is happening with our government.

I see, Mr. Chairperson, that time is fleeting by, and I have hardly had a chance to put into content a lot of the other comments that were brought forth to my department and to me as an individual, not only as the Minister responsible for Urban Affairs, Housing and Seniors, but also as an MLA for the constituency and as a person that when you are talking to people—so I would just like to put those remarks on record for this. Thank you.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased with the contributions that have been made in this discussion by honourable members, notably the members of the government side, but also members from the other side of House, with respect to this matter. I do not even like to have to rise in a debate to defend the personal attack implicit in the resolution before the House today, but I do believe that we should remember that if our intentions are good and honourable, then we ought to be able to defend them, and indeed that is what I propose to do at every opportunity.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has chosen a strategy which I have described already by way of an anecdote, Mr. Chairman, and the honourable member will remember it. That is, the practitioners of the law who sometimes confide in each other—and very often

senior members of the bar work with the younger members of the bar. On this occasion, on one occasion, the senior member of the bar was trying to assist the younger member in preparation for a trial before a jury. The articulated student asked the senior member of the firm, well, what do I do if I have good strong facts, but I do not have much in the way of the law? The answer was, you pound the facts. What if I do not have any facts? Well, you pound the law. The articulated student then asked, what will I do if I do not have the facts or the law? To which the senior partner responded, pound the desk.

Mr. Chairman, what we have seen since the beginning of this resumption of this session has been an awful lot of desk pounding on the part of the members of the New Democratic Party. They simply do not have the support of the people of Manitoba in the matters they are putting forward, and the people of Manitoba are making that clear. Indeed, every thinking person around here knows that no government sets out to do anything but make improvements in the system of health care delivery that we have or any other government service that we provide.

Even New Democrats, I respectfully suggest, do not go out in some deliberate way to do harm to their fellow citizens, as honourable members opposite like to suggest that the government of the day would want to be doing. [interjection] One of my colleagues asks if it is the simple suggestion that New Democrats do not know any better. My humble and respectful suggestion is that they made a very serious mistake from the very day that the CCF was invented in this country and the very day that New Democrats came into existence. That was an organic fusion that exists, a partnership, shall we call it, that exists with organized labour in this country.

We all want friends. Everybody wants friends. We strive to be happy, and, in order to be happy, we need friends. The New Democrats did not have any policies, so they went for friends instead, and they aligned themselves with the labour movement in this country. It helped them get started as a political party, as a political force in our country. It brought together people of high ideals, people like Tommy Douglas. I mentioned him the other day, and I had the honour of working in the same building as he for eight years. I had a lot of respect for him and people like Stanley Knowles. I did not, obviously, always see their way, but I respected those gentlemen and people like—even those honourable

gentlemen seemed to believe in the political connection between the New Democrats and the union movement, something that Professor Allen Mills called organic fusion later on.

An Honourable Member: Those men had principle, Jim; that was one important difference.

Mr. McCrae: I am reminded that some of those pioneers of the socialist movement in our country brought principle to bear on all of their deliberations. I accept that. But there is a consistency and then there is a foolish consistency. Sometimes, as Emerson said, a foolish consistency can be the hobgoblin of little minds.

In the event, what we have today in Manitoba is a classic example of that foolish consistency where they allow that loyalty to a group of people to come ahead of their duty to serve the interests of those people in our society whose interests they were elected to serve. And they have a problem with that. They will not prevail as long as they put their narrow political interests ahead of the interests of genuine needy people in our society. That is what this debate is about. It is not so much about me as the Minister of Health or that personal condemnation that is contained in this resolution, it has to do with the—

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I let it go by the first time the minister said this, but I cannot let it go by the second time. I have read and I have in front of me the motion that we are debating today in the House and there is not one iota of evidence, nor can you read into anything that was said in this motion that says one thing about a personal innuendo or a personal attack. This is simply a condemnation of government policy as expressed and illuminated by the Minister of Health. There is not one scintilla of personal attack in this resolution.

* (1610)

Mr. Toews: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, I think you sitting here as Chair and you sitting here in the House every day understand exactly what has been going on in this House. That motion simply reflects the tip of an iceberg. That does not reflect the comments that have come daily across this floor by members opposite

attacking very, very personally what the member for Brandon West has been doing, and I think it is very relevant to this debate, this discussion, that there are personal attacks being made—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I would invite the Minister of Labour to address the issue of the point of order which is on the floor.

Mr. Toews: I would submit, Mr. Chair, that the direction of my colleague's argument is directly on point.

Mr. McCrae: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Wellington, maybe it is coincidence that the Minister of Labour came to assist you, Sir, in coming to an appropriate resolution of the point raised by the honourable member for Wellington because, indeed, it was the Minister of Labour against whom? That very member addressed her venom the other day in Question Period, and the honourable member for Wellington took a personal shot at the honourable Minister of Labour the other day.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The honourable member for Kildonan, on the same point of order that is under discussion.

Mr. Chomiak: No, on a separate point of order, Mr. Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I would invite the member for Kildonan to—

Mr. Chomiak: Then I will comment on the same point of order.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): —defer his remarks on the new point of order until I have ruled on the existing point of order which is on the floor at this point in time, but I would invite the member for Kildonan to address the existing point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the government and the member for Brandon's argument is so without substance that his comments are completely irrelevant to the point of order as addressed by the member for Wellington. I would ask you to call the member to order, because his comments on the very point of order bear no relevance or relationship whatsoever to the point made by

the member for Wellington because, if you recall, the minister and the member was making the comments about some item that occurred in Question Period several days ago. So he is completely out of order.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I would thank all honourable members for this discussion and the advice that they have furnished to the Chair on this issue. I believe that the member for Wellington did have a point of order, and I would invite the honourable Minister of Health to continue his comments, but addressing the motion which is under debate at this point in time.

An Honourable Member: What was that point of order?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The point of order from the member for Wellington was to, I believe, direct the comments of the Minister of Health to the motion which was on the floor, under debate, and that this was not a personal attack against the minister or his credibility or any personal innuendo but rather the points which were on the order paper.

The minister has two minutes remaining.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly accept your ruling, and whatever it was that motivated the honourable member for Wellington to raise it, I accept that must have been an honourable thing, too.

However, I guess when one is named and condemned in a resolution, one does get a bit defensive about it, Mr. Chairman, and maybe it is my zeal or the sense of passion with which I approach the job of ensuring that our home care clients in this province receive their service, that I might be given to occasional excesses. So if I did that, certainly I would like to conform with the rules of this Chamber and all of its customs and traditions, as represented so ably this afternoon by the honourable member for Wellington.

However, the honourable member for Wellington has not left out from her comments certain people who are not in this Chamber and who are not able to defend themselves, saying from her seat that they are not honourable people who live among us, Mr.

Chairman- [interjection] Oh, is that what it is. Is my time up?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I believe the honourable minister's time has now expired on this matter, and I would recognize the honourable member for Pembina.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, I welcome this opportunity to speak on this issue of home care within our province. I have listened intently to what our Health minister has been saying for the last few minutes. That reflects very much the feeling that the constituents in Pembina feel, as well, and that is one of feeling compassion towards those who need help, and, certainly, I want to say that I support home care. I support a home care system that is sustainable, and it is around that comment that I would like to just add a few comments and put them on the record.

I believe that in order to have a sustainable home care system, we need to be fiscally responsible. To be fiscally responsible, like, I guess, some of the members opposite, we need to live within the dollars that are allocated to us. Mr. Chairman, in 1998, we were spending \$38 million on Home Care. We have added to that now and, in fact, are projecting that we will be spending \$91 million in Home Care. Certainly, that shows that the government and the Minister of Health is committed to home care, towards the area of looking after those who need it and need it desperately.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I would just like to bring in a few comments in talking about a process and a system that is sustainable. In the area that I represent and the area surrounding where I live, several instances have been brought to my attention within the last week or so from people who are involved in home care.

First of all, those who are involved in home care find it unacceptable to walk on the strike and the picket lines. They find it unacceptable to be pushed into a situation where they are not allowed to give the care, the much-needed care, to those who need it so desperately. Therefore, I cannot understand how the members opposite take the approach that this is the only way to solve a problem, that they continue to encourage this kind

of strike mandate. I would just like to say that the members of my constituency do not in any way foster and promote what is taking place.

To give an example of how we need to work at improving the efficiency of our home care system within our area, one example was cited of a home care worker driving 20 miles in the morning in order to service a client; then returning back the same distance; returning after lunch to serve another client, again 20 miles one way. That is a total of 80 miles in one day to service two clients and feeling absolutely comfortable in doing that. The mileage that is given to that home care worker is more than the home care worker is receiving for doing the actual work. That is simply an example of what I believe is taking place and—I could cite other examples—within our province at this time.

Therefore, in order to show our commitment towards home care, to show that we are committed to a system that is sustainable, we need to go out and to offer others to become involved in that same system. To this point we are looking at providing that home care to private agencies within 20 percent of the urban area. I believe that this is an example of where we could possibly start to cut and to curtail some of the costs that we have.

* (1620)

I believe it is important that we continue to do this in a way that is methodical, and I believe that our Health minister (Mr. McCrae) has been showing ongoing that he is well in charge of this situation. I believe that he is in fact giving the leadership that we need as a government in order to direct the 25 percent of privatization within the urban area. I believe that he is, together with his staff, looking at areas of assisting those, and, on the other hand, though, also opening up to others who wish to become involved in that area of privatization.

The other area that I would like to address is the fact that, at this point in time, we do not see at all where we will be adding any services towards our home care clients—rather, that we will not be adding any costs to our home care clients. We want to do this in an area that is sustainable as we move on as a government and as we move on within the home care area, certainly it is our intention to be able to service the 17,000 Manitobans who are today receiving home care. We want to be able

to do it in a way that is going to allow them to be able to participate in an improved manner, in fact, from what they had been receiving to date.

In 1988-89, the cost for home care was \$1,667, and in 1995-96 the projected cost is \$3,160, and that is per client. This is an increase, Mr. Chairman, of 89 percent. One of the previous speakers was stating, if we project into the future as to what some of these costs will be it becomes unaffordable and so, therefore, it is imperative for us as a government to look at ways and areas of trying to streamline a system that is quickly becoming unaffordable. That has been looking at the fiscal end of it.

I believe the other area that we need to look at and look at very seriously is the ability for us to continually give better home care to those who need it. I believe it is important that on a continued basis that this improvement be given to those who cannot look after their own needs. We certainly have that responsibility, and I believe that our minister has on a daily basis been showing through the comments that he has made and answering the questions within the House, he has been on an ongoing basis stating that he does want what is best for the clients. That is his No. 1 objective. Certainly, I support him in doing that. I believe that as he looks at this area through his department that certainly he is doing his utmost in trying to provide the services that the clients need within our province.

The other area that I would like to stress is the fact that within the rural areas, and this of course applies to the constituency I represent, certainly there is no change that we foresee within the future. The home care that they are being provided will continue. The objective, of course, that we have is to continuously provide better home care, and I believe that as we look at other options as they are presented to us that certainly we will be able to do that. I also believe that as we continue to challenge the way things have been done that with that also comes improvement.

It is interesting that listening to the members opposite that status quo seems to be the phrase that is used on a continuous basis. Things have worked this way, we do not want to change. I guess when I look at the businesses that I have been involved in, if we would have taken that approach on an ongoing basis we would not be in existence anymore.

So I certainly support our minister in the route and the way that he is going in looking at the whole area of home care. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Mr. Chairman, I rise too today to commend the tireless activities of our Minister of Health in this management of this crisis. I would suggest with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleagues on the other side of the House that instead of bringing a motion of censure at this point in time, they ought to be lauding the tireless efforts of our Minister of Health. I would bring a certain perspective to this Chamber this afternoon that I would like to share with my colleagues and that is that I received information this morning from my constituency worker that my constituency office was being picketed by the home care workers. So I had occasion to immediately attend to River Heights, to my constituency office, and I want to tell you and my colleagues here in the Chamber that I found a number of women who were home care workers picketing in front of my office, and I attended on the picket line with them.

I want to tell you that these people are most unhappy at the position in which they have been put. These are caring, concerned, hardworking, honest individuals in the home care field, and they feel bitterly uncomfortable being placed in an adversarial position against their employer, the government of Manitoba, and walking away from their customers or consumers, their patients. They have real trepidation for the future and the outlook of their patients, and several women told me today that they are, in fact, praying for an end to this strike.

I asked them what they knew about the ongoing negotiations, and these individuals are being kept in the dark. They are not up to date on the issues at hand, and I think I can bring some further light to this issue in the fact that I have had the advantage of being consulted and advised by a number of physicians who reside in the constituency of River Heights. They tell me that really the issue, the root of this issue, is not privatization. We have heard, like an endless broken record, the issue of public versus private and privatization and for-profit being bickered and bantered back and forth in this House, and I would suggest with the greatest of respect to the honourable colleagues across the way that, in fact, this is

not really the heart of the issue that we are facing in this Chamber and on the streets of Winnipeg today.

In fact, the real issue is quality management of the home care that is being delivered to the sick, to the elderly, to the frail in the province of Manitoba. We look across the country of Canada, this vast dominion of ours, and we can cite province after province where individual provinces have let the contracts on a competitive basis to all sorts of different care delivery models and functions, and, in fact, we are opening this issue up for competition. We are moving the home care delivery of care from the monopolistic, centralized, institutionalized approach of governance to open competition, to efficiency, to flexibility, and these are the real issues that we ought to be addressing and speaking about.

* (1630)

These are the issues that we ought to be taking to the front steps of the building and to the workers and to the patients and to the public at large, Mr. Chairperson. In fact, what I would cite and lay before this Chamber today is that by the very virtue of the structure of our civil service, and we have a hardworking, dedicated, committed civil service, and I am not for a moment deprecating their efforts, but what we face is a group of individuals who do not have the skills at hand in order to monitor, to direct and to plan a future for the home care which is going to be delivered in our province in the years to come.

I have received this information from physicians who are intimately involved with the delivery of this service. I have received this information from physicians who are crucial care deliverers in the secondary and the tertiary hospitals in our province, Mr. Chairperson. All of these individuals are really struck with the risk to which our population has been placed. I would suggest, with the greatest of respect, as pawns, that they are making our consumers, our patients, our frail, pawns to a labour dispute, to a bunch of organizers who are saying that they feel that they will be done out of a job personally themselves. I do not see a real concern for the people whom we ought to be addressing and the concerns that we ought to be addressing in this struggle.

We are looking at a portion of government where spending has increased from a million dollars to \$91

million this year. This administration of this portion of government care, of health care, has expanded and exploded like Topsy. Now, one of the things that our honourable Minister of Health must ensure, when he is in charge of a department, is that the people of Manitoba are getting the most efficient model possible, that they are getting the best product for the tax dollar that is being spent.

I would suggest, with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleagues across the way and to their associates in the labour movement, that the way this present home care delivery is structured is totally, grossly and alterably inefficient. I can tell this House that we have experienced a total of 11 percent increase in numbers of consumers since 1988-89—11.6 percent. But we have experienced a 62 percent increase in the cost of service units over that same period of time. There is more money, six times the amount of money, being spent to deliver care to our sick and our elderly.

Why this is so important, Mr. Chairperson, is because we are going to be facing, we are going to be living with, hospitals without walls. This is going to be the model that the way that our health care will be delivered in the future. We no longer can place people in institutions, secondary or tertiary institutions, to convalesce. The best place for somebody to convalesce is in their own home, and there must be individuals who can consult and contact them on a regular basis to see whether they need the services that are being afforded to them through home care.

There is absolutely no reason to continue delivering home care to somebody on an early release program after they have recovered, but with the way this current program is structured, who is going to make the change, who is going to break the continuum of the status quo? Will it be the hardworking caring individual health care worker who is being dispatched to the resident? I would suggest, with the greatest of respect, no, that is not his place or her place to do this. They are going out to do a job, to establish security, to establish harmony in a relationship with the people whom they are serving, and they will do that job and do that job very well.

I am told by the physicians who have consulted with me on this issue that because of the caseload, the incredible caseload, that our home care co-ordinators are

unable to keep in touch with the consumers that are using our product, and therefore we are wasting endless dollars of public money by the continuation of services when they are either inappropriate or not needed or should be changed or increased or improved but, in order to get effective, flexible, appropriate service on the home care, we need competitive, concerned people who can only be delivered from the private sector.

We are looking at introducing competition, as I think has been said before, in the delivery of home care to 25 percent of the services within the city of Winnipeg. I would like to reiterate, because we have heard fearmongering voiced abroad these days, that we are moving to a private system. This is hogwash. This is mindless prevaricating on the part of fearmongering individuals who are trying to be incendiary and to raise alarm in the minds and hearts of our consumers. There will be no change in services provided. There will remain a single payer.

The government of Manitoba will continue to monitor the quality of the standards that will be delivered in the way of home care. and I would suggest, I would invite some real thought on the part of the union negotiators, on the part of the advocates for the union as well as my own colleagues that some sort of alternative delivery of care be considered. I think that there are many, many individuals, concerned individuals in the health field who have directed their attention to these issues and would welcome the opportunity of introducing some alternatives to the present status quo.

* (1640)

It is ironic perhaps that as we wind through these days that we are in fact the party of change, we are the party of reform, we are in fact improving the status quo. We are not looking back and trying to maintain an empty history of something that was just for the sake of maintaining it.

We want to say it can be done better, and that is the only way that we will be able to spend the taxpayers' dollars with thought, be able to function in the new environment in which we are faced with diminishing federal dollars on our revenue, increasing demand—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Radcliffe: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Thank you very much for that. I would heartily commend the services of our Minister of Health in his administration of this issue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, it has been a while since I have had the opportunity to speak during the Health Estimates. Given the last number of hours, we have seen a number of the government members stand up in defence of the Minister of Health, and I guess one has to appreciate the sensitivity and acknowledge right from the word go that ultimately what we are seeing is a number if not virtually all government members in support of the government's actions with respect to home care services. It does cause, I guess, to a certain degree, some concern in the sense that we as an opposition party have attempted, first and foremost, to indicate to the Minister of Health that the current direction the government is taking on home care services and the privatization thereof are not in the best interests of Manitobans as a whole. The reason, and the primary reason for that, is the lack of any sort of solid information being provided that this government has taken into account in making its decision to privatize home care services. [interjection]

There are numerous reports, as the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) alludes to. Yes, there are reports, but I have challenged and requested on numerous occasions both in the Health Estimates and Question Period for the government to provide specific information or specific recommendations that are there that have been well thought out, researched, that say that privatization of home care in the fashion which this government is approaching it is, in fact, in the best interests of the clients that receive home care services. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), to date, has not done that, and the member for River Heights alludes to what quite often the Minister of Health says, well, look what is happening in other provinces. Mr. Chairperson, what we are talking about in essence is the province of Manitoba, and, believe it or not, at times it can be bold. There is nothing wrong with a province attempting to lead as opposed to looking in other provinces and trying to do something in a half-baked, not well-thought-out fashion.

The Minister of Health has not presented the information that he has said is going to benefit directly—how the clients are going to benefit through this

process—other than a bit of rhetoric and a philosophical approach that this government is taking with respect to this issue.

I am having to—not completely conceded, but recognizing that the government is quite content on forcing privatization in home care services. Again, we as a party have attempted to get the government to do a couple of things. One Question Period I stood up and I asked the government to consider giving preferential treatment to nonprofit organizations—

An Honourable Member: Which we do.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) said, which we do. Well, I would challenge the member for River Heights to indicate on the record that preferential treatment in the putting out of the tenders will be given to nonprofit organizations. Why should that occur? Quite simply, it is that there are completely different objectives and priorities from a nonprofit association such as the Victorian Order of Nurses and a private company such as We Care. Ultimately, that sort of consideration should be given.

Again, today, Mr. Chairperson, we tried to indicate to the government, look, if you are going to continue to steamroll ahead or go in full gear towards the privatization, why will you not consider giving some sort of a province-wide wage scale? Made reference to the construction industry [interjection]

Well, the member for River Heights says, why should we dictate that? If the government is not prepared to take some sort of action on behalf of the client to ensure that there is going to be quality service being delivered, then I think that again the government—and it reinforces the Liberal Party's position in terms of put that year of moratorium so you know what it is that you are actually doing before you actually implement something.

There is a valid argument for continuity of care and if you turn these jobs into minimum-wage type of jobs—some say it is fearmongering, you can call it whatever it is that you want. If you do not believe that that is not going to happen, then why would you oppose putting in some minimum standards when you put out the tender for call of contracts? Why do they not believe in

doing that? What is going to be the cost of doing that? Well, ultimately, what you will see, if you put in that, is you are giving a guarantee at least that there will be some wage above the minimum wage that is being offered on the home care services. [interjection] Well, you cannot compare apples and oranges. We are not talking about a widget or a service that—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Inkster. There seems to be a little bit of disturbance.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I am having great difficulty in hearing the member for Inkster. Perhaps you might bring the members present here in the committee under control, so that I could have the opportunity of hearing my honoured colleague.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister does have a point of order, and I would ask all honourable members to abide by the rules.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: May I commend the government House leader and thank him for his assistance at trying to control and contain some of the reaction from the government benches.

As I have been trying to indicate, there needs to be more attention given to this particular issue. The clients, the home care workers, the average Manitoban have to be provided the opportunity to be able to participate in the decision-making process. They have been denied that process in the sense that we did not hear about this until after the fact. Once the government has made the decision, then we hear about it. Had the government done it in a proper fashion having the horse ahead of the cart, for example, then what we would have seen was a higher sense of co-operation amongst the clients and the workers and the average Manitobans that we referred to amongst the opposition party so at least I can speak on behalf of the Liberal Party.

When you introduce a program that is completely different—this is not a minor modification, this is a

significant change which is going to have a long-term impact on the quality of service being delivered for individuals that are in need. The member from Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) says it is only 25 percent. You are right. It is only 25 percent, and it is going to be expanded. It is only 25 percent today—[interjection] Well, the member from River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) says we are going to monitor it. Well, that is good that you are going to monitor it. These are maybe things that you should have been doing before you made the decision, and why were those things not done? Why did you not talk to the clients? I wonder if, in fact, this was a cabinet discussion. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. All honourable members will have plenty of opportunity during this debate to put their words on the record. I would appreciate it if we allowed the same courtesy to the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if, in fact, this whole privatization scheme was brought to the caucus as a whole, and I see I only have a minute left, and no doubt I might get another opportunity in order to continue putting some more comments on the record, but I do not believe that the caucus in its entirety was even informed prior to this particular issue being made public. If, in fact, members have been, then I challenge those members to put on the record the people that they talked to, because I have yet to find a client, a home care worker, an outside Manitoban who has actually been consulted by this government prior to the decision being made.

I leave that as an open challenge in hopes that members will actually speak on it.

* (1650)

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson, for giving me the opportunity to bring a few more comments on this extremely important issue to this Assembly. I would like, first of all, to say that some of the fears that I have heard expressed by some honourable members in this Chamber are simply fears, and they are simply fears because they speak these words out of ignorance.

Ignorance, of course, always does breed fear. The unknown is always something that we worry about and we wonder about, and I find it very interesting that the honourable member for Inkster in his comments that he made a few minutes ago referenced some other countries and how they provide services to their clients, whether these countries were, in fact, U.S.S.R. members or were other countries that had similar types of government that restricted and enforced and simply manipulated people to accepting the fact that there was only one way to do business, and that way, of course, was determined by the dictatorial approach of an administration that needed to exercise total control.

That, of course, is the mentality, Mr. Chairperson, of most of the members, not all of the members, but most of the members sitting in the opposite benches, and I was somewhat surprised to hear the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) reference these kinds of comments, simply because of the fact that he has always put himself off as a free enterpriser in this Chamber, yet today he confirmed my worst fear, that the Liberal Party of this province would simply revert back to the old way that politicians used to do business in this province and as they are currently doing in Ottawa, and that when anybody has the gall to oppose an issue in their caucus or in public, they are immediately extricated from the party.

That is, of course, the mentality that the honourable member for Inkster brings to this Chamber, and that is, of course, the kind of leadership that he would want to impose upon his party and the people of this province. I think the people of this province clearly have demonstrated that they will have no part of that kind of an approach to government.

I want to reiterate some of the things that have been said here today and reflect, Mr. Chairperson, on the resolution that was put before this House just a few days ago by the honourable member for Kildonan. That, of course, exemplifies the whole approach to government that we have seen in the past in this province. It is the socialistic approach and dictatorial kind of an approach to making sure that the menialization of the services provided are provided equally to everybody and no matter at what cost.

You see, our province has always prided itself on one thing. Number one, we pride ourselves in the fact that

our civil service is top notch and they are professional and we pay them for what they do and we reward them for good thinking, good, sound business principles and the application of services to the people that they represent. We, as members of the Legislature, should stand proudly in this Chamber and speak for the people and speak on the people's behalf that we serve. We are, after all, servants, and the resolution that is being put before us by the honourable member for Kildonan is a dictatorial type of an approach to totalitarianism the likes of which I have not seen before.

That has been rejected solidly. That approach has been rejected solidly today by our civil service in a strike vote that they held in supporting their true principle, No. 1, of serving their client, and that is the people of Manitoba. That is what our people, our civil servants want to do, and that is what they are good at and that is what we as a government will support them in doing. The service that they provide is in many cases extremely, extremely valuable, and we do not underestimate them and we should not underestimate them.

The home care issue is an issue where the word "competition" seems to strike fear in the hearts of those members that sit opposite that simply have no knowledge of what the true principles of service mean. The true principles of service to the ultimate ability are competition, because we compete with one another to be able to provide the service to you better than anybody else can do it. That is true competition.

Now, I will give you an example. If we only had one automobile dealership in this province, need that automobile dealership pay any attention to what the price of the product was that they sold? Would they need to pay any attention to the service that they presented to the customer? No. The U.S.S.R. demonstrated this clearly. They needed only to provide the services at the lowest possible, possible level, and that became the standard. That is, of course, what our members opposite are being proponents of. There are a few on the opposition side that do not subscribe to that kind of principle, and I am glad to see that, but most of the opposition members, and I should exclude the honourable member from St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) from those kinds of comments, because he is a man that understands true business principles and the application of it and he knows what the word "service" means.

Simply, I say this to you, that the principles of providing service to our elderly people are no different than providing services to an automobile customer. The elderly people want good, quality care. They want it provided when they need it and they want it provided to them by professional people that know what they are doing. I believe that we have those kinds of people in this province. I believe that most of our home care workers are those kind of people, but we have no way of knowing whether we can do better. We have no way to judge currently whether we could do better. What the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is suggesting is that we try and look at different ways of providing those services to find out whether we can actually weigh our values that we apply today compared to some others that might be applied.

The fear that inhibits the opposition from accepting those principles is the fear that somebody might, in fact, have a better idea than they had. We spend today roughly about \$90 million, \$91 million on Home Care. When we took office, the opposition, the NDP government of the day spent \$39 million. Our home care component has increased by roughly, the clientele has increased by roughly about 11 percent, yet we have more than doubled, almost tripled our expenditures to home care. [interjection] The honourable members opposite, the opposition party, the NDP have at every chance possible voted against increased spending to home care. They voted against this last budget and this last budget contained an \$8-million item increase to Home Care, and the opposition NDP party voted against it.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

* (1700)

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Chairman, I would like the opportunity to say a few words on the motion put forth by the member for Kildonan which condemns our Minister of Health and also our home care system. I want to say, I think we have an excellent Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). I think he has done an excellent job and certainly deserves our support and the support of all Manitobans and, that is right, he will certainly get our vote and I think the next election will prove that we will get the vote of many more Manitobans also.

As far as our health care system, I think we have one of the best systems in Canada, really.

Mr. Chairperson: I am having great difficulty. I am not sure if it is the microphone that is not working, but for some reason I am having a great difficulty not hearing the member for Gimli, so if we could keep it down in the Chamber I might be more able to hear.

Mr. Helwer: I am getting lots of help here. It is okay. I was talking about the good health care system that we have in Canada and the fact that we are doing it even in spite of our friends the federal Liberal government in Ottawa, reducing the expenditures. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) talked about—

An Honourable Member: The GST.

Mr. Helwer: No, he did not talk about the GST, but he talked a little about the home care system and health care. One of the reasons that we have our problems in Manitoba with trying to fund the services that the people are asking for is because of the federal Liberal cutbacks. That is where the problems begin. They have deducted not only—we lose \$116 million this year, another \$104 million next year. How are we going to manage and provide the same services?

Our minister is just doing an excellent job of a balancing act, of trying to balance his budget and also provide the services. At the same time we are spending some \$91 million on home care, which is about \$8 million more than we spent last year. So we are certainly not walking away from the health care system; we are there trying to improve it at all times.

An Honourable Member: It is a responsibility.

Mr. Helwer: It is a responsibility we have. Our Premier (Mr. Filmon) has said over and over again, the main core expenditures—Health, Education, and Family Services—we must look after those three departments, and we have over the past very well. We are really pleased that we are able to continue and provide the home care system that is needed today.

Also, with the strike as it is, the home care workers have not gone back to work because of their strike—there is no strike in rural Manitoba. There are no services

affected in rural Manitoba, so there is no need for the home care workers outside of Winnipeg to be out on strike. In most of my constituency very few workers are actually out on strike. Most of them are working and providing the service to the—[interjection]

Whatever, that is right. They are providing the service to the clients, the home care clients, as they were before, even though they are being harassed by the unions. The unions are telling them that they are going to deduct their wages, that they are going to hold up their pay. The unions are being ruthless. They are threatening the home care workers that want to work and provide the service. It is unconscionable of the union to do this, but they are getting away with this. We could never get away with this as a government, I can assure you. We would be just taken apart by the news media. Yet the news media plus the union get away with this kind of actions. I do not know why.

On the privatization or the competition, the fact that they ought to put part of the services out for competition in Winnipeg, there is nothing wrong with that. In 99 percent of the cases where things go out for tender, they always come back less. They come back and cost the government less. Private enterprise can run, whether it be home care or businesses, any kind of business—it always does a better, more efficient job than the government can. If we have a bureaucracy to contend with, the private companies can always do a better job, and not only in home care, but in many other things that the government has done. They can contract out, whether it be in Highways or Natural Resources or in other departments. These services can be provided by private companies, smaller companies much more efficiently than we could do it through a government department. So home care is no different really.

There is nothing wrong with putting out 25 percent of the services required in the city of Winnipeg out for competition, out for bids. I think this will prove to be a good move and should work quite well.

We have another service that we provide through the Department of Health, and that is our senior resource centres. This is seniors working for seniors. This program has worked very well in my constituency. I have one in each of the larger communities, Stonewall, Teulon and Gimli. The one in Gimli has been operating the

longest, and we have an excellent co-ordinator there who just does an excellent job in co-ordinating services.

How this works is that she provides services to seniors and hires people to do the job. It is not free. They charge the seniors and the seniors do not mind paying for some of the work that they get done, so we call it Seniors Helping Seniors. In some cases, they are a fee-for-service; in other cases they are seniors who are volunteering to do some of this extra work, and it has worked very well, especially in the area of Gimli. We have an excellent co-ordinator, and the service has kept expanding and is working very well, and this helps take the pressure off some of the home care system, and it works very well.

Just a little more on health care, some of the experiences I have had on a health board of a small community health centre, these smaller centres have always provided excellent service to local clientele. We have always had excellent medical staff in the rural areas, have excellent people. I think some of our home care workers who are maybe only part time, who do other things, help their husbands with farming operations, with other operations, they provide just excellent service for the home care system.

This morning, I had the opportunity to speak to a couple of Grades 11 and 12 classes in the collegiate, two different classes. After I spoke a little about the budget, about health care, about home care and about some of the services we provide and some of the things we provide for economic development, we opened the floor to questions, and I thought they would have questions about maybe home care or Pharmacare, some of the changes we made.

* (1710)

That is not what they were interested in. They were interested in jobs, in their careers. There was more talk about the Constitution than there was about home care, health care and Pharmacare, so it really was not an issue. It is not really an issue out in the country because I think the services are being provided by home care. I think the co-ordinators who co-ordinate the home care system in rural areas have done just an excellent job of keeping the services there and keeping our clients serviced for the needs that they require.

As far as I know, there have been very, very few people with long-term ailments moved to hospitals because of the fact that most of the home care people have been able to continue with their service and it is just great.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on this issue.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I, too, would like to make some comments to the, what is it called, resolution put forward. I would, first of all, like to start out, I guess, just by refuting everything that the resolution states and also would like to suggest that I would like to commend the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). I certainly know in the past travelling with him throughout the province of Manitoba and throughout the city of Winnipeg that I think when you are facing tough decisions that the government is, and the minister obviously is, that the decisions are not always going to meet with favourable approval from the people. From time to time they will express themselves in different ways, and I think that the minister has made himself available to all groups and all people on both sides of the issue. I think he is to be commended. I think the job that he is doing is to be commended in the sense that he has faced the people; he knows and understands the realities of the world today.

I think that the suggestion that we introduce some competition into the health care industry and the home care industry particularly is a valid suggestion. I think that for far too long governments have been faced with the decisions of controlling expenses. I think that the honourable minister has taken these challenges and moved forward in a very positive way, in a positive way for all Manitobans.

There are certainly segments of the society that will disagree, and I know that the honourable members opposite will always disagree. They seem to have the mentality that as long as you sit and watch it, it will never change and therefore people must be satisfied with what you are doing.

I would like to speak personally about the home care workers in my particular constituency. I think that they are a sincere, hardworking group of people that are under great duress. I think the attitude of a rural Manitoban, from my perspective, is that they want to work. They are

willing and capable, and sometimes from time to time when decisions are made beyond their control that they feel that they have a commitment also, I guess, in the sense of serving the union. I think that they sincerely have a real desire and a sense of urgency to get back to serving the clients, serving the people. I do not think you will find anybody in rural Manitoba that is afraid of competition. I think that is something that has to be discussed openly and clearly amongst the members in here.

I notice that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has suggested that we have—I am not sure exactly of the term—but I guess he would say preferential treatment for some of the bidders in all areas of government tender. I would suggest to you that certainly would open up a can of worms.

I guess we would all be looking for the angle to get into that preferential list that he would suggest would send contracts our way and perhaps lead to a more profitable preferential group of people, but I wonder if it would be actually providing better service, or a better service at a better price, to the people of the province of Manitoba, the people, who I might add, are the people that we represent when we make budgetary decisions, when we make decisions that affect the province. I do not think we do it carelessly or callously. It is something that we do and make decisions on what we feel is right.

I think definitely we are in a time of economic restraint. I think that is obvious by every jurisdiction in Canada, no matter of what political stripe. Decisions are being made and decisions are being made on the basis of economics and also of what the population really wants to hear.

It is quite easy to stand up and defend the status quo. Again, from rural Manitoba, I think the attitude out there is that every day it changes, and, if we are not prepared to change, we will never move forward. Unfortunately, the members opposite with their head-in-the-sand attitude are basically hoping that these times will pass and pass without anyone noticing as to where the economy is going and to what the people are saying.

I would also like to suggest that today's results, I certainly commend the MGEU on their decision as far as voting in favour to not withdraw services from the people of Manitoba. I think that every member on this side has

suggested that the home care workers in the province of Manitoba are the best, and I think we feel that the government employees' union and the people are probably the best providers of service compared to the other provinces and jurisdictions within the country. I certainly commend them on their fine decision. I know, again, speaking from my constituency, we are a group of people that want to work, want to serve the people and that is why they voted not to strike.

Getting back to the resolution put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I would like to suggest that when you are forced to make reductions because of a federal policy that withdraws X amount of dollars from your funding, hard decisions have to be made. I certainly commend the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) on not only his ability to make the hard decisions, but also on his ability to go out and face the public and speak with them as he has done at several public functions. I think it shows a real commitment to the communities that he is serving and to the province on a larger scale. I think the honourable members across the aisle could probably take a lesson from the Minister of Health in the sense of his commitment to the people.

I think that as anyone might suggest, if you had an option to not deal with the issues, it would certainly be easier. I think any time you are dealing with the economics of it and there is a way to avoid the situation, in days gone by it was traditionally done by throwing more money at the problem but not necessarily dealing with the problem. It is quite easy to overlook it when the money is plentiful, and the people are demanding that the services be increased.

Currently, I think, what the government is facing is the fact that the people of Manitoba have spoken. They have asked the government to control the fiscal spending of this province and taken responsibility and, again, I would say that the honourable Minister of Health has shown to the people that he is capable of doing this. I think he has met the challenge, he has identified what the obstacles are, and he has set up a path which will lead all Manitobans in the future to the end that we all hope that we have, which is a better health care system, a better home care system and doing it within our means, which I think is the bottom line for all of us.

It is, again, quite easy to avoid the situation if we have the money to throw at the problem, but this is not the case and I do not believe it is the case anywhere else in Canada. I would suggest that he is doing a very admirable job and probably is considered amongst his peers as a leader and—

An Honourable Member: The dean of Health ministers.

Mr. Tweed: —the dean of Health ministers, as my honourable friend has just suggested. I think that there is no one in this House on either side that would envy the position, but I think we all have to sit and stand and admire the work that is being done. With the straightforwardness that he has shown in the House and to the province and people of Manitoba, I think it is to be commended, and I would suggest that members opposite, instead of dealing with personal insults and personal trivialities of the situation, should stop and take a long, hard look at what the minister is doing, the tough decisions that he is making and the way that Manitobans are responding to them.

Again, I reflect back to today's results. I think it has been a very positive turnout, and I think it shows that all people in Manitoba want to work for the betterment of the people of Manitoba.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to just put on the record that I commend the Health minister on what he is doing, and I wish him a long future in the position.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to put some brief comments on the record at this time and look forward to a further opportunity to speak to this motion because although lacking in substance, it is one that calls for a response, and it will get a response, I think, by a number of other members and probably additional responses thereafter as necessary to answer some of these unfounded and insubstantial allegations by the member opposite in his motion.

I want to begin by telling you a little anecdote, Mr. Chairman. There was an old gentleman sitting on his porch one night, watching the sun set from his porch, and a neighbour, another old bachelor, came across the pasture to visit him, and they were sitting on the porch watching the sun go down, sharing a drink, and the dog

began to whine. There was dog laying on the porch there. It was an old bloodhound. He began to whine and he continued to whine with increasing fervour and enthusiasm until finally the visitor said to the old gentleman, Bill, your dog is whining, and Bill said, I know. He said, why is he whining, and Bill said, he is probably lying on a nail. Why does he not move, and Bill said, I guess it does not hurt enough yet.

We have just been subjected in this past year in this province for whatever reason to massive, massive reductions in funding support for Health that are unprecedented in the history of Manitoba. I am not here today to be critical of the federal Liberal government, though Heaven knows there is great legitimacy to attacks, I think, on the basis of these reductions in funding from the federal government, but I cannot, as someone who is in a position of leadership in this province, along with my colleagues on this side of the House, ignore the reality of those cuts.

Mr. Chairman, we are on a nail and it hurts. It hurts enough that we have to move. We have to manage differently. We have to change our approaches. We cannot, as is the luxury of members opposite, sit on the failed ideologies of past years and believe that there is not nails in there somewhere because there really is.

The pain of the status quo is very great, and the pain of passing on ongoing deficits to future generations is far too great for any of us on this side to in good conscience accept. We will not accept it, and we have the strongest balanced budget legislation as a testament to the reality of our commitment to the future of our children and ourselves. We have that balanced budget legislation in place, and we will abide by it as it is the law of this province.

Although it may be news to members opposite, it is not news to the members on this side of the House that there are new and creative and innovative approaches to public management, to delivering service to the taxpayer and to infrastructure management, and we are practising those. There are a number—I could elaborate, but in the current time I am allotted I will not, on our own department's innovative approaches to improving the quality and the services we deliver, not at additional cost, in fact, at reduced cost, the taxpayers of this province.

What is lacking in the debate and in many of the arguments that come across our way from members opposite is evidence of a rational approach. We have taken a rational approach to the management of these difficult issues that concentrates its efforts on providing the highest level of service we possibly can to the people who depend on that service, while considering what the costs are of providing those services and knowing what the costs are of being unable to provide those services in the years ahead.

We understand, with foresight as all good managers have, that it is necessary to manage within our means and we do that. We do that not by cutting, as the members opposite so often wrongly accuse us of doing, but rather by searching out innovative and creative ways to manage. It is that improvement in management that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has exhibited more aptly than, perhaps, any of us on this side of the House, and the way in which he has responded to these challenges creatively.

One of the ways that many other governments across the western world, whether the national, provincial, territorial or civic level, have managed successfully to derive better quality service at reduced cost is through what is called managed competition. Rather than a public, private debate, which is so often entered into by members opposite, really what we are talking about here, is a debate around whether you believe competition is good or bad. It is clear from the members opposite and their comments they believe competition is bad, something to be feared. I do not, nor do the members of the Conservative Party in this province. We believe that competition is, in fact, a good thing and, managed well, it can work well to serve our ratepayers. What is managed competition? Well, what that means is that you allow your public sector to be an equal competitor in providing services to the taxpayers of a jurisdiction. It works very, very well. You let the public sector enter into a tendering process.

An Honourable Member: This is an innovative approach.

Mr. Pallister: Now this is an innovative approach as the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) wisely observes, and the approach has been established and proven effective in many jurisdictions. Competition is the name of the game. It is not just an issue of privatization, it is a management tool to provide better

services at lower cost. Now the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and I am glad to see that he is participating in the discussion, has made the observation or suggestion, and I respect the fact that he has made a suggestion despite the irony of the fact that his federal cousins cut tremendously the amount of financial support that we have for Health. The member to his credit unabashedly, unashamedly, is willing to spend more here in Manitoba. Despite the fact that we have less from the Liberals in Ottawa, he says we should spend more here.

Now how should we spend more? What he suggests is that we should buy votes from our nonprofit sector. Buy votes from them, he says, by giving them preferential advantage—it is hilarious, I am sorry I laughed there, but it is hilarious to me—preferential advantages in a tendering process. The member clearly does not understand even the most basic element of a tendering process. But the fact is when you stack up your costs to projected revenues derived and you put in a bid and you respond to it, the thing that the members of the New Democratic Party constantly attack private sector companies for doing is for factoring in—what?—profit.

Nonprofit agencies do not factor that in at all and they have an innate, built-in advantage in the tendering process for that fact, for that very simple reason. They

are advantaged by these tenders and should not fear them for they should, by the very fact that they do not require the additional expense and profit in their proposals and responses to tender, should bear an immediate and very real advantage over private sector competitors.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he gets his wish, should support us certainly and totally on this issue, because if he wants advantages for nonprofit agencies, there is no surer way for nonprofit agencies to derive advantages than to participate honestly in a tendering process.

I have faith in the Victorian Order of Nurses and other nonprofit agencies the member appears not to have because I believe—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 5:30 p.m., the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 23, 1996

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