



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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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.
JENNISSON, 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	Rupertsland	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

Monday, April 29, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Gertrude Firth, Dorothy Carter and C. Saunders requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Colleen Alecci, Michel Levesque, Philip Malzensky and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of J. Jorundson, E. Jorundson, L. Millar and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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 (by leave). 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 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 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?

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.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). 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.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). 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.

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?

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.

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 and directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Headingley Correctional Institution—Uprising

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I want to take this opportunity to report to all members of the Legislature and to the citizens of Manitoba on the major uprising which occurred last week at Headingley jail.

As you know, due to a series of circumstances which have yet to be ascertained, inmates at the medium-security facility overpowered corrections officers and took control of the institution. I can tell you today the full weight of the law will be brought to bear on those responsible, and we will take steps to ensure that it does not happen again.

Thankfully, there was no loss of life during the event. In fact, I have been told that loss of life may have been prevented in no small way by the heroic efforts of provincial corrections officers who put their own safety aside to take steps to protect their colleagues and some inmates. I believe it was only through the efforts of corrections staff, the RCMP and others who handled the situation in a professional and expert manner that we were able to take control of the jail in as short a time as we did.

My thanks go out to all of the officers involved, and I am sure that I am joined by all those in the House wishing for a speedy recovery for those injured. My thanks also extend to the Headingley fire department, the people of Headingley, and all those who co-operated with us to bring this situation under control.

Madam Speaker, we are still piecing together what may have precipitated this uprising. To the best of our knowledge at the moment, it was not a planned event. Early reports suggest that during a routine search for contraband, several officers were overpowered by inmates and the violence spread throughout the institution. Throughout the night and during the day on Friday inmates surrendered to authorities. Finally, at approximately 5 p.m. on Friday, RCMP and corrections officers moved into the facility to regain control and to take any remaining inmates into custody.

My staff informs me the staffing levels at the institution are not in question and were not the cause of this riot. The inmate-to-staff ratio at Headingley is on a level or better with other institutions across the country. I can also tell the House that we do not believe that the living conditions at Headingley or the way in which inmates

were treated was the cause of the incident. I want to remind members of this House, Headingley is a jail. It is not a resort or a place for a holiday. Inmates at the institution have left victims behind. There have been numerous improvements undertaken at the facility over the past few years. For security, we have upgraded fencing, installed TV cameras and installed other systems to protect both officers and inmates. We have improved windows, showers, water quality, educational and program areas and the kitchen.

Along with the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister), I inspected Headingley jail on Saturday and I can tell you I was appalled at the level of widespread destruction. Though some areas of the facility were left virtually untouched, what could be smashed or broken was. We are not yet able to put a dollar figure on the damage, but it is extensive. In consultation with my colleague the Minister of Government Services, we will put together a plan for the cleanup and the rebuilding process. However, to the extent possible, we will minimize the cost to the taxpayer by having those responsible for the destruction participate in the cleanup and the rebuilding of the facility as long as the work does not compromise the safety and the security of officers, the public or inmates.

* (1340)

This incident will be investigated from several aspects. The RCMP and ultimately the courts will deal with all criminal matters and, in fact, the RCMP have been in the institution all weekend to further their investigation. My department will also conduct a thorough review and investigation to determine why this happened and how it can be prevented in the future. My department has asked the federal corrections service to participate in this internal review of the matter which will look into all practices and procedures underway at Headingley up to the point where the RCMP took control on Thursday night.

Madam Speaker, I am committing today to an independent review of the circumstances, to ascertain if anything could have been done to prevent the riot and how we may be able to prevent future occurrences. I can also tell the House we will soon be implementing new procedures at Headingley to assist in reducing inmates' access to drugs while incarcerated. Some of the

proposals we are currently reviewing include random urinalysis testing, reducing drug dealing and intimidation through the interception of phone calls and other procedures which will reduce the possibility of visitors bringing drugs into the jail.

Madam Speaker, the 24 hours of the riot were an extremely difficult and serious time for all involved. Lives were in jeopardy. Fortunately, there were no deaths, and I want to again thank all of the officers for the way they handled this extremely volatile situation.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, this is indeed a difficult time for too many Manitobans, with the ongoing strike and the flood and now a riot, and we too join with the minister in extending our sympathies to those who have suffered injury, particularly to the correctional officers who in the course of duty were exposed to a terrible, terrible tragedy. We wish them full recovery and, as well, to the families, extend our best wishes, our condolences as they recover from this terrible tragedy in their particular families.

I also want to acknowledge the role of correctional staff throughout Manitoba who are now responding to new inmate populations that have arrived from Headingley. I spoke to one senior correctional officer on the weekend who had to work 36 hours just to deal with this crisis. These are difficult times. As well, we extend appreciation to the role of the police and the RCMP, in particular to the correctional officers who assisted and to the health care professionals who attended to those who were injured.

This is a very, very serious matter. This is an affront to security in this province, to law and order in our province and the consequences that must follow to those responsible must reflect the rebuke that is needed. We hope that the minister, in the course of the plea bargaining and even the positioning on sentencing, will reflect that rebuke.

However, Madam Speaker, we also must talk about who is accountable for what occurred. We are aware certainly of very serious questions having been raised, apparently over some period of time, about the security measures that are in place particularly at Headingley, but which bear a close resemblance to concerns that have been expressed by individuals employed at the Sheriff's

office. We cannot have individuals who are employed in the highest-risk situations in this province exposed to questionable procedures or lack of following a protocol, and serious questions must be raised beyond internal assurances from the minister's department about staffing levels and protocol.

The minister said today, after some pressuring, that she would agree to an independent review. We question when that review will take place and whether that review will be public, will be under The Evidence Act as a commission of inquiry. We expect no less and will demand no less for the staff and families and the taxpayers to ensure this never happens again. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Provincial Auditor's Report for 1994-95, Volume 4.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 11, The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pratique relative aux successions devant la Cour du Banc de la Reine, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 12—The Barbers Repeal and Hairdressers Repeal Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst), that leave be given to introduce Bill 12, The Barbers Repeal and Hairdressers Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur les coiffeurs et la Loi sur les coiffeurs pour

dames, and that the same now be introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members firstly to the loge to my right where we have with us this afternoon Gerry Ducharme, the former Minister of Urban Affairs, Housing and Government Services and member for Riel.

Also in the public gallery this afternoon, we have twenty-six Grade 12 students from Morden Collegiate under the direction of Miss Andrea Petkau. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

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

* (1350)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Headingley Correctional Institution Inquiry

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, as noted by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) and the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), the situation on Friday is indeed tragic. All of us, I am sure, have received numerous calls over the weekend. I have received a number of calls from correctional staff who have been absolutely traumatized by the injuries received by their co-workers and are absolutely traumatized about conditions that they feel have been developing in the Headingley Institution and remain in the Headingley Institution.

I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the minister's statement today that we are going to have an independent review, and in light of the fact that many of the correctional staff that we have talked to and listened to feel it is very important that we have a public inquiry so that their stories and their concerns and their issues can be heard by all of the public, would the Premier allow the staff to speak out and would the Premier allow the

public to hear through an independent public inquiry which we feel is necessary to get answers to questions and get solutions to the safety that is so paramount in our correctional system?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I just want to make sure that the member and all Manitobans know the process that has to take place.

First of all, there is currently a police investigation underway. That police investigation may lead to criminal charges. We, at the same time, will be conducting our internal review within the Department of Justice. That internal review will be supported by federal corrections, who will come in to provide an assessment to make sure procedures were followed.

But we also want to get to the bottom of this. We also want to make sure that this will never happen again, and that is why we have committed to an independent review, which may take place at the same time. If we were to wait for a public inquiry, that public inquiry could not take place until the completion of the criminal cases. That is why we have decided to proceed this way and to not wait.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the Minister of Justice and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to review the precedent established with the Westray public inquiry, where charges are pending and being investigated but a public inquiry is being conducted.

Madam Speaker, we have had reviews before, the 1989 review. There have been reviews in the past. There have been internal reviews that have talked about the safety of this institution, the physical limitations of the corridors, the bars, the situation with the ability to deal with the locking system in that jail.

Madam Speaker, I would encourage the Premier to take charge of an independent public inquiry, and I would like to ask the Premier a further question. Correctional staff have been informing us that three or four years ago—and they think it is four years ago—the staffing levels in the evening shift at the Headingley Correctional Institution were 25. When the incident took place last weekend, the staffing levels were 19, and sometimes they feel the staffing levels are even below that.

We believe that the correctional officers should be able to speak out at a public inquiry about these discrepancies of statistics between the minister and the staff. I would like to ask the Premier, will he allow the staff at the line level, at the range level, at the security level, to speak out in a public inquiry and deal with what they perceive to be a reduction of security at that institution?

Mrs. Vodrey: I would like to remind the member about his own colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), when he was minister of corrections. I have a newspaper article, September 29, 1983, in which the criticism is that with the Garson Report, completed before the riot that took place when that member was minister, they could not even get at the report at all, and that the member right across was saying the public has a right to know, strategies should not be cooked in the bowels of the institution. A secret, Madam Speaker.

This government has made it clear, there will be what is required and that is the independent investigation. We do not want to interfere, however, with the criminal case.

Let me deal with the staffing level as well, Madam Speaker. Earlier, before this government built the Remand Centre, this government dealt with Milner Ridge, populations were higher at Headingley. In fact, I look over information from when the member for Brandon East was in charge of the situation and the population was significantly higher by almost 100. Therefore, there was staff available to assist, but as that population moved from Headingley Institution to the new Remand Centre to Milner Ridge, then staff went with them. But the ratio of staff-to-inmate population, I can tell you, is as good or better than other institutions in this country.

Mr. Doer: I am again disappointed that the minister will not call for a public independent inquiry.

* (1355)

Security Measures

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the minutes of meetings that we have reviewed and other documents that we have reviewed have indicated a concern that has been raised by correctional

officer staff for the last three or four years about the level of staffing at the Headingley Correctional Institution.

They also raise the fact that the new psychologist at the Correctional Institution has condemned the ways of staff and said we need new ways to deal in the institution. The corrections system, in terms of security, was not acceptable.

Further, the correctional staff have been fighting a recommendation of this minister and this government to remove range bars. I will table today a memo confirming the decision to remove the range bars in Headingley Institution. They were reinstated in '87, Madam Speaker, and now in 1995-96 they are in the process of being removed. I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to overrule his Minister of Justice and stop the removal of those range bars, which the staff feel are absolutely essential to the security of themselves and the safety of their inmates.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): First of all, let me say the range bars were not removed. The range bars have not been removed and the range bars are not going to be removed. However, the member across the way seems to be dealing with information that he is getting—and some of that information can be very dangerous, such as the information which was put on Friday afternoon by the leader of the union. That information was just plain wrong, and that information jeopardized more people than any other event, that information by the leader of the union for correctional officers who came out and gave totally false information about death and about castration.

The effect of that was twofold: the effect was to endanger the inmates inside and to incite them to take further action; and then the human factor, the human factor which then every time that was commented upon, every time caused the phones to ring on the family lines while people worried about their loved ones.

Madam Speaker, the security instituted by this government has been continuous security improvement. Any changes to the range bars, the member clearly knows—Headingley Institution is the only institution across this country that has range bars, so in order to look at whether or not they would remain, work was being done with Workplace Safety and Health and with the institution and with the correctional officers.

There has not been the removal of range bars. During the disturbance on Friday, the range bars were in place. The range bars will remain in place.

Headingley Correctional Institution Inquiry

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

In 1989, the Justice department reported that Headingley has, and I quote from the report: marginal capabilities in terms of inmate movement control or group containment—and went on to say—there is a general recognition and frustration that the existing facility militates against safety security.

Given that the government has apparently rejected the essence of the recommendations of this 1989 report and given evidence that correctional officers have been cut by a third, and there is a lack of training, protocol and adherence to procedure at a time of an increasingly violent inmate population with gang activity, would the minister now agree to call a commission of inquiry under The Evidence Act that is public, and will the lack of response by this government be one of the terms of reference?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the people of Manitoba that over the past approximately six years, there has been in the range of \$700,000, \$750,000 improvements done to Headingley. Those improvements were to look at issues such as security, to close down certain living areas and to make sure that there were facilities that were appropriate.

Madam Speaker, we have a continuous plan to deal with the physical facilities at Headingley and particularly to deal with safety. However, members across the way have often wanted to make sure that Headingley was in fact an easy place to go. In fact, the one letter I got on corrections was from the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) who said, at Portage, there were not enough toys.

Madam Speaker, really, I look at the priorities of the members across the way and say that they, frankly, have not prioritized.

* (1400)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): A point of order, Madam Speaker. Beauchesne's Citation 417 is very clear, that "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Madam Speaker, on an issue as serious as the riot that took place at Headingley and on a question as serious as the one put by our member asking for an independent public inquiry, I would like to ask that you call the Minister of Justice to order and ask her to answer the question.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Security Measures

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my supplementary to the minister: When did the minister, who wants to get to the bottom of this riot apparently, become aware of allegations of problems with their closed-circuit TV's, including the monitoring of those, inaccessible antiquated equipment, one key that opens all cell blocks, widespread endemic drug use, procedures not followed, complaints about understaffing? Why was apparently nothing done and will that be one of the terms of reference of the inquiry?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member again is behaving today very much the way he behaved on Friday. He is continuing to spread his ideas, some views which are unsubstantiated, and Friday, while lives hung in the balance, the head of the RCMP for Manitoba met with the member for St. Johns, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and myself, to make it very clear that public comment was very unhelpful at that time while lives were in the balance.

I have to take a moment to commend the member for The Maples who, as a police officer, has clearly understood not to speak. The member across the way—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. If the minister wishes to get off into petty matters, I am sure she does not want to leave on the record of this House the misrepresentation that the RCMP in any way made some advice to me that comment was not appropriate. That is not true, and the minister knows that. I ask that she withdraw that comment on the record.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Inquiry

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My final supplementary, just a simple question: Will the minister undertake to ensure that there is accountability for what happened this weekend at Headingley jail, appoint a commission of inquiry under The Evidence Act immediately to begin the process of looking into this matter to ensure that it does not happen again? Will she simply answer that simple question?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, we certainly are moving immediately into accountability. That accountability will start where the people who caused the destruction of that institution will be the ones required to go in and clean it up. That is the start of accountability for the events on Friday.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, I have made it clear that we will be launching an independent review into the circumstances surrounding this event at Headingley while there is a police investigation, possible criminal charges, possible court cases and our own internal review.

Madam Speaker, just to clarify, also, a question the member asked about correctional officers' concerns. I would just like to say that on reviewing the grievances available, there are in fact no outstanding grievances at all that deal with staffing levels, that deal with safety, that

deal with security. They deal with matters such as sick benefits.

Home Care Program Privatization—Independent Commission

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, when the Premier addressed the Legislative Assembly of the northwest province of the Republic of South Africa, just this year, he stated, and I quote: Canadians have always valued consensus over conflict and co-operation over confrontation.

Madam Speaker, given the Premier's comments, I wonder why the Premier would not accept our proposal that a committee of eminent Manitobans from all political backgrounds, people like Sid Spivak or Ed Schreyer, study the home care issue for a year. It could end the strike; it would allow for the matter to be resolved, and it would allow for public input by the public of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as I have said before, our objective is to ensure that at all times we can provide for the needs of those who depend upon home care in this province. The fact of the matter is that this withdrawal of services unilaterally by the union demonstrates exactly the concern that we have, the valid concern, that with one monopoly provider in the system you can have people irresponsibly withdraw services from those who need them most, and we cannot tolerate that happening again in future. We will not have that in future because we will bring competition into the system, alternatives and flexibility into the system for the needs of those who depend upon home care, and that is the answer that all Manitobans want.

Mr. Chomiak: My supplementary to the Premier: If the government position on privatization is as strong as the Premier suggests, why would they not permit a nonpartisan group of eminent Manitobans to study the situation for a year, to come back with recommendations, to allow Manitobans to have input and to end the strike? What is the Premier afraid of?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the problem with members opposite is they do not like the decision. They are not interested in process. They are not interested in studies or reviews because they go back all the way to the time when New Democrats were in office. Price

Waterhouse, in '87-88, brought forward a study that was commissioned by New Democrats. It said that there should be user fees. It said that many people should be cut off the system. It said it should be income tested. It said all sorts of things.

There have been studies after studies. Governments are elected to make decisions and we are making a decision on behalf of those who are most vulnerable in society, those who depend upon home care. That is why we are doing what we are doing, which is to bring in an element of competition, an element of flexibility and assurance that we can provide home care in future and that the people who are most vulnerable will not be held up for ransom for political reasons by New Democrats or anybody else.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I take it that is a no.

My final supplementary to the Premier: If the government's plan and their contingency is working as well as the Premier suggests, why is the government introducing a program to start paying family members and untrained third parties directly from government to do home care? Their contingency plan is in serious trouble; they do not have the capacity. Why would they not want to end the strike now by having a commission study it for a year?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, when the union leadership, supported by the New Democratic Party, wants to close down the Home Care program, we are left in a position where we have to look at all options to make sure that the clients of this program get the proper care. The honourable member is now fighting the battles for the union leadership here and he would have far more credibility with the public if he would fight the battles of the clients of the home care system.

* (1410)

Society for Manitobans with Disabilities Funding Reductions

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, this government continues to cut those who are the most vulnerable in our society. We have been informed that the handicapped children who receive

adaptive skills and language programs in the preschool at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities will have their programs cut by this government. This \$500,000 cut amounts to 31.8 percent reduction in overall funding with the loss of 11 highly skilled professionals who work with the children.

My question to the Minister of Family Services is, why did this minister decide to take such vicious and drastic cuts to these very needy and vulnerable children?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me the opportunity to tell all Manitobans that we care about providing service for all of those who are challenged within our society, and especially children.

The changes that are happening are as a result of a collaborative process where the nursery at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities will no longer be an in-house service, but the dollars that were being spent on bricks and mortar are going to go into services for children. There will be a co-ordinated approach. There will be outreach, and there will be more children with disabilities served as a result of the co-ordination and the collaboration that has taken place.

Resources

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, given that the personnel, the money is not available to provide services, as stated by the society, can the minister tell the families affected by these cuts what resources will be available for their children so their futures are not being thrown away?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, again, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does give me the opportunity to present to all Manitobans the work that has been going on with the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, with the Rehabilitation Centre for Children, with the Children's Hospital and with St. Amant Centre, so that the outreach program for children and integration of children into the community will be of paramount importance. The nursery school, the bricks and mortar at the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, in fact, was not providing the same kind of

integration and outreach and opportunity for children with disabilities, and we want to see that kind of service provided in an integrated fashion in the best way possible so as many children as possible can receive the service they need.

Ms. Mihychuk: Will the minister guarantee to these families they will receive the respite services they need, the specialized education supports that they received and the specialized health care aid which these children need in their homes? Will the families receive that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again, I thank my honourable friend for that question because more Manitobans and more children with disabilities will be able to receive services as a result of the amalgamation, the co-ordination and the working together of those in the community who are very concerned about providing the supports for children with disabilities. We know that we will be able to ensure that more children are served through that collaborative process than have been served in the past, and I think that is good for Manitoba's children who have disabilities and are in need

Headingley Correctional Institution Inquiry

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

I would like to thank the minister for her all-party briefing Friday in response to the Headingley riot where we put the personal safety of those called to respond to ride above political rhetoric. This type of tactic should be supported by all members of this House.

The minister is saying a full public inquiry will have to wait until the criminal investigations are completed, but let us not sit on our hands. Let us get personally involved. Will the minister consider an all-party fact-finding mission of MLAs which would cost the public nothing? As a 20-year veteran of the Winnipeg Police force, I would be willing to participate in an investigation of the underlying causes of this horrific incident and submit recommendations to the minister.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and also his personal

professionalism which has not gone unnoticed by anyone. However, in our effort to make sure that we do not have to wait, that we do not lose time, it has been our government's commitment today to have an independent review take place. I look forward to being able to announce details on who will conduct that review in the very near future. We feel the same; we do not want to wait too long. We understand that police investigation and an internal review, and we have made the commitment today to an independent review so we do not lose any time.

Mr. Kowalski: Will the minister give her commitment that, unlike the 1983 report from the former NDP government and the 1989 report from the Conservative government, the recommendations that will come out of this inquiry will be acted upon?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, we certainly are always continuing to look for improvements, particularly in the area of the safety and security practices within our institutions. There are a number which are even scheduled for this year in 1996-97, and we can discuss some of those details in Estimates. A number of them are changes which are very enhancing in terms of, again, safety and security of prisoners. So I certainly can give the member my continued reassurance. That is exactly what we have been doing; that is what we expect to continue to do.

Report Recommendations

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Will the minister make a commitment to act immediately on the recommendations from the '83 NDP report and the 1989 Conservative report, to act immediately upon them instead of waiting? Can we have immediate action, act now instead of later?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, as I said in an earlier answer, there has been approximately somewhat over \$700,000 spent on the institution since this government came to power, as well as the development of the Remand Centre to reduce inmate population and Milner Ridge to deal with inmate population. So there has been a continued effort to work on recommendations, and as I said, there are a number which will be taking place in this year which were approved during the

Estimates process, which will continue, I believe, to add to the safety and security of those working in the institution.

Education System Special Needs Review

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are well aware that the number of students with special needs in our schools is increasing rapidly and the parents of those children want, I think, most clearly, longer term plans for their children. I want to ask the Minister of Education if she could tell the House why her department's review of special needs education announced several years ago, contained in Estimates for the past three years, so far has no public presence. Could she tell us why there has been this extraordinary delay?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I have to indicate initially that the plans for the special needs review are well underway, and we have been talking with various groups, various parent groups, various school groups, various educator groups, on the types of things that we feel will need to be looked at and examined in that study.

I do find it somewhat ironic that the member is asking for a study at a time when she is criticizing us for bringing in so much change. That aside, I have to indicate it is very much a priority of ours, and we should be hearing some announcement on that within the next few weeks or months.

* (1420)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell the House whether this long-awaited—and at my count it is over two years now—special needs review will in fact be nonpolitical in the same way that the minister claims her Enhancing Accountability review was a nonpolitical one? Will it have the opportunity for public input and will it indeed be an independent review?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure of the exact definition of “political” that the member is using, because there is a school of thought that any decision made by people who are elected is a political decision, anything done by people who are elected edges the realm of political decision making or activity.

Having said that, the review that we are envisioning for special needs purposes in the province will be widely encompassing, will include those very groups that I talked to. I have already had some preliminary in-depth discussions with parents, educators, administrators of people who work in depth with special needs students of all types, and their input will be required on a review of this nature.

So in the sense that it involves stakeholder groups, the member will have to decide for her own self if she thinks those stakeholder groups, because they are advocacy groups and lobby groups, enter into the realm of political or nonpolitical. I cannot judge that for her.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister confirm that this wide-encompassing, wide-ranging review will specifically address the role and obligation of private schools in the education of special needs students in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have discussed this, as I say, with all of those who educate special needs students. As the member knows, the independent schools also, like the public schools, do receive the same per capita grant for the special needs students they educate. There are many special needs students who, attending independent schools, are faced not only with the need to educate but also with the user fee they must provide for their Christian education or their all-girls education or whatever the milieu is they are looking for.

Certainly, Madam Speaker, since the independent schools do educate special needs students and many parents of special needs students wish their children to have a faith education, they certainly are not going to be excluded from providing input into this very important study.

Child Daycare Special Needs Funding

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Family Services, through the Child Day Care office, funds daycare centres and other facilities for children with special needs, including children with medical disabilities and/or hearing, speech or language problems.

Since the Minister of Family Services said today earlier that she cares about all who are challenged, I wonder if

the minister could tell us if she believes that the funding is adequate to provide for the needs of all these children in the existing system.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because I am not sure—and we have said many times before, the amount of money that goes into programs does not necessarily mean that the quality of service is any better or any worse than more or less money.

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that we as a government have taken a very proactive approach to co-ordinate services so that through the Children and Youth Secretariat we are looking at how we can best spend the dollars we have available to us to provide support for those most in need. We are working very aggressively to try to ensure that the dollars that are there are used in the most appropriate fashion so that children can get the services they need.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table a page from the minister's briefing book which shows that in the last fiscal year there was a waiting list of 46 children who could not get the services that they needed.

I would like to ask the minister how she can say that they care for all the children with disabilities when there is already a waiting list for these children. Why is the minister not providing the resources that they need?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that one area within my department that I have placed a very high priority on is on those with special needs, those with disabilities, and if ever there are more resources that come to the Department of Family Services, they go into those areas to provide that kind of support. We work to try to prioritize the most needy within the system and find the solutions to their needs. It continues to be an ongoing commitment by this government to ensure that as the resources become available we prioritize in the manner that will best address the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

Subsidized Spaces

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services how

she can say that she is making a priority of all these needs when as recently as a year ago the child care community thought that the minister was funding 9,600 cases when in actual fact the utilization was at about 8,200, and now we have a freeze and daycare co-ordinators and family daycare homes are losing cases and the minister is trying to pretend that she is meeting all the needs. How can these needs be met when there is a freeze on, and the cases are being denied from children who need it?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for being at the Manitoba Child Care Association's annual meeting on Friday with me, and he heard first-hand the comments that I made to the child care community. The comments were indeed that the spaces that were utilized last year will be there for anyone who needs those spaces. If in fact there is a discrepancy between what the department has allocated and what the true needs are in those daycare centres, we are looking at those on an individual basis and we are making adjustments where they need to be made.

In the meantime, we are going to be working very closely with the child care community around review of the regulations and the programming to ensure that the flexibility, the accountability and the services are there for working families throughout the province as it is needed. What was necessarily appropriate 10 years ago is not appropriate today. The child care community has agreed to work with us in a very proactive way and I am looking forward to that process.

Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism Employee Morale

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I want to table the Price Waterhouse December 1995 study of I, T and T. On page 13 of that study the following words are found. I quote: "... people recounted showing up for work one morning to find themselves in new areas, reporting to new bosses, with no accountable executive present to explain why. We found people today who ... simply continue to do the same job they did before the 1992 reorganization even though it no longer matches their current job description or assigned area. In several cases, we found people who were demoted and had not received any feedback that their performance was not adequate."

Madam Speaker, will the minister finally acknowledge that his department is obviously highly demoralized and in a state of complete chaos?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): No, I will not, Madam Speaker, but what I will tell the member is that the department had been involved and in charge, in part, of some \$1.5 billion worth of investment in this province, some 9,000 to 10,000 new jobs, the second-lowest unemployment in all of the country is in this province, record export sales to the United States and internationally. That is the kind of department we have and the people have been working on those kinds of projects.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister take responsibility, and apologize to his staff, for politicizing his department where it says very clearly: "... personal success within the organization is seen to be as much a function of personal contacts and informal relationships as performance and impact in economic development."?

Mr. Downey: No, Madam Speaker, because I have to say that those individuals who work within my department are to be commended for the hard work and effort that they put forward without any influence politically, unlike a department that I had responsibility for when I was first elected. This government was first elected to government in 1988, where we had the former member of Parliament for the New Democratic Party for Selkirk working in the government, where we had the former MLA Mr. Eyler working who was a former NDP.

He does not need to give me a lesson, Madam Speaker, as to political involvement in departments.

* (1430)

Departmental Review

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm that, contrary to what he told this House on Thursday, another study by another consulting firm, KPMG, in 1994, also reviewed his department's function and found, among other things: that duplication exists in the delivery of economic development services; there is overlap in competition for clients; this lack of collaboration amongst government-funded organizations is inefficient?

Will he confirm that he should have told the House about this study on Thursday, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I did not say that there was not absolutely another study. I said I would take it under notice, and I do apologize. When making reference to former people working for the departments, I forgot that he himself was a political hack, but I am not just sure what party it was, whether he was a Liberal or NDP at that particular time.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have two rulings for the House.

On April 18 during Question Period I took under advisement a point of order raised by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton). His point of order concerned the following words used by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae): "honourable members opposite might condone threatening and intimidating actions against home care workers, but they will not threaten or intimidate me."

Having reviewed Hansard, I am ruling that strictly speaking the opposition House leader did not have a point of order. However, I wish to give a very strong caution to the honourable Minister of Health; his words did come exceedingly close to being out of order. As well, in the minister's advice to me on the point of order on April 18 he went on to say "These people"—in reference to members of the opposition—"cannot be bullies like we see out on the streets of Winnipeg." The phrase "the honourable Leader of the Opposition thinks that he can bully his way around here" was ruled out of order in this Chamber on October 5, and the member speaking was asked to withdraw that phrase. I would remind the minister and indeed all members that inflammatory language does nothing to enhance the decorum and workings of this Chamber.

* * *

On April 22 the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) raised a matter of privilege and moved "That

this House do censure the Minister of Health for a breach of the privileges of its members in the matter of information made available about the privatization of home care, a misrepresentation of reports and background documents on this issue, and that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections."

In his submission on the matter, the honourable member for Kildonan I believe made three points: (1) he alleged that the minister had said one thing in the Chamber and something else outside the Chamber in regard to the existence of reports on contracting out of home care services; (2) he alleged that a document tabled by the minister during Committee of Supply on April 19 appeared to have been altered because pages were missing; and (3) he referenced the inability or incapacity of the minister to deal with issues.

In speaking to the matter of privilege, the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) noted that when he tabled the document in question, he had told the committee that the pages were misnumbered and that the pagination was incorrect but that he had been assured by people in his department that all of the pages that were part of the original document were included in the document the minister tabled on April 19. I have reviewed the Hansard of that day, and it confirms that the minister had clearly referenced the pagination errors in the document he was tabling.

A matter of privilege is a serious matter. Beauchesne's Citation 26.(3) indicates that the Speaker cannot rule on a question of privilege. The Speaker's function is limited to deciding if a prima facie case has been established, i.e., whether the matter is of such a character as to entitle the motion, which the member who has raised the question desires to move, to priority over Orders of the Day. Beauchesne also in Citations 115 and 117 states that the matter must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity.

I am satisfied that the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) did raise the matter at the earliest opportunity. That leaves us with the question of whether a prima facie case has been made. There are a number of Speakers' rulings on this point, but in particular I would reference the March 16, 1993, ruling which has some similarities to the matter before us at present. That ruling cites the Canadian authority on the subject of privilege.

Joseph Maingot. He clearly states that "An allegation of misleading the House is not out of order or unparliamentary, nor does it amount to a question of privilege."

The ruling just referred to and several earlier ones dealing with circumstances similar to the current issue include the statement that a motion of privilege should be worded in such a way that another member is alleged to have deliberately or intentionally misled the House and that a member must support his or her charge with proof of intent.

In the arguments put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan, he did not put forward any evidence to show that the Minister of Health had deliberately misled the House or intended to do so when making statements about the existence of certain reports. As to the question of the document tabled by the minister on April 19, again there is no proof that the minister deliberately gave the House an altered document. The third point made by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) concerned the competence of the minister. Maingot, on page 191 of his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, says "... allegations of misjudgment, or mismanagement or maladministration on the part of a Minister in the performance of his ministerial duties do not come within the purview of parliamentary privilege."

For these reasons I must rule that the honourable member for Kildonan has failed to establish a prima facie case of privilege.

* (1440)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Brandon Wheat Kings

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, as many of our members know, Manitoba is home to one of the most successful organizations in the Western Hockey League. Of course I speak of the Brandon Wheat Kings. What members of the Legislature may not be familiar with is the fact that 17 members of the Wheat Kings call Manitoba home.

Madam Speaker, in a day when hockey has become a truly international sport and where teams often have many

players on their roster from overseas, it is truly notable that they have this level of talent from our own province on a team as skillful as the Wheat Kings. The players of whom I speak are: from Winnipeg, Justin Kurtz, Bobby Brown, Dorian Anneck, Mike Leclerc, Cory Cyrenne, Mark Dutiaume; from Thompson, Vinnie Jonasson and Stefan Cherneski; from Brandon, Jeff Temple and Daryl Stockham; also Brian Elder from Oak Lake, David Haun from Solsgirth, Daniel Tetrault from La Broquerie, Sven Butenschon from Oakbank, Burke Henry from Ste. Rose, Kelly Smart from McAuley, Ryan Robson from Russell.

These young men are representing our province well as they travel to various locations in western Canada and the northwest United States. Represented in each one of these individuals is a dedication of commitment each has invested to reach this level of sport, and they are to be congratulated. However, equal recognition should also be given to the parents of these young Manitobans for the countless hours of encouragement and support they gave so that they could reach such a high level of achievement. We need more parents in society of the ones I speak. The world would be a much better place.

This past winter, these parents of these young hockey players have ventured out under severe conditions to support these young men and their team. It is for this reason that I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating these parents on this dedication and loyalty to their children and their team. I would also ask honourable members to join me in wishing Manitoba's Brandon Wheat Kings, under the coaching of Bobby Lowes and the management of Kelly McCrimmon, well in their bid to bring the Memorial Cup to Manitoba in 1996.

Wapusk National Park

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): Madam Speaker, I, too, have a statement for the House.

Last week, I was pleased to attend the official signing of the new national park, the Wapusk National Park in Churchill, along with the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik). This park will be a major effort not only for the North but also for the entire province.

First Nations people have been involved with the development of this park since 1989. This park not only

protects an area that has special meaning for northern Manitobans, but it also recognizes existing treaty and aboriginal rights through renewable resource use of the parkland. Traditional land uses will continue in the park. Treaty land entitlement is also being respected and the management board of the park consists of representatives from the LGD of Churchill, the First Nations of Fox Lake, York Factory, the Province of Manitoba and the federal government. There is a commitment that 75 percent or more of the park jobs will be held by northern residents and that northern businesses will have first consideration in terms of park businesses and services, and the Akjuit space project will not be affected by the park.

Quite simply, this park is a model of how parks should be created. The contrast between the launching of this park compared to the four new provincial parks that were announced last year in northern Manitoba is truly remarkable. My congratulations to the working committee, to the former mayor, Doug Webber, the current mayor, Mayor Michael Spence for his hospitality, as well as to Rod McKenzie, the emcee, and most certainly to Chief Norman Kirkness of Fox Lake and Chief Eric Saunders for their hard work; also to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Northern Affairs, and, of course, all the residents of the town of Churchill. Thank you.

Spring Flood Volunteers

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, as the MLA for Morris, I am keenly aware of the impact that this spring's flood has had on my constituents and, as well, some other constituencies. Most areas are experiencing water levels that are close, if not equal, to 1979 levels.

Closer to Winnipeg, Ste. Agathe and St. Adolphe are expecting the water to rise above the levels experienced in 1979. What this means, Madam Speaker, is that there has been a lot of activity as people are either sandbagging their own properties or helping others who are in need.

I want to take a moment to recognize the countless volunteers who are giving of their time and effort in selfless ways. In fact, the volunteer contribution has been overwhelming. I acknowledge these true Manitobans.

In addition to the volunteers, I also recognize the rural municipalities that very quickly assumed leadership roles

and helped their constituents. The R.M. offices were frequently the first place to get a phone call, and I appreciate and I think we all appreciate their preparedness.

I thank the Natural Resources staff for their great cooperation and for the high level of client service and for the tireless hours they are putting in towards the needs that require attention.

I also appreciate the Highways staff who have often worked around the clock helping to direct traffic and informing people who are on the roads about which highways were closed and how to get to their destination.

It can, Madam Speaker, be a very frustrating time when people's patience is stretched to the limit. I thank those affected for the patience they have demonstrated and for being so understanding. I know from the people I have spoken with, any and all efforts have been greatly appreciated. It is a testament to the spirit of Manitobans that, when there is a need, there are people who are willing to give of their time. We cannot control the weather, but we can roll up our sleeves and help our neighbours.

To all those who have helped their neighbours, we thank you.

Workplace Safety—Role of Labour Movements

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Sunday was a very important day for the working people of this country, Madam Speaker, the national day of mourning. In Thompson we were very fortunate to have a service to commemorate this, which was attended by Alexa McDonough, national Leader of the NDP, by Gary Doer, our provincial Leader, by Mayor Bill Comaskey, and by Bob Desjarlais, the president of the United Steelworkers of America Local 6166.

Also this weekend, Madam Speaker, to mark the occasion, we were very fortunate to have in Thompson a play called *Westray*, *The Long Way Home*, put on by the group, *Two Planks and a Passion*, a theatre group from Nova Scotia, which addressed first-hand the reality of what happened in the *Westray* mine disaster.

Madam Speaker, as we reflect on the day of mourning and the message of the impact that that tragedy had in the

province of Nova Scotia, I think it is important to recognize two things, first of all, the fact that we continue to have unsafe working conditions in this province. We have had six mining deaths in this province over the last number of years. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the co-operation of all honourable members who are having private meetings at the back of the Chamber and at other members' desks, if they would return to their desks or move outside the Chamber for the meetings.

I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Thompson in his member's statement.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have to reflect on the reality of continuing unsafe conditions in this province, and also the fact that disasters such as Westray have a very political dimension, in that province a federal Conservative and a provincial Conservative government that ignored the very clear warnings of the unsafe conditions, and I believe very much led to the 26 deaths that took place.

But there is something else that we have to reflect on, Madam Speaker, and it is something that I think was unfortunate the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) failed to recognize in his statement on Thursday, when not once in his statement to the House, on the day of mourning, did he mention anything about the labour movement or the important role that unions play in fighting for safe workplaces.

Madam Speaker, I know for political reasons it has been the practice of this government, particularly this session, to attack unions, and attack union leaders and union members. But you know, without the union movement, the labour movement, we would not have the many kinds of improvements we have in health and safety in this province, and it is about time this government recognized it has to accept the reality of the fact that unions do speak for workers. They seek better wages. They seek better working conditions, and they are key players in getting better workplace safety and health in our workplaces.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1450)

Balanced Budget

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, this government tabled a budget in April that demonstrated fiscal responsibility. Unlike the members opposite, this government believes in living within its means, something that my constituents readily applaud. On a broader scale, I also know that Manitobans as a whole agree the balanced budget legislation will benefit this province in the short term and in the long run, which shows, in fact, there is a vision for the future.

Part of that vision requires money be put aside in case of disasters such as flood or forest fires. My people in St. Adolphe, Ile des Chenes and Lorette, right at this point, know the devastation of flood. I received a fax recently from a group called the Manitoba Taxpayers Association. The message from this association is a simple one, deal with the debt. This association also has a message for those, the NDP and Liberals, who would like to see the surplus spent. The message is that the money is being set aside to pay for billions worth of government excess, excess that the NDP are mostly responsible for, an excess that continues to plague this province even though we have tabled the second balanced budget.

Madam Speaker, the support that we are receiving for our budget from the Manitoba Taxpayers Association is not unique. This is just another group within Manitoba that is taking a long, hard look at the fiscal directives of this government, and they approve. We want to ensure that we look at the big picture, which includes what Manitoba needs right now and what Manitoba needs in the future. This has to be offset with what Manitoba currently has available to meet those needs. It is really quite simple. It is called a balanced budget and it is called living within our means.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion 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.(c)(1) on page 34 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chair, I think at the end of the last time we had been asking the minister about the Council of Ministers of Education, and she was going to table some material from that.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, I indicated at our last session here that I would table some information for the members.

First of all, I have the Grade 4 mathematics Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes and Grade 3 standards, which I had said I would bring. As well, a question was raised regarding what we might have submitted to the Council of Ministers of Education, Second National Consultation on Education, and I have documents here on that.

The member had asked, what did I hope to gain from participation in that particular consultation or at that meeting, and I am looking forward to going for a variety of reasons. One reason that is always an important reason, which has nothing to do with what the agenda is, is the opportunity for ministers of Education from the provinces and territories to gather together to discuss

education in Canada. This is particularly important, given that there is no federal Ministry of Education. While there was a period in time when in the past ministers of Education had wanted a federal ministry, I think, as time has gone on, it has become a consensus across Canada from the ministers in each province and territory that having a council in many ways is preferable to having a central authority because the decisions that we come to for common direction in Canada then are built by consensus and are truly owned by the provinces, and you find ministers much more willing to participate when jointly we have come to agreement on issues.

I am looking forward to attending the Second National Consultation on Education for a variety of other reasons, of course. First and foremost, the consultation involves many nongovernment organizations which truly do reflect the sentiments of the public at large. These groups will involve business, labour, cultural groups, aboriginal people, educational associations, groups concerned with women's issues, and many others. Without question, it is important to participate in a consultation process that is Pan-Canadian and representative of the public at large.

Manitoba has much to gain from collaboration and partnerships at the national level. As you know, our province is currently involved with other provinces in a number of cost-effective joint projects, and some of these include curriculum development, the western consortia programs and Pan-Canadian science project, the assessment activities, the School Achievement Indicators program, the sharing of information and resources on aboriginal education, the sharing of information regarding teacher education renewal, transferability of teaching credentials, teacher education issues.

* (1500)

Manitoba, I believe, has much to offer to the national consultation. As the report for Manitoba outlines, our province has a comprehensive process of educational renewal already underway. Some of the areas in which Manitoba is actively involved include the outcomes-based curriculum, assessment evaluation, Distance Education and Technology, and post-secondary reform. There are always other areas in which provinces can work together, and a consultation process, such as the one in Alberta, can help stimulate and support such work. I had indicated at our last get-together that one of the things we

hoped to do was to look for the common thread that is evident across Canada and to be able, using our own experiences as a springboard for discussion, to see if those common threads would, in fact, have application for Canadian application whereby we could co-operate and benefit from a variety of thrusts.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask on this line 16.1(c). There is a footnote there: Reduction in nonrecurring special project support. Could the minister explain what that is?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the total operating reduction is \$85,400, as the member maybe can see at the bottom of the page. In the past, a number of designated or special projects were provided from within this branch, and some of those have been moved to another area. This branch will continue its role in department-wide policy, co-ordination in areas such as the education indicators project, Human Resource development action plan, Distance Education and Technology initiatives, credit transfer recognition, school planning and other issues of the day. However, funding will be charged to those areas having long-term or continuing responsibilities for the outcomes of such activities.

Ms. Friesen: Which sections or which programs have been removed from this area? The minister said a number had been moved to other areas.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the education indicators project, for example, you will now see under the EIP which is 16.5(c). Management Information Services, MIS, and Human Resource development action plan is now the responsibility of each manager in that thrust, in that area. Distance Education and Technology initiatives, School Programs Division plus MERLIN, school planning will be BEF and SPD. Credit transfer recognition is now the responsibility of post-secondary education and Advanced Ed, and you will see them being moved so they have broader application in those kinds of ways. They are not just restricted to one area now; they are more permeable.

Ms. Friesen: If that is the case, why is there no change in the staff years in this division? What are the programs that the staff are working on that would involve them in the same number of staff years when so many areas of responsibilities have been transferred?

Mrs. McIntosh: As circumstances evolve, areas of endeavour will then become, for example, as I indicated, the Human Resource development action plan under the various managers. It then becomes incorporated into those particular responsibilities and the staff then, that are doing new work, continue on again with new initiatives and new projects.

Ms. Friesen: I think that was the purpose of my question. What are the new initiatives and new projects that this same number of staff are working on?

Mrs. McIntosh: Their role, Mr. Chairman, is still that of co-ordinating and taking the lead in a variety of issues. We will see now new work being done on teacher education, on adult basic education, on aboriginal issues. We have staff doing research on teacher collective bargaining, on boundaries.

Those types of initiatives that are underway in the department, of course, require people to gather information, make recommendations, those types of duties and assignments that are always needed when new initiatives are explored.

* (1510)

I think the member is aware of some of the new initiatives that we have undertaken because they have been the matter of some questioning in the House and some matter of public interest. Each of those areas, of course, have people working on them. Distance Education and Technology, for example, is requiring a lot of study in terms of the capabilities and trends. The capabilities to be used for tools in the classroom or to be used for the actual delivery of education, and all of those do require staff to work upon them. They do not just happen in a vacuum.

Ms. Friesen: Is this section of the department still responsible for the Schools Information System?

Mrs. McIntosh: No. That is under MIS, 16(5)(c).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(c) Planning and Policy Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$423,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$123,800—pass.

Item 1. (d) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$356,300.

Ms. Friesen: The minister suggested that some of the plans of this section have been devolved down to regional or branch managers. Could the minister tell me what the role of this department will be in career development initiatives throughout the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: That area would co-ordinate all human resource activity: recruitment, evaluation, performance, management classification, career development, affirmative action and, of course, payroll, which is a large portion of their duties, as well.

Ms. Friesen: I asked specifically about the career development initiatives, and how the department is going to handle that kind of planning with this devolution in place.

Mrs. McIntosh: The Human Resource Branch has always had the responsibility for career development, and research and planning, where this question led from, does not do the career development that has always been done by the Human Resources Branch. They have experience and methods that they have used and do use to ensure that those people working in the department are suitably capable of performing the career responsibilities assigned to them.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what career development initiatives there are anticipated in the coming year for people in the affirmative action designation?

Mrs. McIntosh: The Manitoba Civil Service Commission has an Affirmative Action handbook for managers, Putting Equity to Work, and it has a large amount of information contained in it: equity framework; foundations for equity planning, for equity building blocks; removing employment barriers; communication strategies; workforce analysis; accountability roles and responsibilities; case law legislation principles; equity representation through staffing; options and best practices; recruitment and selection; outreach recruitment; equitable distribution through employee development; executive development program for women; employee development services for designated group employees; OSD seminars and career development. They also have, in terms of retention options and best practices, a healthy, respectful workplace, sexual harassment, accommodation,

aboriginal support network, and they have a lot of information resources, as well.

So that is the foundation handbook that our managers are working to implement. Our managers themselves will in their own performance evaluations be judged on how well they are able to put equity to work.

I want to indicate first of all that I have two other staff members at the table right now that I do not believe have been introduced. They are Jack Gillespie, who is Director of Human Resources; and Louise Ulrich, at the table this afternoon, who was part of the Civil Service Commission committee that wrote the Putting Equity to Work manual, so very well versed in that particular question.

* (1520)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think what I had anticipated was that there was a departmental plan, that there were X number of people in the affirmative action group, that the plan was that so many would be taking these kinds of courses, so many would be developing their careers in these areas.

That is really what I was looking for, the departmental career development initiative for persons in the affirmative action designated groups such as it indicates on page 28.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we have two phases really that have been at work here. The first phase was to get a handle on the hiring practices which I believe this government has been very successful in achieving. The second phase, then, was to look at career development for those who have been employed. This handbook is a major step in that, and that has just come out in 1996, hot off the press, so to speak, and the department is currently developing the plans the member has talked about.

A good question, very timely, because they are in this department at the moment in the process of developing career plans based upon the guidelines and principles and suggestions that have come from this handbook, to start in on how we train our managers, how we get people moving towards growing in their careers, growing and creating and achieving.

It is clearly a major first step that will be information technology skills. So, in short, step one has been put in

place. Step two, phase two, to sit down to plan with the Civil Service Commission on how to train our managers and how to evolve top-notch career development initiatives, is now in the creation stage.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, so at the very minimum, next year we should be looking for a plan that is on paper and perhaps begun for the training of people in the affirmative action area in information technology. Is that what we should be looking for?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we would hope that we would have a plan ready to implement some time in the fall.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(d)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$356,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$63,600—pass.

1.(e) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I notice there has been some increase in the salaries on this line in both the managerial and the professional area and in administrative support, as well. Could the minister give us a breakdown of those increases at a time when I understand the MGEU has taken percentage cuts across the board?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the increase is mainly due to the merit increments.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, does that mean that every manager, the two managers, the eight professional staff and the 11 administrative support staff all had merit increases this past year?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Wolseley, could you repeat your question?

Ms. Friesen: Yes, sorry, Mr. Chairman. I was asking whether each of the two managerial, each of the eight professional, each of the 11 administrative support staff had merit increases this past year.

Mrs. McIntosh: No, not all did receive a merit increment. Some did. Some did not.

One other factor that affected this particular line, as well, was the accrued salaries, because the province has

been migrating from a cash basis of accounting to accrual accounting—and the member may be familiar with accrual accounting—that reports salaries on an earned basis, rather than on a paid basis.

This year, the '96-97 year, is the first year that the accruals are reflected at the program level rather than a central appropriation, and the effect has been to increase salary budgets by about 0.4 percent or about \$100. You will see the effect of switching to an accrual method of accounting in that, as well, but not all did get a merit increment, just some.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about the school information system services. I am not sure what the last "S" stands for on this line.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, 16.5.(c) is the Schools Information System.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, this section of the department also looks at the schools funding program, administers the schools funding program, and I wanted to ask the minister here about the new agreement which has been reached with the private schools, and whether that can be tabled?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, yes, I indicated we would be pleased to table it and we will. That will come under 16.5.(d), but if you would like it today, we could probably have it up here later this afternoon.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I would like to see that new agreement that has been reached. I wanted to ask the minister about the origin of that agreement, if this is the office of the assistant deputy minister which develops school funding programs, how that agreement was reached? Was it initiated by the government or was it initiated by the schools themselves?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have with me right now the staffperson that will be dealing with line 16.5, but I can respond in general terms. If we feel a need to get into more technical detail on 16.5, then we could either wait till we get to that line or see if we can get the appropriate staff people up. I just draw that to the member's attention

for ease of questioning and answering, that we have the right staff people here for her.

But in answer to the question she has just posed, my understanding of the evolution of the agreement is that there was felt to be sort of a mutual need to have a more clear understanding of what that agreement actually meant. That I would say would be something that was considered to be a mutual decision in terms of how to express this better and how to give clearer definition to the whole matter of independent school funding or at least for those independent schools that receive funding because, as I have indicated before, they do not all receive funding.

So the agreement stipulates that the maximum per pupil funding for independent schools will be calculated as 50 percent of the per pupil expenditure of public schools two years prior to the school year being funded.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, there were some questions that I would like to ask on that, but we will wait until the appropriate staff are here on line 16.5.

One of the areas that this section of the department deals with is the real and perceived inequities in school funding, and I wanted to ask whether the minister had received any claims, letters, deputations, delegations from school divisions or from stakeholder groups about perceived inequities in school funding this past year?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I think there have been two. There always are one or two on an annual basis who will indicate that they are not satisfied with the funding. It is normally not a question of equity as it is that they just want more money, but some will argue on the basis of equity.

We do each year receive advice from the Advisory Committee on Educational Finance. That advisory committee has proven to be invaluable because, as the member may recall, under the last year of the NDP government the formula was so inequitable that I believe there was only one school division left that was able to be on that formula.

So we had a province-wide formula that was so out of whack that every division in the province, except one, had to finally be exempt from coming under the formula.

To say it was a nightmare is to make an understatement that could put it in the Guinness Book of World Records. It was extreme dissatisfaction.

What we have noticed now, and it is dramatic by comparison, is that, by and large, the vast majority of school divisions say that the formula now does provide the equity that it did not have under the NDP, and while there will always be one or two—I think Seven Oaks comes in every year and says, it is not equal and we want more money, but, by and large, most will say it is equitable. Now, some will indicate that while maybe the formula is equitable, they wish that the funding had not seen a reduction overall. So they will be arguing that they would like more money from government, not because the formula is wrong, but because they wish the block grant could be larger.

Having said all that, and having indicated my great relief that I do not have to be Minister of Education administering the old NDP formula, I will also indicate that we are taking a look at the whole matter of the education formula. As we implement the Blueprint, we want to make sure that we have the equity, the flexibility for the implementation of the Blueprint, which will include new initiatives, new directions and technology, and those types of things. So we will be looking at it again with a view to making sure that the new ways of delivering education are able to be properly addressed under the funding formula.

* (1540)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain the process of re-examining this formula? Who is involved in it? Are there advisory groups, other than the one the minister has already mentioned? Does it involve the whole spectrum of K to 12, plus adult education, plus Continuing Education, or is it more formally based upon the K to 12 system?

Mrs. McIntosh: The Schools Finance program, the funding formula for finance, is for Kindergarten to Grade 12. The advisory committee is a single advisory committee. It will work in conjunction with the men and women hired by the government of Manitoba, because they are experts in educational financing, to develop or to reaffirm funding formulae to meet the needs of the students of Manitoba.

The advisory committee, the member should be aware, provides the widest possible consultation in that it is composed of representatives of stakeholder groups who, in turn, do wide consultations with their stakeholder groups, so that they can come to the table with their organization's perspectives for input and then come to consensus.

We have representatives of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, two citizens-at-large, one, of course, representing the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, plus the staff of schools, plus the Finance Branch, plus input from staff at the School Programs Division. These people will make recommendations to the government on what they, as representing every stakeholder group in K to 12 education, feel should be done with the funding formula. We value their input very much and are pleased that they are so broadly representative.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure I got all of that. MTS, MASS, MAST, MASBO, et cetera, the Parent Advisory Council representative—then I think the minister said there were two citizens. Then there was staff of schools, and then there was staff of School Programs. Was that a repetition? Who were the two citizens who sit on that committee?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicated staff of Schools Finance Branch, and I apologize for that. The two citizens are the president of the Association of Parent Councils, Viola Prowse—the other citizen position, at the moment, we have a vacancy, and we are currently in the process of looking to fill that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(e)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$917,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$195,800—pass.

1.(f) Management Information Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$559,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$330,500—pass.

2. School Programs (a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$250,800.

Ms. Friesen: We are on 16.2(a)?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: That is right.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask some questions about the linkage here to New Directions. One of the things that has concerned me about New Directions is that, intentional or not, its implications have been to narrow program opportunities in Manitoba schools.

The minister knows that I am concerned about the loss of home economics programs in a number of Manitoba schools, particularly in rural areas, and the prospects for the losses of those types of programs, particularly at the middle school level. We are talking here of French, of music, of industrial arts and home economics, the areas where I think New Directions, combined with the funding cuts, have put school divisions in a very difficult bind.

One of the ways in which they have responded to the minister's requirements for increased timetabling amounts and the minister's reductions in funding has been to reduce some of these programs.

We can see it now very clearly in the home economics area. I know the minister's response is to say these are local choices, but what we are getting as a result of these local choices is a school system which is inequitable. Areas which were able to offer that in the past now no longer are able to offer it for whatever reason. I think it is in many areas a combination of reasons. So there are opportunities available for some children in some areas but not in others, and as schools under New Directions move to essentially much more atomized, much more individualized kinds of schools, I am concerned about a system which is losing that sense of system-wide opportunities.

So that is one of my concerns about New Directions that it has narrowed the choices for many students. I want to ask the minister for some comments on that in the future. Does she see that as one of the new directions, in fact, that the emphasis on what in popular terms is called back to basics, in effect, has meant fewer choices for Manitoba students. In some cases those choices—and, again, I am speaking particularly in the context of home economics—do not seem to me to make economic sense.

One of the strategic areas for Manitoba is a garment industry, one of the areas where students become interested in careers and many aspects of the garment

industry whether it is in computer-aided design, whether it is in clothing construction, whether it is in textiles, or whether it is actually in the design of textiles themselves, those all begin, it seems to me, in the home economics classroom.

A secondary, I think, for home economics is family life studies. Although I know that there are perhaps old images of home economics which do not see it in that broader context. Certainly the recent home economics curriculum and the one that people had anticipated would be there for students in Grades 7 and 8 and through in many cases to Senior 4 dealt with family life education. The other area of school experience where students had the opportunity to learn and to discuss, to prepare themselves intellectually, mentally and practically for a future family life was also in skills for independent living. For a very brief moment that was a compulsory course in Manitoba. It has become now a noncompulsory course, and we are not sure in the future, as we look at the future, how many schools will, in fact, be able to offer that.

* (1550)

So what we are looking at, it seems to me, is the prospect of schools and divisions in Manitoba where home economics is not available, where skills for independent living may not be available, and an area I think of great importance to a community where it is clear that there are many areas of family breakdown. It seems to me that that is a very important aspect of education.

If you talk to superintendents and schools in Manitoba, one of the things that comes through clearly is that one of the areas of increasing expense for schools is the cost of children who are learning disabled, not in the physical sense but who are handicapped by behaviour problems and by a breakdown in family communications and in family life, some of it economics and some of it behavioural. It seems to me that here was one area in home economics, in a serious, progressive in the sense of advancing an educational opportunity throughout the school division and in skills for independent living, that here was an opportunity on a limited scale to try and address some of those issues which we are facing as a community.

So my concerns go beyond simply the educational curriculum ones, although I am concerned about those

narrowing opportunities. They also go to the larger community and to the kind of issues which have to be addressed. I am sure the minister is familiar with it, Winnipeg 1, St. James School Division. Both of them have very serious costs in this area that how do we begin to address those long-term issues when we are taking away from some schools the opportunities to at least begin to address it in a formal, an academic sense, one that enables students to at least begin to prepare themselves for a different kind of future than some of them have perhaps been able to experience?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am just seeking clarification from the member because she is speaking as if we are making home economics not compulsory and as if that is a change. Could she please tell me where in Manitoba home economics was compulsory?

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

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, what I was speaking of was the changing conditions in Manitoba schools where schools which were once able to offer home economics, whether it be in Pine Creek School Division or in St. Boniface School Division, and there are a number of them—I know that the minister has been approached by the home economics teachers association and that this issue has been brought before her.

The issue is that schools, which once were able to offer it, now no longer can. It is a combination, I think, as I indicated in my question, of the minister's two-year attempt to address timetabling issues, which, I think, were put into jeopardy by the last Minister of Education as he began to put some very rigid constraints upon the number of minutes that had to be dealt with in mathematics and language education.

The implications of that for school divisions across Manitoba were in the middle years that home economics, industrial arts, band, music, choral music sometimes, and basic French then became essentially choices that had to be made.

In addition, in subsequent years, there have been continuing cuts to education, and the result of that has been that school divisions have found that they have had to make final choices, that they cannot juggle those subjects anymore. In rural areas, it is partly a cost of

transportation because students have to be transported from one school to another.

There is a variety of reasons that these choices have been made. It is a new situation for Manitoba schools. For schools where it was available in the past, it is no longer available, and I am looking at what seems to me to be a sudden loss over the past year. The number of school divisions which have eliminated that opportunity for their students and the number of school divisions which over the next year, in fact, will be discussing and evaluating this prospect point in a direction to me that offers fewer opportunities for young Manitobans.

Another reason, I think, has been placed before the minister by parent councils, and I think the one that I mentioned in the House was Gladstone parent council which has suggested to the minister that these are programs that are very important for students who see this as one of their reasons for remaining in school, that the practically, vocationally based aspects—and it is not the only aspect of home economics, but the vocationally based aspects of that have great value for the nature of the school and for the retention of students.

So it is on a number of areas that I am asking this question and, as I say, I know that the home economics teachers have met with the minister and that they are very concerned about this. I am looking at it in the broader context of fewer options for Manitoba students. Is this going to be the result of New Directions and of funding cuts? Is this the direction that the government is taking Manitoba schools?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for her answer because in her answer she has indicated to me that home economics never was compulsory, ever, and that it is still an option if parents and boards choose to wish to have it, just as it was in the past.

In terms of the principle, home economics has never been compulsory, and I wish to stress that because I do believe that to some observers the way in which the member has phrased her questions it appears that she thought that it was compulsory or that she was leaving the impression inadvertently that it had been compulsory. It has always been a choice, and it has always been a choice that has either been accepted or rejected by students and parents, and that is still the case.

The member said that she wanted equality. She said that she wanted every school to be able to offer the same programs. She wants every school to have home economics, skills for independent living, music, art, phys ed. She wants every school to have those things, practical arts, as well. In that sense then all schools would be equal.

What we are seeking is equity, and the member will probably recognize that equity and equality are not the same thing. We are saying we want system-wide opportunities for parents to be able to do what they have told us by the hundreds in clear, unequivocal language, that they want the right to be able to choose options and not be restrained in that choice.

If a community feels that they have, for example, 4-H clubs and their students are all active in them and therefore are acquiring a lot of the skills in nutrition and textiles and things like that and they would prefer to see their students take another option in school since they feel they are acquiring these skills, through an example that has been given to me by real, live parents who are making real, live choices is that, you know, my kids are really active in 4-H and they are already learning a lot of the stuff they have learned in these options. I would rather that my schooling for my student could more reflect my needs for my student.

The member refers to things that are not in place. The member talks about timetabling problems. The member may recognize that a letter went out to all people a few months ago indicating the flexibility that has been put into timetabling as a result of direct consultation with the minister's advisory committee on the implementation of educational change and that that has been hailed with great relief, yes.

* (1600)

I am glad the member is aware of it, and I wish that instead of saying that timetabling was still a problem, she had acknowledged the great relief and gratitude that the system is feeling, because to have put on the record, as she did, that timetabling was restrictive and all of those things and a terrible problem for the field when she knows that that is not a problem anymore and that principals have expressed relief, pleasure and optimism that they can now accommodate New Directions in a

more meaningful way so that parents and students can have more choices, I think it would have been probably proper to acknowledge that, rather than leave an impression that the past is the same as the present.

School divisions make decisions based on enrollments in particular courses or on the interest the local community has expressed. That is why we have local boards; that is why we have local school advisory committees, so that those people can make local choices. We do not believe that every division should be a carbon copy of every other division, as the member proposes. We do not believe that there needs to be identical courses, course options and items of study in every school as the member proposes.

We believe that if areas have a desire to have certain courses from an approved list of options, and I indicate that the approved list of options still includes home economics, still includes skills for independent living, still includes music, still includes art, still includes industrial arts, still includes all those things that she would like to have compulsory in every school even if the parents feel their students are receiving that education elsewhere and wish to concentrate more time on another issue.

We believe in equity for opportunity to make choices reflecting the community as opposed to equality, which forces all people to be the same, sometimes at the lowest common denominator. The issue is not as simple as the member implies because the real issues go beyond one subject or two. The issue of what do we believe is the most important in school today, we see it much more than, as the member puts it, back to the basics.

In fact, we believe we are moving forward to new essentials in foundation skills, transferable skills, ultimate outcomes of both formal and informal schooling, problem solving, critical creative thinking, human relationships in all their forms, technology and communications. As far as the arts, bands, visual, et cetera, and music, we maintain these as compulsory as a group at kindergarten to Grade 6, and we have expanded them as compulsory for Grades 7 and 8. So these have been expanded not diluted. Again, I think that is important to note for the record because the member's comments indicated there would be decreased opportunity for these subjects when, in fact, the converse is true.

Furthermore, we have empowered parents via councils. We believe it involved choice, and I think the member must acknowledge if she is fair, and I believe she would like to be fair, that in today's schools, classrooms are being called upon to deliver everything. Yet unless we lengthen the school day, the week or the school year, we instead have to make some priority choices.

We believe that a first order of priority ought to be those core subjects of mathematics and language arts and social studies and science, those are the cornerstones, plus the physical and affective subjects up to Senior 1 of physical education plus up to Grade 8 of the arts. Beyond that, we believe local schools must be empowered to be able to make some choices to suit local values, beliefs, et cetera, with input from the community.

In our work with the Home Economics Association, we have not only provided flexibility but also recognize some of the home economics courses, such as family studies, which will be recognized as a graduation credit in the supplementary courses under the sciences area or the social studies area. So far from saying that decreased opportunity for home economics is there, if students so desire it, increased opportunity can be there.

But I do come back again to equality and equity and system-wide opportunities and more choices which I believe we now have. There was a time, as well—I should indicate this so that the member is aware of the full history of things and again sees the role of her previous government in this evolution. I can recall tremendous discussions taking place during the '80s with school trustees.

Whenever a trustee would say, you know, we really should stick to the timetable guidelines as put out by the minister, trustees would then argue—usually, it would be new trustees who would say—oh, I see we are supposed to have so many minutes of such and such per cycle. Why are we not abiding by this? The answer always was, of course, there is not enough time in the school day to follow the full-time allotment assigned to each subject area without extending the school day or extending the school year, so we will just ignore the guidelines. That was the way education operated under the NDP. The NDP put down guidelines. Nobody followed them because they could not. It was impossible and nobody enforced them doing it. Nobody said you have to follow these guidelines

So I think we are being a little more realistic and knowing that education has evolved to being a lot more than just education, we are trying to ensure that whatever we do in schools, the actual education experience, all the essential skills, is not lost as we minister to all needs and attempt to be everything to everybody.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, so the minister used the word "relief" which I offered to her for the changes in timetable, and it is true, as I said in the House, that it is a combination of the funding cuts and the timetabling dilemmas that the government over the past two years has placed the middle schools in. I offered the minister the word "relief" because it is exactly this that I believe schools are feeling. For the time of the previous Minister of Education when he wanted to cut recess or offered that as an "opportunity to schools to meet his new guidelines," the protests of schools, the protests of children, the protests of parents, were that that was not the way they wanted to go.

During the first, I guess, six months of this session, the same kind of protest came in to the minister from her advisory councils, from parents, from teachers, from students. Finally, the government sent out a survey and said, what do you think? How can we deal with this? How can we deal with this difficult situation that we have created?

So it is with some relief that parent councils and teachers and superintendents saw that there was, in fact, some willingness in the department to be less rigid than they had been in the previous year and a half. So, yes, I use the word relief advisedly. I am glad to see that the government finally did consult school divisions on this. I am glad to see that the government finally saw that the rigidity which they were imposing upon the school system in the middle years was simply not going to work to the best advantage of the schools and the students and the teachers.

So I am concluding from what the minister is saying about home economics in this area that it is not the minister's concern that home economics will no longer be offered in the middle years in eight school divisions in Manitoba, that this is simply a matter of local choice, and that this kind of local choice under the constraints of both timetabling and of continuing budget cuts will continue in Manitoba.

The minister would prefer to argue that there are more choices for students. I am not sure that the list has actually expanded to a very long one. But, I think, Manitoba students would be very interested to know, those particularly in those eight divisions where they can no longer take home economics, that their choices have, in fact, been enhanced.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I am not sure that I can see the connection or would suggest to them that their choices have been enhanced. My concerns are that as New Directions proceeds, that in other divisions, with the combination of funding cuts that continue under this government, that choices, indeed, are going to expand.

The minister has also suggested that it is system-wide decisions that she is looking for. But, in fact, New Directions puts much of the actual decision making about curriculum and curriculum choices upon the individual school rather than on the division. Individual schools may make decisions which may not be applicable for a division as a whole. The division as a whole may never get the opportunity to say, look, in this system-wide system we want to offer A, B and C in X, Y and Z schools, because many of those decisions are being made in the future. We have not seen it yet to any extent, but in the future, and in the system that the government is setting up where schools are being atomized, being dealt with as individual units, those decisions are going to be made at the individual level.

* (1610)

There are certainly concerns amongst parents. I know, as this is combined with school choice, that the movement of students across schools even within a division, let alone across divisions, becomes less systematic; that the availability of certain options will exist in some schools, but not in others; and that ease of movement which I think the minister has often spoken of that she would like to enhance is not necessarily going to be there in the future. So system-wide application, I am not sure, is there under the government's new system, and I would like to be assured that it is.

The minister has spoken of the involvement of local parent councils in this and of choice at the local level. I

wonder if the minister is actually saying to those school trustees and those parent councils in Pine Creek and in St. Boniface and in other parts of southern Manitoba, where I know, for example, there have been quite large protest meetings at some of the cuts to home economics.

Is the minister actually saying that in spite of the dissent that is there, that she still believes that these cuts in home economics are as a result of parents' wishes, parents' choices?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I suppose the member may not be aware that there were three divisions which decided not to have home economics before there was any reduction in funding. I know she is trying to indicate that it is all due to funding cuts, but it is kind of hard to explain that they would make that decision before any reduction in funding if her premise were correct. So I do not know what she feels was the board's rationale for making decisions there because that was done before the announcement of any funding cuts in those three divisions.

However, I do maintain that decisions made by local school boards are autonomous. I do not believe that moving to autonomy is something new. School boards have always been autonomous and value their local autonomy greatly. In addition, school boards, the member may not realize, over time have frequently put forward the request that they be allowed more decision making in the course selection for their students, as have parents.

This whole thrust, the member must never forget for a moment, came as a direct result of two major province-wide Parents' Forums, where the parents placed this—getting back to standards and measurements and emphasis on literacy and computation—as an extremely high priority. Parents said very clearly that they were tired of schools that tried to be everything to everybody, jack of all trades and master of none.

There was no mistaking that message. We ran an election on that message and got very clear signals back, despite the efforts of many who spent millions and millions of dollars putting out the other side of the story, literally millions of dollars putting out the other side of the story. The net result of that was very clear because I heard it at the door, and I am sure the member did, as well, that the other side of the story was not accepted.

The member keeps referring to constraints on timetabling, and she, at the same time, indicated that the school divisions felt relief that the constraints on timetabling had been lifted and, yet, then proceeded in her next question to continue talking about the constraints of timetabling and wanted to know if I am on the record of wanting to see home economics dropped from school divisions.

I guess I want to know, is she on the record in terms of wanting all of these courses to be taught in all schools in Manitoba? Is she on the record of wanting extra days to accomplish this, do as they do in France and teach on Saturdays also, or is she on the record of wanting days that stretch until six o'clock, as they do in some schools, to accommodate all of the lack of time constraints that she would have? If she is not willing to see a longer school day or a longer school year to accommodate her insistence that every school offer every course, is she then on record saying that she is willing to cut time for language arts in order to accomplish her goal?

The member wants all these subjects taught in all of these schools in Manitoba. There is not time in the day, and there is not time in the year. We can do three things. We can lengthen the school day, lengthen the school year or take time away from language arts.

I would be interested to have the member, instead of just criticizing that we are not teaching everything in every school because we are leaving that choice to parents and to school boards, which of the three would she like to see, cut time from language arts, lengthen the school day or lengthen the school year, because if we do as she proposes, if we do as the NDP wishes us to do, those are three choices boards will have to choose from and make one of the choice.

The atomizing, sort of individual schools versus the system, is ignoring new curricula. When the member makes her comments about atomizing she is ignoring the new curricula that must be used in all schools, ignoring standards tests for all schools, school councils that must work with boards. There are and will be in legislation clear powers and responsibilities of boards to manage the system. All of the above negate the claim of atomization of the system. It is not that simplistic, it ignores the whole picture.

I am the minister. If the member is proud and pleased with the changes, who brought in time allotment

flexibility and enabled local choice and established an advisory committee on implementation of school change, who delayed the implementation and slowed it down so that people could keep pace, who altered the ACSL regulations to reflect what people were saying, I should indicate, and so I thank her for the compliment in complimenting the government for all those initiatives. I am the one she is complimenting and I thank her very much for the compliment for those particular items and the others that she referred to.

I accept that she condemns the previous minister. I feel the previous minister took the initiative to break through the apathy, the willingness to allow school divisions to float along with guidelines that were not applied, that were not endorsed, that were not enforced. He was the minister who listened to the parents for the first time in the history of this province and brought them in and asked them their opinion and then did what they asked. The member may condemn him for that. He did what they asked. He approved the principles of what they asked. I am charged with administering them and implementing them and I am trying to make any such modifications in time, et cetera, that need to be made so that his directions can be well implemented.

I am not slowing down his initiatives because I did not like his initiatives. I am slowing them down so that people can keep pace because he was moving faster than the system was able to move, but he was moving in the right direction and parents gave him the direction in which to move. I believe and trust in parents and I am glad that they are finally considered a true stakeholder group.

* (1620)

I should read the duties of school boards to the member under Renewing Education in New Directions: The Action Plan. Every school board shall administer and manage the affairs of the school division, shall set the divisional budget and special budget levy, provide advance release of the draft budget to the public and receive input, implement provincial curriculum as directed by the minister, support local schools in the development, acquisition and implementation of optional supplementary curriculum to meet unique local needs subject to the approval of the minister, employ and appoint senior division officers as may be necessary and

delegate duties and responsibilities to such officers as required, employ and appoint principals who hold valid Manitoba teaching certificates, require principals upon request by parents to establish advisory councils for school leadership, report annually pertinent educational information and overall achievement results to the residents of the school division, use the results and evaluations of any tests and examinations conducted or directed by the minister as the minister may determine, require principals to develop school plans for board review, provide pertinent and meaningful information about the school division as required by the advisory councils for school leadership to meet their mandate in serving schools and receive recommendations put forward by the advisory councils for school leadership that relate to divisional concerns.

Those are the duties of the school boards. If there is any one of those that the member would like to take away from the school board, when the school board has been elected by the people of the area to make decisions, if the member feels that they should not make any of these decisions in co-operation with the parents to whom they are ultimately responsible, then maybe she could indicate which ones they should not do. These are ones that parents want them to do.

Parents are the ultimate guardians of the children. Long after she and I have departed the scene, and long after she and I have forgotten the names of the students in our classes, those parents, grown old, will still be caring about their middle-aged children, currently our students, loving them unconditionally, providing them with advice and guidance. We will not be able to remember their names. So I think parents have a vested ongoing lifelong interest in their children and have a right to be heard. They have a right to be listened to.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, the minister suggests that I condemn and that I commend, and I would remind the minister that my comments are always directed at policies. They are not directed at people, and if I do slip up on that, I would be happy for her to remind me, but my task is to deal with policies. I would like to continue to try and do that.

I notice that the minister suggested that her Parents' Forum on Education had given her these guidelines, and I am looking in front of me at the Parents' Forum on

Education, March 1995, the one from Dakota Collegiate, which I think is one of the two so far that actually has formal written summaries.

It seemed to me that some of the things that were said there are at least suggesting that the minister should have taken a different direction. Recognize those things that are working now, do not change for the sake of change, ensure that there is a commonality across Canada and/or Manitoba, a consistency of curriculum across schools in Manitoba, keep course options open and an emphasis upon technology, which seems to me all to fit into the desire to maintain home economics teaching.

So I am not sure what elements of her own parents council the minister is particularly addressing in this area, and it seems to me there is as much in that Dakota Collegiate forum that would suggest that parents want to see those kinds of options remain and that they would regret the funding cuts and the timetabling changes and proposed changes over the last year and a half that have led to trustees making the kinds of decisions which they feel they have had to make.

I want to pass the microphone, Mr. Chairman, to my colleague from Transcona who I think has some questions.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, just in answer to the question. I think if the member for Wolseley checks Hansard and reads it carefully to see what I actually said, rather than what she thought I said, she will see that—[interjection] Pardon me? The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) wishes to say something.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think if the member for Wolseley reads Hansard and checks carefully what I actually said, rather than what she thought I said, she will see that when I said we took our directions from the Parents' Forum in developing New Directions, clearly and obviously I was speaking about the two Parents' Forums that Mr. Manness held to give us the guidance. How else could we have developed New Directions from a Parents' Forum if we did not hold the Parents' Forum till last month?

I mean, it is clear I am talking about the Parents' Forum that Mr. Manness held which evolved the clear

direction given by parents saying that we want to have—[interjection] Well, you indicated my forum in March. [interjection] No, in your question, you indicated my forum in March. Okay, so the member understands I was talking about Mr. Manness's forum as where they put the summary up on the board and said they wanted measurable standards, et cetera, and that is good.

The member then indicated the types of things that she read into the record. Do not change for the sake of change, they want course options kept open and those things. Each and every one of those things, of course, is exactly what we are doing—exactly what we are doing. The member herself indicated she does not want course options kept open. She wants them to be compulsory, and we are saying we want the course options kept open. We want parents to be able to choose, to truly opt for rather than have imposed upon them. Options and compulsion are not the same things, and I think it is important that that be noted that something that is optional is different from something that is compulsory.

We have acted on many, if not all, of the lists that the member read out. Home economics is still an option, for example. The flexibility and time allotments were based on the consultative process used by surveying all school principals. We had indicated clearly, and I indicated clearly when I became minister, that I like the consultative approach, that we were not married to change for the sake of change.

That is our phrase. I am pleased to see the member using it, but that is our phrase that we have used. I am sorry, it may be in there, as well, but it is in there because we have put it in there, having heard it from parents and agreeing with it and accepting it, and saying that we were not married to change.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, throughout I was quoting from the Saturday, March 4, 1995, Dakota Collegiate Parents' Forum on Education summary, not the minister's Parents' Forum of the last month, and my quote on do not change for the sake of change, e.g., Canadian history is one that comes directly from that forum.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The member does not have a point of order. It is definitely a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: I was saying we do not believe in change for the sake of change. We are not afraid of change. We will make change where needed without fear or favour, but we do not believe in it just for the sake of change. The member in her point of order put on the record that she is referring to a document that was indeed the document that came out of a forum held by Mr. Manness, and that is good because it is from those kinds of forums that we evolved our direction.

The member in reference to history also knows what we are doing there and knows, in case the inference is there that Canadian history was compulsory till the end of high school, it was not, it never was. We are talking about condensing 11 years of history into 10 years. It never did go to till the end of Grade 12 as a compulsory subject, and we do now have the opportunity for advanced history, for extra history courses over and above what students used to be able to take. So before they would have 11 years of a certain amount of history. They now have the same amount of history exactly, taught in 10 years rather than 11, and the opportunity in Grades 11 and 12 to take advance courses in history that were never available to them before.

With new curricula concentrating more on aspects of Canada that have never been covered, pre-European Canadian history, emphasis on Canada taught earlier and more in depth, and those are things that I think parents who understand what we are doing really do like. Parents who have been told that all we are doing is not making history compulsory in Grade 11 anymore and have been left with the inference that the other changes I described were not at the same time occurring, of course, would then, based upon the erroneous and incorrect assumptions, express some concerns.

* (1630)

But we did go and survey all school principals. I believe in consulting. I believe if we get back some advice and some feedback from groups of people that we consider to be well-versed, in this case principals certainly would be, we received feedback from over 600 principals, many of whom had taken the time and effort to consult with parent groups. We also got information back from our survey from superintendents responding

with divisional perspectives, and we felt they provided good advice.

Now, if the member is concerned that we were flexible and were willing to alter the methodology in response to a survey that we put out, our initiative—government put out the survey. Government said, are these things working well? Is there some other way you could implement? They sent back and said, we think we need more time here and here, and we would like to see a change here and here. We said, good advice, thank you very much and made the adjustments.

If the member is concerned that that has made everybody in their field happy and does not give her as much cause for complaint, I am sorry about that. But it has made people relieved and very happy with many letters of thank you. Our basic intent has not changed. We have not changed New Directions. We still have that stronger emphasis on foundation skills and core subjects. The flexibility we have offered allows for greater discussions and decision making at the local level to accommodate express local needs.

Those are all still there, but if people say they are on a treadmill and going so fast they cannot keep up, we will slow the treadmill down to a nice easy jog so that they can keep pace because they want to be in the race with us. They have told us that. They just want to be running at their speed, and we are quite willing and able to accommodate them in that. I know that means it forces the opposition to criticize on the things that were taking place yesterday, but I really do think it would be more relevant to concentrate on the things that are actually happening today.

Ms. Friesen: Like the loss of home economics.

Mrs. McIntosh: Is it loss of that? Okay. I hope the member will have both the courtesy and the courage to put on the record how she would adjust that. Will she take time away from language arts? Will she extend the school day, or will she lengthen the school year in order to make sure that all schools have what the NDP want all schools to have, skills for independent living, home ec, industrial arts, music, band, physical education.

All of those things that they want them to have with prescribed time allotments, I want the member to tell me

how she will accommodate that and how much language arts she is willing to sacrifice in order to achieve those. Or would she prefer to allow parents the choice? Well, I know she does not prefer to allow parents the choice or school divisions the choice to say, our students are actively involved in such and such outside of school, and therefore we would rather concentrate our time in school on this other option. I think they have the legal right to make those choices at school divisions, and I support them wholeheartedly as they try to accommodate the various needs and requests from the people whom they represent.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I am interested in getting involved in this discussion related to the government's changes in required courses and time allotments and the way that schools are being forced to make scheduling changes based on budget cuts, and guideline changes, as well, that are affecting the availability of courses.

This may not, as the minister says, be the intention of their budget cuts or their changes in policy, but, actually, in classrooms, in the school divisions, that is the effect. The policies are being set by budget cutbacks. The minister may say that this is by choice, but I know that a number of changes that are occurring—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: You will have to change mikes.

Ms. Cerilli: I have to change mikes. There we go.

I am interested in participating in this debate on the Education Estimates as it relates to school policy related to curriculum development and the availability of courses.

Now, we have been talking about how policy-related decisions are being made because of scheduling limitations, because of budget cutbacks, and that relates not only to the availability to have resources for classrooms and programs, but also the availability of schools to hire teachers who are skilled and trained in the specific disciplines. The minister is raising her eyebrows.

I will give you an example of a program in the constituency of Radisson. An elementary school that has

the same number of students as an elementary school in the school division of St. Vital. The same size school, one has three physical educators, and one school in Transcona has one physical educator. I would suggest that that is because of the funding available to hire. I would suggest that the way that the minister is changing the allotment, particularly for academics or basics they may call them at the elementary level, is counterproductive. I want to ask her what research has been done? Because as I am going to focus in on the changes that are being made to physical education/health education, this government seems bound and determined to not have young people take physical education.

First of all, in the Blueprint they eliminated phys ed from the high school curriculum as a core course. Under pressure, they put it back in. Now, with an interim document on curriculum, they are suggesting that at the elementary level, the time for physical education be reduced from 180 minutes and to become only 60 to 65 percent of that, and that time be used—the 40 percent lost to physical activity and physical education—to teach health education topics.

That is because under the Blueprint document the government has eliminated health education from the core curriculum from kindergarten to Grade 8. So it seems that in their effort to backtrack on the shortsightedness of teaching health education, where children learn about preventative health, dental health, nutrition, safety, they are having to take that out of phys ed time, and that is counterproductive.

I want to ask the minister if she is familiar with any of the research being done in her own province that show, from the experience in sports camps, that having physical activity is a great advantage to the emotional and physical and intellectual and social well-being of children. There was a wonderful speaker in town recently, a Mr. Fishbourne [phonetic] from Alberta, who showed that there were many examples of how increased time on physical activity actually improved academic performance.

There was a school in Montreal that increased at an elementary level the activity time, the physical education, to one-third of the day. That school showed a dramatic improvement in academic accomplishment and learning in attendance; it reduced absenteeism. It increased the

motivation of students, and I am not suggesting that that should happen in Manitoba that we should increase it to one-third time, but what I am saying is that having a quality physical education program shows itself to be valuable in improving the health of children and improving the learning and the academic performance of children.

I am wondering if this department has made the decision to reduce physical activity time at the high school and elementary level on the basis of any study. They have had a study in their own department which showed that children are less active, are watching more TV. In Canada, the average child now watches six and a half hours of television. That has to be countered with having them learn some quality skill development so that they can participate in physical activity not only as children but on towards adulthood.

I want to also raise the whole issue of the approach that the government is taking with increasing the academic and basics and classroom, more sedentary school time. The issue that I am raising is particularly again at the elementary grades, that by increasing the sedentary time in classroom on academic or basic skills, core courses, be they mathematics or language arts, that this may not even be developmentally appropriate for children.

* (1640)

Kids, when they go into kindergarten and Grade 1, they are active, they are imaginative, they are creative, they are eager to learn, and by the time they even hit Grade 3, a lot of them are much more sedentary, and a lot of curriculum development is now looking closely at developmentally appropriate activity. I want to suggest to the minister that the changes that are being made in this curriculum in terms of the amount of sedentary learning that is going to be taking place to teach dental health or nutrition in a sedentary fashion is counterproductive when you are taking it away from physical activity time, and that is not developmentally appropriate. It is not developmentally appropriate to have young children at a desk more during the school day. That is not developmentally appropriate for children.

I want to ask the minister, again, if she has any studies that her department has read that are going to repute that,

that are going to show that it is going to improve the academic learning and the cognitive ability of young people in this province to have more class time—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I am requiring clarification. As Estimates go on increasingly, we each have 10 minutes to ask a question, 10 minutes to answer a question.

There have been about 15 questions so far in this member's 10 minutes, and a question that says, how do you build an airplane cannot be answered as quickly as the question could be asked. The member says, how do you build an airplane? It takes 10 seconds to ask it, it takes three hours to answer if she wants the answer.

So she asked 15 questions, as do the other members, and then later on they say, you did not answer the question. I cannot put in 10 minutes full answers to those many questions she has put.

What are the rules surrounding how many questions they ask in the 10 minutes?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: On the point of clarification, I have said before and I will say it again, if, indeed, the critics asking questions would like an answer to those questions, I would suggest to lessen the number of questions, or, indeed, they can ask as many as they choose in that 10 minutes—

An Honourable Member: But they cannot expect answers for them.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. In other words, the members or the critics in the official opposition can ask quite readily as many questions as they wish. The minister indeed can answer those questions as she sees fit or as she can.

The honourable member for Radisson, to finish her questions.

Ms. Cerilli: On the same point of order, could I ask the minister or the Chairperson to—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Just for clarification, that was not a point of order. The honourable member for Radisson, to finish her questions.

Ms. Cerilli: Did the minister not call it a point of order? [interjection] A point of clarification.

On a point of clarification, I just want to clarify on the same point of clarification—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I ruled it not a point of order—[interjection] Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson, if she could wait till I recognize her for Hansard, then she will be able to ask her question or bring up her point of order. This is a point of order or clarification?

Ms. Cerilli: A point of clarification. I just want to ask how much time I have left on my current question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Radisson has three and a half minutes left.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Radisson, to finish her questions.

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to encourage the minister, with the assistance of her staff, to realize that my questions all pertain to the kind of support for the policies that are being developed in curriculum development with respect to research that would support them. I have my 10 minutes to speak, and I think I will use that to support, with the research and information that I have, that has been brought to my attention, questions about the direction that they are going in terms of that I do not think it is supportable by the current research in education pedagogy and curriculum development, that the direction that they are going is going to meet the desired outcome that they have.

I am sure we all want to see young people achieve better academic scores and to achieve all the other learning goals that we have for children in the province. What I am suggesting is that reducing the amount of time that students have for quality physical activity and physical education is counterproductive.

I want the minister to also clarify, if she is aware—she had mentioned earlier in response to the member for

Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) that there were guidelines that were not being followed under the NDP government in education. Well, I want her to know that there is a guideline currently for 180 minutes in physical activity and there are schools that do not come anywhere near to that.

I am wondering if her policy is simply to reduce the requirement so that it comes in line with the lowest common denominator or the practice and that the direction that she is going with, introducing health topics into phys ed, is not going to mean that people will never reach 180 minutes of physical activity and physical education. They are simply going to start teaching curriculum topics, and we are going to have more obesity problems. We are going to have even a greater percentage of young people who are inactive because they are contending now with more TV and video games and all the other temptations there are for young people not to have active play or active physical activity.

I am wanting her to know that recently there was one in four young people who could not touch their toes in Grade 2, that there were 17 out of 20 children in a study that could not do even one chin-up, that there are three-quarters of all girls who cannot do a six-minute step test. When we look at preventative health, when we look at the importance of physical activity for cardiovascular fitness, when we know that in our country the largest cost in health care is to treat heart and circulatory and illnesses related to the amount of physical activity, we cannot afford to reduce the amount of physical activity as required by the government and the amount of physical education as required by the government in its curriculum development.

I want to ask one final question, then, in concluding my remarks. Who wrote this document with the recommendations from March 22, 1996, the education change update in the area of physical education?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The member's time for her questions has expired.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it is an interesting little game that we are playing in here in the way in which we—[interjection]. The member for Radisson, I believe, had her 10 minutes, and I would appreciate—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. To all members of this committee, I would ask that you address your questions and comments to the Chair. That way, perhaps, we can have a more even flow of conversation, questions and answers.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, what I am referring to in terms of the game is that the rules of the game are this. The opposition asks as many questions as they possibly can in 10 minutes, many of them demanding a full-scale, detailed answer, which simply cannot be answered as quickly as the question can be asked.

The minister then attempts to keep track of upwards of 20 questions asked in the 10 minutes and attempts to answer as many of those questions as is possible during her 10 minutes, but, of course, there is not enough time to answer all of those questions in her 10 minutes. The opposition then says, ha, ha, she did not answer all the questions.

That is a game that is part of the whole adversarial system of government. I would then not be able to answer all of those questions, and I am saying it up front. If time could be extended, if the member would be willing to allow time to be extended so that I could answer each of her questions, I would gladly answer them, but I will have to keep backlogging them and trying to get the answers in on subsequent questions, and then they will say, she is not answering the question I just asked.

So somewhere in here, I will endeavour to get all of the answers to all of the questions on the record, even though the time—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

* (1650)

Ms. Cerilli: A point of clarification—for the minister's information, I would be quite willing for her to answer my questions in writing and supply the information to me outside of the Estimates. I know that the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) has done that on occasion. Other ministers that I have sat through Estimates with—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. There is actually no such thing as a point of clarification.

However, I thank the member for Radisson for her question and her comments.

The honourable minister, to finish her comments.

Mrs. McIntosh: I will be pleased to provide answers to all of those questions in writing.

Ms. Cerilli: I am glad that the minister will do that. I will continue then with the whole issue of the phys ed and health curriculum changes, because I am very concerned that what has happened is, between the Blueprint document and then subsequent educational updates, there have been a number of changes.

Mrs. McIntosh: I wonder if we might be able to take a recess, and I am wondering if the member then requires my presence here if she is simply going to read a series of questions into the microphone, that we can get the Hansard and provide her with the answers in—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Is it the will of the committee to take a seven-minute recess? Is it the will of the committee? [agreed]

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to put on the record and clarify that the minister is wanting to take a break and was earlier wanting to leave the table and merely read Hansard with my questions because she did not want to listen?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. [interjection] Order, I said.

I have put it to the committee if the committee wishes to have a now six-minute recess. [agreed] The committee is recessed until five o'clock.

The committee recessed at 4:54 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 5:01 p.m.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, again, I would just like to clarify the amount of time that I have.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Radisson now has 10 minutes to pose her comments and questions.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you. I wanted to pick up on this whole issue of the changes to physical education and health education as proposed in the March 22, 1996, update.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, you may have to help us refresh our memories here. The member had asked a 10-minute series of questions. I indicated that I would provide the answers to those questions in writing.

She then asked a new set of questions, if I am not mistaken, and that new set of questions was complete just before we recessed, if I am not mistaken, that I might have an opportunity to try to answer some of those and send the rest in writing.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Radisson, I would just ask this, that, in fact, there were a lot of questions asked. A couple of comments were put out by the minister that, in fact, she would answer the questions, or she could supply it in writing because of the number of questions that were put.

Would the member for Radisson like the answers to those questions now, or does she want to continue with her 10-minute period?

I thank all the members around the table for their comments. Although they have not been on record, I thank them anyway.

The honourable member for Radisson now has 10 minutes.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, I will in this question be dealing with the document released from the minister's department on March 22, 1996, which made a number of

changes to the New Directions direction that the school system in Manitoba, the public school system, was intended to go under the stewardship of this minister. I want to focus on the area under physical education, health education on page 5 of the document.

I had asked the question, who wrote this, because I know that the staffperson who was hired under the curriculum development branch, I believe—I am not sure what division she was working in, but she had the duty to develop a new physical education curriculum, and I know that she resigned. I would like to find out from the minister why she resigned but, given that she did resign, I would like to know who wrote this document because, as I understand it, that physical education specialist or professional was not the author of this particular recommendation.

I want to read into the record what the recommendation is, that, quote: My department will be providing to schools before the end of the current school year information for instructional planning related to physical/health and proposed topics for instruction. This information will apply until such time as the new physical education/health curriculum framework becomes available within the time allotted to physical education, including health. In Grades 1 to 8 schools should allocate between 60 and 65 percent of the time to physical education and 35 to 40 percent to health. In each of Senior 1 and Senior 2, the existing breakdown should remain in effect, that is, 55 hours, one-half credit for physical education and 55 hours, one-half credit for health. The focus in early and middle years should be on physical well-being, community health, social/emotional well-being, safety, dental health and nutrition with increased emphasis on family life education in the middle years. Life skills, family life, drug awareness and physical and mental well-being should have greater emphasis in the senior years. The information to be sent to schools in spring '96 will reflect this emphasis.

I am concerned, as I said earlier, that this is taking from physical activity, phys ed time, in order to have health education taught. I want to make it very clear that I am all in support of having health education. In fact, I know it is on the record that I requested the government not to remove health education as a compulsory course in K to 8, as they have. I do not think that we should be taking away either health education or physical education.

particularly in the primary grades, that this should not be a competition for those two.

I want to ask the minister, what kind of research or studies were done to develop this particular compilation of topics? Was there consultation with the Physical Education Teachers' Association, and what were the recommendations from that consultation? I have been made aware that this was not what they recommended, and it was not what Ms. Dufresne [phonetic], the woman who resigned over this recommendation had intended, that they did not want to see a loss of physical education time in order to teach health education.

Now, I know the way the government has come up with this, that they interpreted the 180 minutes to be approximately 10 percent of the school day or the school cycle, the six-day cycle, and I am aware of the way they have tried to justify this, but I am concerned that this is not in keeping with what the professionals in physical education and health education would recommend. So I am wondering, where did this come from, and how can the minister justify this direction which, as I said earlier, is going contrary to a lot of the emerging research in the area of activity and physical education and fitness which is pointing to having an increase.

The government's own report, the Health of Manitoba's Children, recommended compulsory physical education right through to Grade 12, and the guideline that exists now of 180 minutes per six-day cycle is not even attained by a number of schools in the province. This is a result of, as the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) was alluding to earlier, the difficulty of meeting that curriculum guideline even with the existent stress on providing staff, and I am concerned that this will lead to having physical education being taught by fewer physical education specialists.

I am sure the minister is aware of what has happened in Portage la Prairie, where they are having classroom teachers teach physical education, and where a lot of those people will not feel comfortable with using the equipment and using a lot of the necessary kinds of activities or doing a lot of the necessary activities that young people need to do in a quality physical education program.

* (1710)

So I am wondering, as well, with this, if that is the direction the minister is willing to have physical education in this province go. I think that in Portage la Prairie they have made the move to have 25 percent of all the class time be devoted to health education topics. I just want to reiterate, again, how important I do think it is for those types of topics to be taught, social and emotional well-being, safety, dental health, nutrition. I know that the phys ed teachers feel quite comfortable with teaching some of those topics in the physical education course, and that some of them already do integrate those topics, but they do it in an active way.

They do not want to have sedentary classroom desk time replace physical activity time. I am wondering, as I said, if that is the direction that the minister is willing to see physical education go, where there is going to be less activity time, where there are going to be fewer physical education professionals teaching that kind of subject area.

The other concern is that there will be more pressure on having people teach topics that they do not feel comfortable with. A lot of the physical education people would feel comfortable if they had the inservicing and the training to teach, particularly, the areas in family life, and that is quite a concern. I am wondering how this department is going to remedy that.

The other question I want to emphasize as important is, how is the minister going to create a consensus in the health education, the physical education professions? I am wondering what kind of pressure or what kind of lobbying the minister has succumbed to perhaps, or has listened to, to give rise to this kind of policy for physical and health education. The agencies for school health have been meeting, and I am wondering if this policy was something that they approve or they support or they recommended.

I know recently I heard from one of the members of that agency, and she did not want to see a reduction in the activity time. They did not want to see health education come at the expense of physical education. They think that both are important, and neither should be sacrificed for the health and well-being of young people in our province. I am wanting the minister to clarify that. What kind of agencies were recommending this approach to providing health education and physical education to Manitoba school teachers? Thank you.

Mrs. McIntosh: I begin my response by saying that there is no way that I can possibly answer all of those questions with the detail she requires. What I cannot answer in the limited time that I have, we will provide in writing. I also have to state for the record, anybody reading this Hansard should know that there are very, very big mistakes in the assumptions the member has made in her questions.

She has made wide, sweeping, generic commentary with no backup factual information. I will respond with the same kind of wide, sweeping, general commentary that her facts and her assumptions in many instances are wrong. For example, the member said she spent a lot of time and so I will ask her then, but I do not presume she will be able to answer. She has made comments that our new phys ed curriculum is going to be bad, and she told us all why it is bad and that the contents of the new physical education curriculum are not going to do the job for the people of Manitoba, but we have not written the curriculum yet.

We have not written the curriculum, Mr. Deputy Chairman. That is what I am saying to the member through you, so she will take discussion documents. She will take letters and questions. She will take positions put forward by interest groups. She will take questions put out to the field. She will take any number of recommendations that are floating around and say, this is the new physical education curriculum, and it is bad.

But we have not yet written that new curriculum, so that is one assumption. She is making assumptions about what the content will be, and then she puts the assumptions forward as if they are fact, which they are not, and then she tells us all why her incorrect assumptions are bad for children and why this government, therefore, is bad for children.

She also indicates that marrying health and physical education is bad because it will not give enough time to physical activity. It will take more time away from physical activity and time on task in terms of being active, and she says that is bad.

She also, I think, recognizes or should recognize that having children touch their toes, which was the example she used, is achieved with much more degree of diligence and vigour if students understand why touching their toes

is good for them. It is equivalent to saying to students, do not smoke, but not telling them why they should not, not telling them the ramifications.

We have research—[interjection] The member having asked all the questions does not want to hear the answers, and it would be good if she stopped her own conversation and listened to the responses because then I would not feel that the few moments I do have are being wasted, but I presume she is going to read Hansard to see what I said.

I will indicate, Mr. Chairman, that the research we have and the studies that other people have done show that when people understand why a healthy lifestyle is important, they are more inclined to follow that healthy lifestyle. That is why you have all of these physical fitness experts on television, in workplaces, in government encouraging wellness, because they know that once people understand why it is important to have a certain lifestyle, they are more inclined to be physically fit because they understand the rationale for being physically fit. So the member may contend, as she does, that having children touch their toes will ensure a healthy lifestyle. We believe that telling students why physical activity is good, how oxygen moves to the brain—

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: On a point of order, I want you to call the minister to order, because I think if she reviews Hansard she will see that she is misconstruing or putting words in my mouth, and I made it very clear that I did not want to sacrifice phys ed and health, one for the other.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

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Mrs. McIntosh: The member, despite what she says, is absolutely forcing school divisions to make choices as to time allotments. Whether she understands the implication of her suggestion or not, the reality of what she is saying is that school boards will have to choose between health and physical education or give up language arts, which I am beginning to accept as the final and ultimate goal of the official opposition because they want—the 180 minutes that the member complained

about—[interjection] Mr. Chairman, could you please call them to order. I understand they are agitated, but I would like to have them to listen to the answer, they have made such a point of asking.

The member refers to the 180 minutes that are in the guidelines for physical education, and she says, with great judgment in her voice, that the 180 minutes are not being adhered to. The member maybe did not hear my earlier response when I said that all of the allotted time lines for subject areas under the NDP, if complied with, would have meant an extension of the school day.

The 180 minutes for phys ed came in under the NDP and were not enforced under the NDP, and the member, if she does not know that, should know it. That is part of the problem that government has had. The member indicated that the policy is set by budget but was not able to give any examples.

The only example she was able to provide, which was not an example of this at all, she said, well, one school division has three phys ed experts, and another school division does not have any. That means policy is being set by budget.

That does not mean any such thing at all. That means that school boards are making choices. She asked me who wrote a document and then told me the person who wrote the document, then asked me why that person resigned and then told me why that person resigned. Now, I mean, I am not even needed here. She can ask and answer her own questions.

* (1720)

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, the minister has definitely put an erroneous comment on the record this time. I think this is not a dispute over the facts. She may want to take it as a point of order and peruse Hansard, but I asked her who wrote the interim recommendations, and I am very interested in that question because—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

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Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am positive that the member asked why an individual resigned and then told us why the individual resigned. Perhaps she would care to review Hansard and indicate that if she asks the question, then provides the answer, our time could be better spent providing information on things she does not know about. I do not know if her answer is correct. I will check and see, but she seems to feel her answer is correct. I will check that out.

Physical activity as well as health topics are both required for physical well-being. In Manitoba, over the last number of years, we have made that, even with 30 minutes of phys ed and with nine to 12 minutes of health, students are not showing a better performance regarding their activity level. To us this means that both the activity and the knowledge and the skills of health topics need to be improved. People need to understand why it is important to be physically active. Health tells them that.

We are working with health educators and with physical education educators to develop a curricula, yet unwritten, that will address both areas. Local decisions regarding the allocation of resources, some senior year schools have offered many school-initiated courses or student-initiated courses. Note that these are additional courses, not just the required courses. Our intent with Senior 3 and 4 has been to offer students greater choices so they can make decisions that will be of benefit to them and their goals for post-secondary training or for work options being planned for upon graduation.

Our time allotments are guidelines, as they were under the NDP. The 180 minutes the member referred to is still the 180 minutes. It was not enforced then, so she is telling us it is not enforced now. Then I am asking her, what should we do about it? Should we enforce the guidelines, change the guidelines, take time away from other subjects, lengthen the school day? I ask her to indicate, from where will the time come?

Mr. Chairman, I am thoroughly unimpressed with the fact that all the while I am giving this answer, the member has had a steady stream of conversation with the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). Having made a point of saying she wants answers to these question, she

has not done the courtesy of listening. I think that is extremely rude, and I think it should be on—

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

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, I just want to clarify for the minister that although when she is speaking the member for Wolseley and I are conferring, we are discussing what she is talking about. I would ask her not to be so oversensitive because we are interested in the answers, and I do appreciate her taking the time to provide the information.

I want to indicate for the minister that the issues that I am raising are as a result of my participation in the recent Forum 3 organized by the Physical Education Teachers' Association, and their entire focus right now is to try and—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I am presuming my time was up and that the member is now asking a new question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Yes, Madam Minister.

Mrs. McIntosh: Okay, thank you.

* * *

Ms. Cerilli: I was just pointing out that the issues that I am raising are as the result of my discussions and consultation with physical education teachers and my own participation with the Forum 3—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Do people in this room have a problem hearing me?

Would the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and the honourable minister (Mrs. McIntosh) please curb their conversation, while the honourable member for Radisson is posing her comments and her questions.

Ms. Cerilli: I was just clarifying where it was that I became aware of the concerns in the profession of physical education/health education with regard to the interim document that the minister has put forward.

I am wondering why, given that they are in the process of hiring a new physical education/health education consultant, and I am not sure if they are combining that into one position, I assume that they are, why they have not just waited until the subsequent school year to bring forward any changes in the area of health education/physical education, until they have that person in place so that they can ensure that this new guideline is going to reflect the profession and is going to not just add more confusion and inequity or lack of standards in the provision of these courses.

This is the government that is very concerned about standardized tests, but I find it confusing and ironic why they are not equally as concerned with standardized curriculum. The way that they are going about this, they may call it choice by introducing these interim guidelines, I know that a number of school divisions are not going to follow these guidelines and the way that they follow them is going to vary greatly between divisions, and from school to school, even within divisions. So we are going to see a real mix of the provision of physical education/health education schools.

I know, even when the changes that were made previously in the New Directions document when health education was removed from the curriculum as a core course in the elementary school, there were a number of schools that still wanted to, and I think, do ensure that that is a requirement for all elementary school children. I am not sure how the department is responding to those concerns and I would like the minister to clarify that.

Are they not concerned that, by putting this interim guideline in prior to having the new curriculum developed, is adding a lot of confusion and inequity in the provision of health education/physical education? I think I am correct, and I know that the phys ed teachers were thinking that what had happened with the changes in the social studies curriculum and the history curriculum was that it was put on hold until the new curriculum is created

So I am not sure why that was not done for physical education/health education. I would like the minister and her staff to clarify that for me. Maybe I will stop there and she may be able to answer that before our time is up. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The time for today's committee is up. I would ask the minister and her staff to keep track of the questions that were posed, and the minister will then have 10 minutes when we come back to order tomorrow.

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

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please.

This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 21.1, item 1.(b)(1).

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I know that we are commencing at approximately 3:15 p.m. on Monday, which has been similar to the pattern that has been adopted during the course of these Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson, at the onset, we are not making a lot of progress in terms of the minister directly answering questions in this committee. Most of the time is spent with the minister attacking, and I am just wondering whether or not some progress will be made in the course of these Estimates, and whether we will get down to answering questions on the part of the minister, and whether or not we will be able to make some progress. After all, we are not sitting here in order to waste time; we are sitting here in order to conduct the public's business.

This department has an expenditure of approximately \$1.8 billion. We are elected to help scrutinize and to deal with that expenditure on the programs running underneath those appropriations. It is our duty to deal with that, and we are not making a good deal of progress as long as the minister insists on constantly attacking, which he has done literally for hour after hour in this committee. It is not productive, and it is not a good use of the public's time and energy.

I have two questions for the minister at the onset. The first is, can we and will we be getting into a situation

where the minister will attempt to answer the questions that are placed and try to forgo the rhetoric, try to forgo the constant accusations and attacks that we are hearing over and over again? Secondly, what kind of staff will the minister be providing as we go through the course of these Estimates debates? There may be merits in going on to different line items during the course of these debates, but it will accomplish nothing if the staff that are appropriate to those particular line items are not brought forward for answering questions here in this Chamber.

So my question is twofold: firstly, is the minister going to begin to take part in the process, and secondly, will the staff appropriate to the line appropriation items, as we go through these Estimates, be brought forward to deal with those appropriation Estimates?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, I regret any inconvenience this committee has suffered with any delays that have been occasioned by my attendance or nonattendance. The honourable member was standing outside the Chamber listening to me address the issue of home care, at which there were allegations raised by the union bosses about someone being hurt. Those are serious matters, the suggestion being that would not have happened if the union bosses had asked the workers to be at work where they belong. That is the kind of thing that I have been dealing with on a daily basis.

The honourable member is concerned about information. I have already told him that as long as we are in a strike situation in our Home Care program, the members of the Department of Health are stretched significantly in terms of their time and ability to attend to information gathering. I think we have been responsive to questions where we are not able to provide specific information because of staff being involved in other pursuits at the present time. We will take notice and undertake to provide answers at a later time.

I regret any inconvenience all this causes, but the honourable members in the New Democratic Party are certainly able to fix that problem with their considerable influence on the union bosses in this province, but one is led sometimes to think that the influence is the other way around: members in this Chamber are simply doing the bidding of their union boss friends rather than here to represent the interests of the people of Manitoba.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talks about the value of having a process whereby the spending of the Department of Health can be scrutinized. I agree with that; that is why I participate in this process. But, Mr. Chairman, surely you have to recognize that there are two sides, and if the honourable member feels sensitive and under attack, let him look at his own conduct of his responsibilities during the course of this disruption with respect to home care services.

Never once have I heard that honourable member condemn the union bosses for conducting a strike vote without even having reviewed the position of the government negotiators. Never once have I heard the honourable member for Kildonan condemn the tactic of telling people that if they return to work before the union bosses say it is okay, you will be fined significant sums of money by the union. Never once have I heard the member for Kildonan or his colleagues condemn any of these sorts of things that tend to intimidate and threaten people. Never once have I heard the members opposite condemn the union for telling home care clients that they will face user fees and cuts in service. Never once have I heard that.

* (1520)

The honourable member characterizes my conduct in this place in a way that is not in accordance with the facts of the situation. I do not know what he expects me to do when he and his colleagues and their union boss friends conduct themselves in such a way that personal attacks are the result, on myself and anybody else. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) has been the subject of personal attacks by members of the New Democratic Party. So let not the honourable member for Kildonan stand there in some sanctimonious manner and talk in the way that he has without the record being clear. I am attempting to do the best I can under all the circumstances, but the union bosses, with the help and support of members of the New Democratic Party, have taken steps to remove many people from the delivery of health care services in our province, and I think that is something that I have to respond with when honourable members opposite attack me.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess the minister's tirade is indicative of the process that has been going on inside this Chamber. I asked the minister some specific questions

about (a) whether or not he would answer questions, and (b) whether or not staff would be made available as we go through the line-by-line specific appropriation items. All we heard was the usual minister—we accept that your polling is saying that union bosses is the best way to defend against your abysmal failure to deal with the home care crisis. We accept that, we recognize that. You can say it over and over again, and I recognize that is what your polling says.

But this is the legislative Chamber, where we are dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. We are not dealing with the minister's fantasies about what is going on outside on strike lines. We are not dealing with 1987. What we are dealing with is a very serious situation as it affects health care presently and we are dealing with expenditures of \$1.8 billion that the people of Manitoba sent us to this Chamber to talk about, not for the minister to go off on his rhetorical attack over and over again.

So perhaps the minister could indicate again (a) whether or not he will be prepared to answer the questions as best he can, and (b) whether or not staff will be made available as we go through the line-by-line expenditure items throughout this process so we know how to plan our questions accordingly.

Mr. McCrae: Ordinarily, Mr. Chairman, during review of the Estimates, staff are available to assist the minister in being responsive to the questions seeking facts that are raised by members of the opposition. If the honourable members look back on previous Estimates processes, I think I have been very open with honourable members in terms of providing information. I think that we are dealing in extraordinary circumstances. It is not every day or every week that you just happen to have a strike amongst the home care attendants on the one hand, and—

An Honourable Member: Did that paralyze your whole department?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) asks if that paralyzes my whole department. Does he not understand that there are people out there who need services and that the people in my department are, indeed, extremely stretched to provide services to our home care clients? How arrogant can you get, Mr. Chairman, as to suggest that at a time when

3,000—well, not 3,000, but the union bosses would like to have 3,000 people pulled off the job, and the honourable member for Crescentwood supports those union bosses. Then he comes in here and says, oh, everything should be all right.

Well, the honourable member for Crescentwood is a pretty naive fellow to think that you can run those kinds of services at the drop of a hat. This is a very serious matter, and I wish the honourable member for Crescentwood would treat this seriously. We have clients in our home care system who require services. They are not getting them from their union boss friends. Their union boss friends are threatening and intimidating people to stay off the job and to refuse to provide services to people who need them. They are being threatened not to provide services to people with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, serious cases of arthritis, people who are functionally dependent on home care—

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, again, there was a question asked about whether staff would be present to provide answers. The answer of the minister is not relevant to the question that is being asked, and I would ask you to ask the minister to either answer the question or to sit down.

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

Mr. McCrae: These same honourable members who come in here complaining about the conduct of these Estimates have spent a good half of the time raising points of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the minister to be relevant towards the point of order raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood?

Mr. McCrae: In my humble submission, the honourable member does not have a point of order. Mr. Chairman, you cannot argue one thing one minute and something else the next and expect to be believed.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Crescentwood does have a point of order when it comes

to relevancy within line 1.(b)(1). The question that was put by the honourable member clearly in his second question was to deal with the procedural matters before the committee at this time or the process, so the relevancy should be towards that question.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to respond.

Mr. McCrae: Without accepting the comments of the honourable member for Kildonan, whose characterization of events is usually at odds with mine, yes, we are here to try to help. That is what we are here for, but, as I say, Mr. Chairman, it is with the provisos that I have already put on the record. You cannot on the one hand support a movement to pull 3,000 away from delivery of service to home care clients, even in cases of Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, severe arthritis, people functionally dependent on home care. You cannot do that on the one hand and then expect the full force of the department to be available for the whims of the honourable member for Kildonan.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I just want to indicate that I have never seen such an abuse of the Estimates period as we are seeing today. This minister—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member if he is going to be relevant towards the line we are dealing with, or is he on a point of order?

Mr. Ashton: I am rising on the line item, the deputy minister's salary. I really wonder what is happening to the Minister of Health. I have known the Minister of Health for many years and we obviously do not agree on politics. I saw him go through some crises in the Department of Justice, but there seems to be something about this particular circumstance that is clouding the minister's judgment.

I mean, I hear the minister responding to questions with the script about union bosses day in, day out and the other script that the minister has. We are asking questions about the Ministry of Health. It is our one opportunity this session to ask questions about the Department of Health. The Department of Health was scheduled first by joint agreement of the House leaders,

and there was consultation as well with the member for Inkster and the Liberals in this House.

We are dealing with important matters of public policy, and what we are seeing is a continuing pattern. First of all, I have no difficulty with the late starts so long as it is understood that we fully expect that, if this committee is going to start 45 minutes late as it has on a number of occasions because the minister is either talking to media or meeting with people in his department, that time be allocated some other time.

We have a tradition in this House of working in co-operation on it. He has been a former government House leader too. The Minister of Health should know there was no disagreement from the government House leader; this was by joint agreement—by joint agreement. The Department of Health is the biggest department we have so there was joint agreement by both sides of the House.

* (1530)

On Friday the deputy minister was in committee for approximately 10 minutes. [interjection] Twenty-five, says the minister. We sat how many hours on Friday? [interjection] Twenty-five minutes. We have been in here today and once again the deputy minister is not present but, not only that, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked what the situation is going to be in terms of staff. We have got a number of items ahead in turns of Estimates that require very detailed answers.

The member says, there is a strike on. For all he wants to do in terms of painting it as he likes to do in these rather exaggerated terms, obviously it has been something that has arisen in a process that has many different sides to it. I am not going to get into the irrelevant discussions about that. We have the Department of Health Estimates here. Is the minister saying that because of the current situation he is unable to provide a staff and answers? Is that what he is saying? Is the minister saying he is not going to give any sort of indication when staff might be available?

We have always—

Mr. McCrae: Ask your questions.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the minister says, ask questions. We have received zero answers. This minister cannot even

answer a question by the member for Kildonan in terms of process. He repeats the same thing. The minister, I realize, is under a lot of stress, but you know that does not excuse refusing to answer questions, it does not excuse coming to this committee repeatedly late, and it does not excuse refusing to give any commitment to members of the opposition as to when staff might be made available.

The Estimates process always works on a certain level of co-operation. I worked co-operatively with the government House leader to develop a schedule. I worked co-operatively with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to make sure that all members of the House were consulted. Now, I do not know if the Minister of Health was consulted or not. If he was not, he should talk to his government House leader. Those Estimates were set in co-operation by both sides of the House.

Now we are here, Mr. Chairperson, we expect a few basic things. One is that we start on time. I think it is absolutely unacceptable the degree of lateness in starting in this House, because I have seen other times when ministers have had issues with the media, but you do not spend half an hour and 45 minutes of the Legislature's time doing that on a repeated basis.

Other ministers have had just as critical situations to deal with as this minister. This minister does not have the right to do that. I have never seen a minister who has refused to provide staff resources or provide any indication to members of the opposition as to when those resources can be made available.

We have various line items. If the minister will stop the rhetoric and tell us when we can get staff in here, we can work on a co-operative basis. There are many line items here. Different staff can provide the resources necessary for the minister to answer those questions. I realize the minister is under a lot of stress, and I must admit that it is clouding his judgment. But I plead with the minister, I will ask him whether he will make sure that the staff resources are available. Starting, when will the minister ensure that the deputy minister, the line item we are dealing with now—

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I have listened for a few minutes now to the discussion that has gone on, and I

would suggest to the honourable members opposite that, if they are really serious about asking the minister questions, they have had 10 minutes now where they could have asked a question, but they have not asked questions. I think it is important that all of us in this Chamber recognize the importance of agreements that were struck in regard to Estimates and all those kinds of things. Some of us spent a lot of time changing some of the processes that were prevalent.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, and the members opposite, maybe even the minister, that we get on with the business of answering questions on the Estimates, and so I would ask your indulgence in this.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order, he did have a point.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson, to conclude his statement.

Mr. Ashton: To conclude—and I asked a very specific question, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked the same question twice—I would like to ask the minister: When will he make sure that, beginning with the deputy minister, the appropriate officials are available for the line items we are dealing with? I want to indicate to the minister that in the spirit of co-operation, which I think the previous member mentioned, we have always worked with some degree of co-operation in this House regardless of other issues that the minister has to deal with, the stress the minister is under. I understand that situation; it is very apparent to anyone in this House.

Will he please, however, make a commitment right now in this line item to give us access to, for example, the deputy minister—we are dealing with the deputy minister's line—and other lines, so that we can start getting some clear answers on very important health care issues as we proceed through Estimates?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, if honourable members ask questions, I will attempt to answer them.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the minister is losing his hearing. I just said, will the minister commit to providing staff, including the deputy minister—

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member cites Beauchesne daily in this House; he knows a little bit about the rules. The deputy minister has no voice in this Chamber. I am the person responsible for the Department of Health, I will answer the questions.

Mr. Ashton: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairperson. It has always been the practice in this House in Estimates to have staff present and has always been the practice to have deputy ministers present in this House.

The member is not only out of order, he conveniently seems to forget the many years of tradition we have in this House in Estimates, one of the unique features of the Manitoba Legislature, so I believe the minister does not have a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order, but the ministers have been known to lay over questions put forth by the opposition critics until such time as staff is available to the minister as they are allowed within our rules to come within the Chamber.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: I will ask the question again because the minister seems to have some difficulty in understanding what a question is. When someone says, when will resources be made available, that is a question, Mr. Chairperson. The minister does not have to answer. That is also in Beauchesne's. In fact, I think he has probably read one section of Beauchesne's and one section of Beauchesne's only, the one that says that ministers do not have to answer questions.

Mr. Chairperson, I ask the question because what the minister is doing is preventing this committee from doing what we do every year. I have never seen in a department of this importance the kind of obstruction, and that is the word, that we are seeing from this minister. I realize the minister is under a lot of stress, and it is interesting that when we ask questions about this, the minister gets onto his fetish about union bosses and the rest of it. I realize that the minister has a hang-up on these type of issues, but he has the responsibility as Minister of Health (Mr.

McCrae), the largest department in government, to put his own personal political fetishes aside, including this one, and start dealing with the issues.

* (1540)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We are getting nowhere fast here. We could keep this up for the next week and accomplish absolutely nothing. I would ask the co-operation of the committee to assist me here in where we are headed, and in what direction we are headed. I think it is important that possibly the House leaders get together and have a little conversation outside of the Chamber, or something, but if we continue in this path, we are getting absolutely nowhere. I am only here as the humble servant, as I have advised you many times, so I ask for your advice at this time.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, I can tell right now, looking at what has happened in the first 25 hours of consideration of health care Estimates, I will tell you where we are getting: it is nowhere. I appreciate your raising that question in this committee, because this minister is pathologically unable to answer even the simplest question. I will ask him again, and, indeed, I will be raising this with the government House leader because this is an abuse of Estimates. This is an absolute abuse of Estimates, and I find it unfortunate one minister, in this case, is threatening the co-operative process that is very unique in this session, something that many of us work many hours and years to achieve, and I appreciate the comments brought forward by the member for Emerson because that is one thing that is certainly at issue here.

I am asking, Mr. Chairperson, and I will ask once again, because it is a question, and it is a standard question. All we want to know is what staff are going to be available, when they are going to be available, if the minister cannot provide staff at certain times. I will leave it on the record. I am sure our Health critic will offer, by leave, to rearrange the line items that we are dealing with. We do that on occasion as well. We have even arranged on many occasions—and we are considering doing that again on Friday, arrange the actual schedule of Estimates, in this case, a Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) that has to go off to a conference.

We are constantly asked to co-operate, as we will be looking at doing this Friday, and I do not want to see the situation where we stop co-operating from our side when

ministers of Education cannot go to ministerial conferences, but I suppose—[interjection] Well, the minister says, is it a threat? It is interesting that the most unco-operative minister in this House right now is suggesting that somehow it is a threat to suggest that we on the opposition side do not have to co-operate.

The bottom line, Mr. Chairperson, I can say one thing to this Minister of Health, he is definitely stepping over the line when he talks about members of this House intimidating because not only is that unparliamentary, but it shows the level to which this minister will stoop. If he wants to put comments on the record, as he did just over a week ago, I welcome him to do it again in terms of intimidation, because I have always respected in this House the democratic process, including the minister's right to get on the record and put on the record some of the more ridiculous comments he has done in the last little while, but he does not have any right to accuse members of an opposition party who are trying to do nothing more than get answers to questions, to accuse them—and he used the word “intimidation.” I remind the minister that he got thrown out of this House once for his inflammatory rhetoric, and, if he is not careful, I see the same thing happening again, because we will challenge him each and every time he makes those kinds of comments. They have no place in this House.

Mr. Chairperson, I want to complete my question again, and, if the minister will not give a commitment, I would ask then, because of what is happening, because of the stress the minister and his department are under, is he saying that we are now going to establish a new precedent whereby there is going to be no co-operation in Estimates about the ordering of line items, where we now have no commitment by the government to provide staff to provide answers to questions, something that has happened in this House ever since there has been an Estimates process? Is the minister saying that despite the progress we have made in terms of co-operation in the rules, because of his own personal and political agenda, he is now saying, that we cannot and will not be able to ask questions about the deputy minister's line item without having the deputy minister here to at least attempt to provide some information that might result in a very unusual thing happening?

This minister who for 25 hours has not answered a single question yet answering it, I ask him once again:

Why will he not commit to a more co-operative approach here and provide us, at some point in time, with the ability to ask questions about, for example, the deputy minister's salary, the line we are on now, by having the deputy minister here? Is he now breaking that precedent?

By the way, Mr. Chairperson, if he is not willing to do that, if he is now breaking that precedent, I ask him, is this his own personal decision, or is this something that is being directed by the government House leader, who has made no communication to myself or to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) about this, that he personally is changing this, or can we try and perhaps persuade this minister to return to a tradition that served us well? We do not agree on issues. We certainly do not agree with the government on home care. He does not have to agree with us either, but he does have a responsibility, as a minister of the Crown, not to abuse the Estimates process, and he does have the responsibility to respect the traditions of this House by providing staff that can ensure that we get answers to very serious questions we have about health care.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I thank the honourable member for Thompson for raising for the first time a question. We have been here, as he has said, 25 hours. We have no record of any questions that have not been answered. The honourable member has said that in the general area of the deputy minister and his salary—we are prepared to answer questions about that.

We have staff here who have that kind of information. It is not for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) or the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to dictate to the department who should be sitting with the minister to assist. We have the Associate Deputy Minister, Mr. Frank DeCock here, a man who is respected throughout Manitoba, who can assist me. We also have Susan Murphy, who is available, who has her finger on the pulse of the finances of the Department of Health.

I am delighted, at least now we know the general area of questioning. The members want to ask about the salary of the deputy minister. All we need is some questions. We have been willing from the beginning. There is no government and no minister, I do not think, who can show to be more open and willing to answer questions than this particular minister. I eagerly await a question. After 25 hours, all we have from members in

the New Democratic Party is rhetoric, very little in the way of questions; and, if there were any, we answered them. We do not have any record of outstanding. We keep records as we go along as to what answers have not been forthcoming, and members opposite cannot force me or the department as to who should advise the minister. The minister is here prepared to answer questions.

I explained the reason for being late this afternoon. We were talking with the people outside the Chamber with respect to allegations of a problem in the Home Care program as a result of the strike, which I think I have set out how that came about, but the fact is you cannot support that on the one hand and then also come in here and try to force the minister to fit himself into the mould that members opposite would like to make for me.

The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) can get as exercised as he wants; the fact is that there have not been any questions. I await questions. It might be helpful if we went through the lines of the Estimates, so the department could properly, or try under all the circumstances to prepare to be responsive to the questions, but let us have some questions and we will attempt to answer them.

Mr. Ashton: Tell us which staff can be available to answer those questions.

Mr. McCrae: It is none of your business, frankly. I answer the questions.

* (1550)

Mr. Ashton: Well, do not talk about dictating. Okay? Because you—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: This has never happened before. This is ridiculous. You do not have the right to deny access to staff in other areas. Your entire department is working on one issue? Mr. Chairperson—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Have we got it out of our system yet? Is my microphone working?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister has asked for us to ask questions. One of the reasons why I am

reluctant to—we have gotten very few answers during the course of the 25 hours we have been dealing with the Estimates, very few answers. I have had discussions with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and I think I reflect his viewpoint as well. One of the reasons we are reluctant to move onto other line items is we will accomplish nothing on the other line items.

For example, if we are to move to the Home Care line item and ask specific questions on home care, we do not think we will get the answers there either and thereby will lose the opportunity to ask questions of the deputy minister on this line item and lose that opportunity. That is where the concern is and our concern, and my question that I have asked twice—twice—since we arrived in this Chamber is if the minister can give us some idea whether or not staff will be made available on the appropriate line items so we can answer the questions.

The minister is indicating from his chair that he is doing his best, and I appreciate that response. I guess my question is if we move into, for example, the Information Systems, can the minister give us general assurances that we will have the appropriate people who understand that area in this Chamber? If we move to the continuing—[interjection] We are making some progress here, and I will translate for the record. The minister is indicating from his seat that if we move in an expeditious manner from item to item, he will attempt—well, perhaps I will ask the minister to put on record that we are prepared to move along in this process and try to move through it systematically, as we always do in Health Estimates, as we always do.

With the co-operation of the minister and the member for Inkster, we usually move through expeditiously, and we usually try to accommodate each other. Is the minister saying that if we go into that process, we can be assured that our questions can be answered on one item with the appropriate staff and move onto the next item so that we feel that we are doing the job that we should for the people of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: I am not saying there have not been any questions. I am saying there are a lot of questions about process and nothing about any substance. I thought honourable members were interested in what really goes on in the Health department. We are here to go through the Estimates of the Department of Health in a

chronological way as they are set out in the printed documents and to answer the questions that come up.

The honourable members are talking about the traditions in this place. Well, one of the traditions is that we answer questions when they are put to us. If we do not have the answers immediately, even sometimes when we have staff, members opposite seem to want to insist to run the department for us.

Even sometimes when that happens we have to make information available subsequently. And I have seen the information that we have made available subsequently. It is very significant. Members opposite have so much information they simply do not know what to do with it all. That is okay. We will continue to be extremely open, and if honourable members will just ask their questions, we will pass an item, move to the next item, ask the questions, pass the item, move to the next item.

My staff will have a better idea. We will endeavour to do our utmost to be responsive, to be co-operative, but we will not let members opposite, as they are wont to do, just exercise control over other people. We will not have that. We have very, very capable people with us this afternoon to assist us on the line 1.(b) that we are working on. Let us work on it. Ask the questions, we will answer them, then we will move on.

Mr. Chomiak: I will note for the record that the more co-operative spirit that I hear from the minister from his seat during the course of my question did not come out during the course of the minister's verbal response, but I will accept and hope that we can move along in this process. Since we are at that item, on page 24 of the Supplementary Estimates book, it is indicated that the objective of Executive Support is to provide for consultation and advice to the minister through the Urban Health Advisory Council, Mr. Chairperson. There have been numerous questions concerning the process as it relates to the Urban Health Advisory Council.

My question for the minister is: Can the minister give us a schematic diagram of who makes up the council and what are the reporting agencies and an outline as to the time frame as to their decision-making process during the course of this fiscal year?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, we will make the diagram available for the honourable member. The planning

partnership has made its recommendations. The evaluation and costing is underway. We expect that report will then be made to the minister, that is me, and that will happen in the next few weeks. It has been delayed because of the strike.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. Can the minister indicate who composes the committee or group of individuals who are doing the cost analysis?

Mr. McCrae: The chair is an employee of the Department of Health, Mr. Bill Campbell, and other members of the costing group are the financial officers of the various hospitals.

Mr. Chomiak: So Bill Campbell is chairing it and all of the hospitals' financial officers or CEOs—

Mr. McCrae: Financial officers, chief financial officers.

Mr. Chomiak: —chief financial officers have composed it. Can the minister indicate who is compiling the data? Is the data generated from the Department of Health or is it from KPMG or a combination thereof?

Mr. McCrae: The information is provided by the hospitals and examined by Manitoba Health. Then there is further dialogue between the department and the hospitals to make sure the numbers are accurate and that the appropriate interpretations are being arrived at pursuant to those numbers.

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

* (1600)

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate how the consulting firm KPMG interacts in this particular process if, in fact, they do?

Mr. McCrae: KPMG is represented in the urban planning partnership, and they are assisting all the other players as part of that partnership in the evaluations that come forward as a result of the work between Mr. Campbell and his group.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is KPMG preparing, or has it prepared any reports per se?

Mr. McCrae: We expect within the next few weeks to receive the report of KPMG on the work they have been doing. The member for Kildonan was a participant in the process on primary and secondary care.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister be making that report public within a relatively short period of time upon receipt?

Mr. McCrae: The process that we have used, all the processes we have used have been very, very open processes. There have been reports already from KPMG with respect to the process that we have gone through reporting on the symposiums, or whatever you call, the forums, and I expect to see a very open process in the future and that would probably include making that report public. I think we made the Wade-Bell report public, and that was the tertiary report, and now we are into this primary and secondary, so that would be my expectation for this one too.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister outline for us how—will the coming together of the primary, secondary report by KPMG dovetail with the deliberations of the urban planning council to sort of result in final recommendations, or is it two different sort of paths?

Mr. McCrae: The processes are complementary.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so can we anticipate at the end of the day that the recommendations will be brought together, and the minister will make an announcement based on a distillation of the information from the complementary processes? I mean, just structurally, is that roughly what we are looking at? The urban planning council will do the costing studies, KPMG does its studies, it goes to the minister and the minister comes back with final recommendations as to primary, secondary care in the city of Winnipeg. Is that roughly what we are looking for?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, it has been stated as government policy on several occasions that there will be a consultation process before final decisions are made. Can the minister outline for us when we will see that consultation process?

Mr. McCrae: We are into that process now.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I had the impression that there was going to be anticipated to be some kind of public meetings or public forums concerning this process. Is the minister saying that is not to be the case?

Mr. McCrae: Since making public a very, very public process, I think, Mr. Chairman, you know a little bit about the public nature of the process, and so do I, where the politicians themselves are involved in that dialogue. Certainly the design team reports did capture some people's attention, and there has been a very, very significant public process since that time. It goes on, and the design teams will no doubt want to have a look at the response to their recommendations and be provided an opportunity for one more possibility for input. At that point, I would think that it would be time to make decisions and start implementing them.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate what that one more possibility for input—does he have any idea what that will entail?

Mr. McCrae: The design teams who made the recommendations in the first place will then be shown the costing analysis and other issues that sort of go along with that. I think, certainly as the groups that made recommendations in the first place, this kind of information should be shared with them. If there is any requirement for further input, we will know at that time.

Mr. Chomiak: We have raised questions before about the \$38-million transition fund. Can the minister indicate how the allocation of the \$38 million in transition funds, where the decision-making process will occur for that? Is it at this level and through these committees that those decisions will be made?

Mr. McCrae: No. How those millions will be appropriated will flow from deliberations between the government and the hospitals and community organizations.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess what I interpret from what the minister says or states is that the recommendations will come back, government will make some decisions, and then the changes or requirements to implement those decisions will be made between the government and the

affected institutions as they relate to the recommendations. Is that a fair summation of how the process is meant to work?

Mr. McCrae: And the community. You cannot forestall decisions forever.

Mr. Chomiak: Under this line item is also the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program. Do I take it from this reference that the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care Program is in fact the committee that recently reviewed the home care recommendations?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, and the honourable member has the report, complete with the correction that I pointed out that is required.

* (1610)

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate what the process is, since the Advisory Committee to the Continuing Care is right in the Estimates flow chart, what the process is for utilization of that committee with respect to the home care changes as they are presently envisioned to be?

Mr. McCrae: To ask for their advice, to review it and to proceed with the changes taking into account their advice. For example, they raised the issue of back-up kinds of services that were needed, the issue of being able to guarantee our services, those type of things, very valuable advice which we have taken.

Mr. Chomiak: Are they presently working on any initiatives or recommendations or studies at this point?

Mr. McCrae: I do not think so, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: As part of the urban planning committee and design teams, a public relations person has been hired, Barb Biggar, I understand, to deal with communications. Can the minister indicate where the funds that are being expended on the communications budget are coming from?

Mr. McCrae: Out of the consolidated revenue fund of the government. We will have a closer look to see which particular line of the budget.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) had been

pursuing a line of questioning with respect to what constitutes core services as they relate to home care. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to table what the departmental position is as it relates to core services being offered by Home Care. Can the minister table the departmental position as it relates to what constitutes core services by the department?

Mr. McCrae: The contract with Biggar Ideas is a \$75,000 contract, not all of which is expended, and it comes out of the Communities Development Fund, and the majority of that was expended last year.

The core services, rather than provide a document, I will put it on the record. The core services are: assessment of need for care, care planning, co-ordination of service, nursing service, therapy assessment such as occupational and physio, health teaching, cleaning and laundry, meal preparation, personal care, respite and family relief and access to adult daycare. That is the core.

Mr. Chomiak: So I note, for example, that cleaning and laundry is included in the core services. Is it government policy that cleaning and laundry constitute core services under health care?

Mr. McCrae: As required, yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate whether that is divergent or different policy than has been adopted by the department in the last several years?

Mr. McCrae: There was no clear policy prior to 1993. It was removed and restored.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, will the list of core services, as designated by the minister, form part of the tender documents that are shortly going to be issued by the government concerning home care?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the minister see the appeal panel for home care changing in structure and nature if the government should proceed with its changes to home care?

Mr. McCrae: We have no such plans.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the government be issuing any revised regulations concerning this process prior to the targeted date of July 1?

Mr. McCrae: Home care is not an insured service. There are no regulations; there are policies.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the government be changing those policies prior to the implementation July 1?

Mr. McCrae: The core services I described a few minutes ago will remain. We will not be bringing in user fees or cutting services.

Mr. Chomiak: Does that nonbringing in of user fees and noncutting of services extend to patients who are presently not receiving home care or who might require additional services under home care in the near future?

Mr. McCrae: We have none of the intentions the honourable member's question suggests.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, has the structure, as described in the December 16 government document concerning a government agency to monitor and to deal with the privatization, been established, or will it be established in the near future?

Mr. McCrae: No, and we are working on it.

Mr. Chomiak: Under the deputy executive support, it is indicated that there will be implementation of a restructured health services system. Does the minister have any kind of an outline that suggests what policies or what areas that restructured health system will be working towards?

Mr. McCrae: The health system restructure, I believe the honourable member refers to, is set out in the 1992 document, Quality Health for Manitobans, The Action Plan. We expect to see some pretty significant results of the restructure of our health system. For example, the regional health authorities coming into place April 1, 1997, work in the city, as the honourable member and I have already discussed. Those are the kinds of restructures that are going on in our health system.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I wanted to do a bit of following up with respect to

questions on the cost analysis that is being done currently. I am wondering if the minister can indicate whether the individuals or the committee that is out there doing the cost analysis are in fact looking at other options, or are they strictly looking at the implementation of recommendations as put forward from the design teams?

Mr. McCrae: They are looking at the recommendations that have been made.

Mr. Lamoureux: If they are looking at the recommendations that are being made, is there other work that is being done to look at other alternatives that could in fact achieve equivalent cost savings?

Mr. McCrae: Let us await the cost analysis and we will know then if we need to look at alternatives.

* (1620)

Mr. Lamoureux: I am wondering if there currently today is a need to look at other ways in which those same cost savings could be gotten that would be more acceptable to Manitobans as a whole.

Mr. McCrae: We certainly have not ruled out looking at other options, but, first of all, the design team recommendations came out; there was lots of comment about them. Let us find out if the comment stands up under the cost analysis which has been the subject of everybody's criticisms. Let us check that out, and then we will also look at the options. I do not mean to imply that options cannot be looked at, because I do not know yet whether this cost-benefit analysis is going to prove that these design team recommendations are achievable.

So let us get that process through. I know what some of the other options are. The honourable member has talked about private conversations, and I have had them, too. So we are not ruling anything out until we find out. If the cost-benefit analysis is extremely positive, then we will have to compare that. If someone has a better idea, then that would have to be looked at, too.

Mr. Lamoureux: One always has to be cautious of potential simple solutions, and I do not want to suggest that this is in fact a policy position of the Liberal Party or anything of that nature. Let us use as an example, if there

is a need to find the savings, where those savings might be found. Government is looking or at least considering the option of closing down hospital beds or acute care service beds or the conversion of acute care service beds. At the Health Sciences Centre, we have some 854, that was of November 1995, from what I understand. There are reports that say that it costs more to administer services at the Health Sciences Centre than at our community hospitals. So let us say, for example—and I emphasize that this is an example, that I do not necessarily want it to be quoted as saying this is what the member for Inkster is suggesting, Mr. Chairperson—let us say, for example, you have services that are in fact more economically feasible, more efficiently done in our community facilities that are currently being done in our tertiary hospitals, and to get some sort of an idea in terms of the degree to which the Health Sciences Centre is doing things that community hospitals could be doing, therefore, some would assume that you could cut significantly, if you were wanting to cut, or convert acute care beds over at the Health Sciences Centre.

If that did take place then the need or the demand for some of the OR rooms and the emergency service rooms and the capital dollars that are going to be required there in order to sustain the new things that are going to be put on to it as a result of a potential closing of community hospitals, there are going to be dollars saved there. There are going to be dollars that would be saved from the shifting of responsibilities from the tertiary hospital over to the community hospitals. This at least on the surface appears to be quite simple, but there seems to be some merit to that sort of logic. I am wondering, is there some sort of active attempt to see if there is legitimate merit to that argument, and, if so, I am wondering if the minister can expand on it?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Could the minister give any sort of an indication of what percentage, if you like, of services that are currently being administered in our teaching hospitals that could be administered in community hospitals? I realize it is always dangerous to speculate, but if the minister could at least give a guesstimate on a percentage.

Mr. McCrae: It is next to impossible to do that, but there is a recognition that there is a lot of nontertiary

work happening at the tertiary hospitals, but it is impossible to give a number.

While I am on my feet, I would like to table a schematic for the urban planning partnership model as I undertook to do a little while ago.

Mr. Lamoureux: In part, the minister the other day indicated to me if I am prepared to invest some time and sit down and come up with an alternative, he would do his best in terms of trying to get it at least analysed to a certain degree to point out where there might be some merit.

Part of the information that would be important, because the biggest issue in terms of being able to save the type of dollars the minister is talking about, I believe ultimately, is the way in which we are delivering those services, tertiary versus community as an excellent example, hospitals versus long-term care, the question of geriatrics. That is why I posed the questions, not realizing that they are a hot, politically sensitive issue if you come back and you say, well, you know, 25 percent of the services over at the Health Sciences Centre could quite easily be done over at the community hospitals.

I do not know what the percentage is and I think there would be some benefit in terms of knowing that. There is equally some benefit, and I would acknowledge to a certain degree you have to have a certain amount of care in order not to put into jeopardy the quality of hospital or tertiary care that is being delivered at our teaching hospitals.

I acknowledge that right up front, but I think one could ultimately argue and use as a specific example, obstetrics. Obstetrics was a big issue in the early '80s when it was being taken out of the Seven Oaks Hospital. At the time there were individuals who were saying, what we need to do is it is more cost efficient to have it brought over to the Health Sciences Centre. They closed, I believe it was the Seven Oaks and the Concordia Hospitals. Maybe this is an area that we can actually see being brought back into communities, and is there, in fact, a valid argument for that?

My concern is that the government or the Minister of Health is looking at those as viable options so that ultimately when the cost-analysis study comes down, and

even if the cost analysis says that the current recommendations—and I do not believe personally that they are going to be able to justify or see the types of cost savings that they are hoping for under the current recommendations—if they do come back and they say that, that the government does not say, okay, we have achieved what it is we were hoping to achieve in terms of the cost savings, that the government is quite prepared to look at the recommendations, modify the recommendations in an attempt to still achieve the cost savings, but something that would be more publicly accepted and not to be fearful, if you like, if I can use that word, of wanting to change some of the larger institutions that might carry a considerable amount more weight or be a bit more difficult in order to administer that change in the sense that, I think, a movement in that direction from the minister would receive even political support to a certain degree, depending in terms of what direction the minister is going, from our party.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

* (1630)

Mr. McCrae: There is not sufficient capacity in the whole community hospital system to remove all nontertiary patients from St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre and place them in community settings. I would not want, by talking about percentages or numbers, the honourable member to think that you can never use those two tertiary hospitals in any way for any community function because it just would not work. It is a question of degree in everything. I think that the analysis that is being done will demonstrate or will end up with recommendations about how best to look after patients in whatever setting, with due regard for the capital improvements that have been made in some community hospitals, with capital improvements that would be required at places like Misericordia Hospital, should we follow the honourable member's directions, or the changes at Health Sciences Centre that would be required to meet certain needs in the future.

So we are trying to look at this without imposing a heavy capital improvement requirement on the planners so that that should give the honourable member and others who are speaking in favour of the community hospitals some comfort, because we have capacity there, newer construction that is available for the use of the

system. So the whole idea puts the best and right thing to do, leaving aside the political considerations. I guess we can do the political considerations after we look at the reality of the situation. The trouble is, some people have allowed the political situation to jump ahead of the reality that we are working in.

Mr. Lamoureux: I know that the capital costs of the current recommendations are in fact fairly overwhelming. I have had the opportunity to tour a number of hospital facilities, and some facilities are more accommodating in terms of being able to convert. A couple weeks ago, I actually had a tour, I think it was, on the third floor of the Seven Oaks Hospital, where you are constantly turning around or it just does not seem to blend very well to a long-term type care facility, and, in order to make it accommodate something of that nature, you are talking about fairly substantial capital dollars being changed. Then you compare that to, let us say, the requirements of an expansion of services over at other facilities, whether it is the Concordia Hospital or the Health Sciences Centre, as a direct result of decisions, and I trust that ultimately the capital costs that would be incurred as a result of any sort of recommendations that are ultimately accepted would be included—is that fair to say?—that the capital costs are being considered, and ultimately that would also be reported on when then minister comes down with this report some time in the next three weeks?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: In the mail today, Mr. Chairperson, I actually received, from the Department of Health and Community Services—I believe it came from, it was either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick—a listing or a number of pages, a document that indicates homemaker-home support worker service program standards. It is a fairly lengthy document and, no doubt, involved quite a bit of work. I am wondering if the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) can give us any sort of indication in terms of where or what jurisdiction we might look at as to what the Minister of Health or this department was looking at for coming up with standards.

Mr. McCrae: We think we are the best. Other people think we are the best. That tells me we have the best standards.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I guess what I am looking for is a document that would be at least similar

in the sense of, here is what our standards are in the province. I am wondering if the Minister of Health has a document.

Mr. McCrae: We will talk further about standards when we get to home care, or we can do it now, but I do not have all the documents I need in order to answer the question. Our standards book is much fatter than the one the member has got in his hand.

Mr. Lamoureux: The width of a document should be somewhat irrelevant in the sense that the print could be considerably larger in the document that the minister has. The minister would like me to table it. I will table it—or, I will send a copy of it to the minister and maybe the minister can photocopy it and provide me back the original, if that is okay. As long as I get the original back, I would be more than happy to do that.

I am wondering if the minister then, if he is going to be putting out the tender for home care services, if he could give some sort of an idea when that will be occurring.

Mr. McCrae: We are in negotiations with the union. Well, I do not know whether we are actually into them today or not, but we have made generous offers with respect to a moratorium on those tenders, but they want it shortened down to about 18 days. We have it at 60, so that might serve as a sort of a guideline for the honourable member to figure out when we are going to put them out; 60 days moratorium. That is still part of the negotiation process, but we have offered a 60-day moratorium on that from the time that the offer was made.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am somewhat familiar with the press release. I do not have it in front of me where the moratorium is being suggested. There was going to be movement towards the private sector effective for July 1. What impact does the moratorium have on that July 1 date?

Mr. McCrae: In the light of our generous agreement to the union, we are not going to be able to meet our July 1 date.

Mr. Lamoureux: Could the minister then give some sort of indication when he anticipates this date for the first contract being accepted will be into place?

Mr. McCrae: I just answered the question. I said that we have offered to delay tenders for 60 days. That was 10 days ago or so that we made that offer.

Mr. Lamoureux: How long would the minister then expect for the tenders, where it would be closed, or submissions to be into the government?

Mr. McCrae: I am sorry. It is hard to be clear because right now we are hopefully in negotiations with the union, and this is one of the items that is under discussion, so I would rather not discuss it here as well.

* (1640)

Mr. Lamoureux: Does the minister have criteria already set for the tendering process?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would that be complete, or is it a draft? Is the Minister of Health then ready to go so that, come the 60-day moratorium, the tender can go out, it is a final document?

Mr. McCrae: It is not because I do not want to be, but I will not be very forthcoming with this sort of information while we have a strike on and we have negotiations underway on these very points, and I do not want to do anything to jeopardize the delicate nature of labour negotiations.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, would the individuals involved in the discussions have access to the type of criteria that the government is putting into place for the tender?

Mr. McCrae: I do not think they would have the documents unless they were leaked to them or something like that, but they should not have the documents. We do not want to give anybody an unfair advantage.

Mr. Lamoureux: Is the government having any sort of discussions with clients in particular, home care workers, other individual Manitobans that have an interest in this? Are they having any vehicle in which they can have some direct input into the criteria?

Mr. McCrae: We already have that now. Well, on another matter, as early, as late as this morning I met

with MARN and congratulated them on their initiative to attempt to want to get involved in a positive way in the future of home care delivery in Manitoba. The criteria, documents, they were pretty well ready to go, so we have, as the honourable member, I think, agrees, the best system in North America, so I do not see any need for much adjustment to what we require by way of deliverables.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, at any point prior to the tender is the minister prepared to share with us the criteria?

Mr. McCrae: Well, the member and others have said, this is the best system in North America, so it clearly must have the best criteria in North America. I am not sharing proprietary documents with anybody until the time when those documents are available. They will be available publicly and the member can obtain them at that time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, then, I posed the question the other day, but I will re-ask it. I am wondering if the minister can indicate, is there any, because it is a final document, the criteria, can the minister indicate if there is any wage scale or reference to wage scale?

Mr. McCrae: I am not going to discuss these matters at this time. They will be subject to a process for tender. The honourable member is on record as favouring an unequal playing field, Mr. Chairman. I cannot share information with him.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I did want to move on to another area, but I do see that there is some benefit in having that information available. The minister can say what he likes from his seat, but, ultimately, I do believe that having the information available for more of a debate inside the Chamber would definitely be beneficial for the clients and, who knows, it might even allow for the government to reflect and change accordingly its thoughts with respect to preferential treatment for nonprofit organizations, as an example.

I am wondering if it would be appropriate at this time to ask the minister, in regard to the last provincial election there was a great deal of concern on the Cancer Research centre and a commitment of, I believe it was, in

excess of \$40 million, if the minister could give us some sort of an update on that particular issue.

Mr. McCrae: The Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation project is a unique one. Although it was included in those suspended, it is unique and very important to the people of Manitoba. Discussions are underway to see what opportunities there are to get that project going at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister can indicate what type of discussions he might be referring to. Is it formal, informal? Is it the minister meeting with groups? Is it backbenchers, or what sort of discussions are we talking about?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, we do not need to meet with groups and backbenchers. We know that there is a requirement for cancer facilities. We know what kind of facilities, and we are working with the foundation, which is composed of board members, who are drawn from the community, and the administration and the government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the capital freeze then that was put on by the government in its entirety is in fact being revisited currently?

Mr. McCrae: The capital program suspension was brought about so that we could do exactly that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of a time frame when we can anticipate that capital freeze then will be lifted, and is the government looking at permanently cancelling any of those that were initially accepted?

Mr. McCrae: We brought in the suspension so that we would be able to answer that question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister give us some sort of a time frame?

Mr. McCrae: Not today, not immediately.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, does the minister have any indication whatsoever with respect to the Cancer Research Foundation and when they would be given the green light? He says that it is currently under review. Is it something in which we are talking three

years? Are we talking a year? Are we talking the next budget? Any indication whatsoever.

Mr. McCrae: To what stage of development is the honourable member referring to us getting to?

Mr. Lamoureux: The stage in terms of allocating the money out into an account in which the research foundation can actually start construction, or demolition in one part and construction in the other.

Mr. McCrae: No.

Mr. Lamoureux: The Oakbank personal care home was also supposed to receive some capital dollars. Has the minister given any personal review of that particular capital request?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I have met with the proponents.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, again, what I am looking for is some sort of indication of what the government's intentions are. There were a number of capital projects that were given a green light and then because of the freeze, a great deal of uncertainty and now, I think, and unjustifiably so, there are many different groups of individuals who are looking to get some indication in terms of what the government's priorities are.

Is the government developing a priority listing of capital projects that will ultimately be brought to the attention of Manitobans, some sort of time frame? What can these different groups and nonprofits anticipate from the government with respect to capital projects?

* (1650)

Mr. McCrae: I have written to every board chair in the province setting out the situation the government is in and setting out what was happening. It is a matter of public record. I think I took out ads in the newspapers for that or an open letter in the newspapers for the same purpose. That is where we are at.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I do at least attempt to read the newspapers. I am wondering if the minister can share with us the correspondence that he has sent out regarding the capital.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, we will make that available very soon.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the other issue in which I wanted to touch briefly on is the Pharmacare program, if the minister can give some sort of indication on the actual cost savings expected from this particular program.

Mr. McCrae: It was the initial projection that we would save \$20 million with this change. I am now tabling a letter I wrote to the chairpersons of all hospitals, personal cares and community health centres dated January 25, 1996.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I am quite prepared, at this point, to pass the line and maybe what we will do is we will get into some more specific questions as we go through the line-by-line Estimates.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have a few follow-up questions in this area. Can the minister outline specifically what will be tendered in terms of the home care process for offices in the city of Winnipeg and the entire nursing contract? Will that be what will be tendered?

Mr. McCrae: I will make available the press release we put out several weeks ago in this regard, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have access to that press release. What I am seeking to ascertain is from the content of the press release and Ministerial Statements, it appears that what will be tendered will be four separate contracts for four areas of complete home support service and another contract for complete nursing services; or, is that an incorrect assumption and instead we are dealing with a number of smaller contracts and nursing services in a number of smaller contracts as it relates to the support and related services of the 25 percent or the four offices in Winnipeg that are being privatized?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member has said he has access to the press release. If he reviews that, that will answer his question.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, do I take it from the minister's response that there will be five tenders then released?

Mr. McCrae: It might be better to wait till we get to the Home Care line before we answer these questions.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I would be prepared to. That makes sense.

In questioning on Friday, I asked the minister about the meeting of Health ministers that was held on the 25th. The minister indicated that he had not had an opportunity to converse with his deputy minister, and that was understandable. I do have a copy of the press release concerning the meeting, and I am looking for the minister's comment on the item that says, and I quote: an appropriate single agency to manage an integrated system, including supply and distribution of blood and blood products.

Specifically, if the minister could outline for me what generally is meant, or how does the province of Manitoba interpret that particular aspect of the press release? [interjection] Page one, the third one, an appropriate single agency to manage an integrated system, including supply and distribution of blood and blood products.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, at the ministers' meeting last week, which was attended by the deputy minister for Manitoba, who also was here the other day on Friday and no questions were asked of him, an appropriate single agency to manage an integrated system, including the supply and distribution of blood and blood products, was discussed. Ministers directed their officials to develop options for their consideration based on the principles set out above. Dr. Wade will be playing a lead role in that regard.

Mr. Chomiak: It was a pity that I did not have an opportunity to question the Deputy Minister of Health on this. What I am getting at is: We already have the Red Cross; we already have the Canadian Blood Agency; and we already have the provincial government. What aspects of the blood system is going to be subsumed by this one agency? Is it an administrative body? Is it in addition, it will take over the responsibility of the Canadian Blood Agency? Can the minister give us any further enlightenment as to what is meant by what appears to be a major initiative to change the administration of how the blood supply is dealt with in Canada?

* (1700)

Mr. McCrae: There will be ample opportunities for the honourable member under appropriate lines in the Estimates to ask these questions, but, at the ministers' meeting, it was decided that a national approach was required. In regard to that, it was felt that that national approach requires the points set out in the press release, and, at that point, ministers directed their officials to develop options for their consideration based on the principles set out above. That is exactly what happened, and that is as much as can be said at this point.

Mr. Chomiak: The announcements have been made that the regional health boards will be established. The government has indicated that they will be in operation April 1, 1997. I wonder if the minister can give us any indication as to when we will be seeing legislation concerning the administration of health care outside of Winnipeg in relation to the establishment of the regional health boards.

Mr. McCrae: Spring 1997.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am a little confused by that insofar as the boards, I understood, were to be up and running by April 1, 1997, how that could take place prior—considering whenever spring is in Manitoba, that is an aside—but prior, how they will function in the interim without the legislative authority? Does that mean that the target date of operation of April 1 is not necessarily on?

Mr. McCrae: The transfer of authority and money begins April 1, 1997. There has been virtually unanimous approval of the whole concept of the regional authorities so that we do not anticipate any serious, other than administrative problems, we do not expect any serious problems with the move in this direction.

Mr. Chomiak: I am assuming it is an appropriate point in the Estimates process to be asking questions about the regional health boards insofar as it relates to significant changes. But my question therefore to the minister is, when does he feel the process will be complete in terms of membership and the boards will be fully announced?

Mr. McCrae: We would hope no more than six weeks from now.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate what the process will be to have the boards determine how and what funds will be allocated to them within their specific region? What systems and what process is in place to make that determination?

Mr. McCrae: A funding formula being worked on now, we expect to be available to be tested later this year.

Mr. Chomiak: When the minister states that, I wonder if he can elaborate more. Is it a pilot, or is it a total formula that will be prepared for the entire province of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: The test model will run alongside the present model for the remainder of this year, and we will learn from that experience how best to proceed come April 1, 1997.

Mr. Chomiak: Will that include all 10 regions, or will that only include a region or two?

Mr. McCrae: Ten.

Mr. Chomiak: Will that funding include physician remuneration and that of other health care professionals?

Mr. McCrae: The first go-around will not include physicians.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister elaborate on that? When he says the first go around will not include physicians, does that mean this year's test run will not include physicians and possibly after April 1 it will include physicians or next year's actual run will not include physicians, but it is a vision that will ultimately include physicians after April 1, 1998?

Mr. McCrae: There is this year and next remaining with the agreement with the MMA.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am aware of that. So is the minister saying by that response that based on the agreement with the MMA, physicians' remuneration will not be included in the budgetary allocations to the regional boards this year and the next?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, does the minister have a list of what will be included within the financial

considerations for each of the regions within their budgetary allocations? In other words, what will be the basket of services and funding that will be provided within every region?

Mr. McCrae: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister table that, please?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, tomorrow.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response.

Let me phrase the same question, a preceding question in a different light. Will the minister be tabling a document that includes the core services that will be offered by each region or envisioned to be offered by each region?

Mr. McCrae: This is not all yet formalized. We have our boards busily at work getting oriented to their new task, and this will become clearer as the work proceeds.

* (1710)

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister saying there is no stipulated core services that the government is requiring of the boards to offer in specific regions?

Mr. McCrae: No, we are still negotiating with them.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, when the minister says they are still negotiating with the region, does that mean the different regions will have different core services that will be required to offer vis-à-vis other regions or is the minister negotiating with all 10 regions as a group to offer the same core group of services?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the work of putting together the needs assessment in each of the regions has to be done before these questions become questions that we will be able to answer in any kind of detail. That is one of the first things the new boards will be doing, their needs assessment in each of the regions.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there anyone at the Department of Health or allied with the Department of Health who is

doing needs based assessments on behalf of the Department of Health for utilization or for negotiations with the regional boards?

Mr. McCrae: Work is going on between Manitoba Health, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, and the regions.

Mr. Chomiak: There is a fairly defined process in the city of Winnipeg to deal with the budgetary allocations as they relate to hospitals through the urban planning system that has been put in place. Could the minister outline if a similar process is taking place outside of Winnipeg?

Mr. McCrae: The process is not the same.

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if the minister might outline what the process is.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, we are dealing with the rural hospitals this year on an institution-by-institution basis.

Mr. Chomiak: Has there been an across-the-board budgetary figure applied to the rural hospitals outside of Winnipeg, and if there has been, can the minister indicate what that figure is?

Mr. McCrae: Budgets have not yet been applied, so that allocation has not been clarified as of yet.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there an overall figure that has been applied or is being utilized for the hospitals outside of Winnipeg to be cut as part of the \$53-million cut?

Mr. McCrae: We have said there would be a reduction of \$53 million in hospitals in Manitoba. A transition fund of \$38 million applies to all of Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister saying there is no allocation vis-à-vis Winnipeg-Brandon and the rest of Manitoba, the whole \$53 million?—because I was under the impression there was a specific figure that applied to Winnipeg-Brandon and a specific figure that applied to outside of Winnipeg-Brandon.

Mr. McCrae: This work is underway. It has not been completed.

Mr. Chomiak: At various times in the process of the urban planning model and various discussions that have

taken place over the last few months, it has been suggested that Winnipeg may be one overall regional board, and I wonder if the minister might comment on whether or not that is part of the deliberations.

Mr. McCrae: That concept has been referred to, and no determination has yet been made.

Mr. Chomiak: Is it part of active consideration by the department?

Mr. McCrae: Well, it was part of active consideration at the meeting at which the honourable member attended and ongoing discussions between myself and board chairs throughout the city with respect to the hospital system.

* (1720)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I just want to state at this point for the record that I and my colleagues appreciate the minister's response and assistance in this area. We have dealt with the matters, I think, very effectively in this committee for the balance of the afternoon, and I want the minister to know it is appreciated. Just for the record, my colleagues do have some questions with respect to the regional health boards, and I am looking for the minister's advice as to whether we should deal with it during this appropriation—the minister is nodding in the affirmative. [interjection]

Okay, well, subject to those questions dealing with the regional health boards that some of my colleagues are going to want to ask, I think the balance of the afternoon, possibly tomorrow, I think we can move along quite a bit. I have discussed it with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). We can move ahead in terms of where we are heading in Estimates.

I certainly would think we could move fairly expeditiously down to the next major series of questions that I believe I will be asking a lot of will be down in 2.(c), which is Health Information Systems. So subject to my colleagues asking some questions on regional health boards, I think probably we can move fairly quickly through some of the other items and probably move on to 2.(c) item. I do not know if we will be able to achieve that by tomorrow, but that is just roughly where I think things are heading.

Mr. McCrae: We would appreciate as much precision tomorrow as the honourable member can give us about when we might need the director of our Health Information Systems person. We can probably answer financial type questions, but on the operational end we will need that fellow.

Mr. Chomiak: I will let you know specifically.

Mr. McCrae: Okay, thanks.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, there are several questions that I would like to ask the minister with regard to regional health boards, and I believe my colleague may have touched on them. But as the minister knows, there are concerns right across the province, and in particular, in the Parklands. The way the boards were appointed, who is on the boards, and that some of the regions do not have representation on them. In particular, the area of Winnipegosis and Grandview, there is no representation there, and I hope that the minister is going to be able to tell us that he has addressed those.

The other issue that I would like to ask the minister with respect to boards is I know the minister has not tabled the list. We have not seen the complete list of the people who are on the board. I wonder if he could provide us with that list, and if he might be able to tell us why his government chose to choose such a large number of men to be representatives on this board and very few women? When we found out how many people were on the Parklands board, I mean, there is only one woman as a representative there, and there were people who were very concerned about that. I wonder if the minister could explain why such a decision was made and what steps he is taking to correct that oversight.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, almost everybody knows who has been appointed thus far, but we do need to make a formal announcement of it; it is true. We will try to do that ASAP, perhaps even later this week, if we are lucky.

With respect to representation, I am very sensitive to the questions the member has raised. We had some difficulty with the number of providers who were women whose names came forward. Those people were not eligible for appointment, and that narrowed the number of women who were nominated vis-à-vis the number of

men. So simply this is a hard problem for me. I agree with the honourable member that I would like to see more women on these boards. So we are trying to address that as best we can in subsequent rounds of appointments, and I dare say, though, the near term future will not bring us to the kind of balance that I would like to see personally. We did try, I can tell the honourable member that, but when we are faced with so many nominees not eligible for appointment, it created a difficult situation for us, but we are very mindful of the concern the honourable member is raising.

Ms. Wowchuk: In light of the fact that so many of the women who applied to sit on this regional board are involved in the health field, and I believe they would add very much to the discussions of the board in making decisions, is any consideration being given to allow people who are presently employed in the health field to take those positions, or is any consideration being given to perhaps leave of absence if these people who are interested would consider taking a leave of absence to sit on the board?

Mr. McCrae: I asked the staff of the department to go out and consult on that point. There is very little support for what the honourable member is suggesting. However, each regional board is required to have a health provider advisory committee. In other words, in each region you have to have a board of doctors, nurses and other professionals to advise the regional health authority boards.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am not quite sure what the minister is saying, that there is going to be the community advisory committee, and then there is going to be an advisory committee of health professionals to that board in each region?

Mr. McCrae: In addition to the recommendations that there be community advisory groups, there is a requirement, in addition to that, that there be a health provider advisory committee in each regional association to advise the boards who are not to be providers or paid providers in the system.

I will say it again. In addition to the community advisory councils, as many as four in each region, there must be in addition to that a provider advisory committee to the regional health authority.

Ms. Wowchuk: I must say that I am concerned with the composition of the board and the argument that is being made, the reason for not having more women on the board, and I would encourage the minister to pursue other avenues to ensure that there is a better representation of women on the board.

The other question I wanted to ask the minister with respect to the boards is, we have a high aboriginal population, and we know that our aboriginal people have many health problems and are users of the system. Over the years they have raised many concerns, and in my area, under the Swan Valley health board, they have always been concerned that they have not had representation on the health board. I wonder what steps the minister has taken to ensure that aboriginal people are represented on these regional boards and how many aboriginal people have been appointed across the province.

Mr. McCrae: I will get as much precise information for next day on this as I can. There was a very notable lack of nomination from aboriginal organizations. I met with some chiefs, I believe—yes—from the honourable member's area recently and discussed this and challenged them that this is not simply—I did not argue that there is no room here. I did not do that. I expressed my dismay that there were so few aboriginal people nominated by aboriginal organizations.

I really do challenge the chiefs; I say so again today. I challenge the chiefs to do what they can to develop interest. There were hardly any aboriginal groups, an aboriginal group as a band council or any other of aboriginal organization who could have nominated. We advertised very widely and, in fact, the Parkland area brought forward the most nominations of any area, but I hear what the honourable member is saying and I feel just as disappointed as she does, but you cannot force people to serve on these committees either.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30, the 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 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 29, 1996

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