



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
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KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
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MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 7, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Point of Order

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I would ask leave, because of storm conditions and I was not able to go home, to depart from the dress code for this one occasion because of the blizzard and be allowed to sit without complying with the dress code.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit the member to violate the dress code for today and stay in the Chamber? [agreed]

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Gang Action Plan

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), and 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.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the 1997-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Ministry of Health, as well as the '97-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): I would like to table the Supplementary Departmental Estimates '97-98 for the Manitoba Seniors Directorate and also '97-98 Departmental Expenditures for Manitoba Housing.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Northern Affairs Estimates today.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): A point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder if there is leave of the House to revert to Reading and Receiving Petitions so the petition could be read. There was some disruption, I suppose you could call it, in the House at the time.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to revert to having the Clerk read the petition? [agreed]

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Gang Action Plan

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. It is the will of the House that the Clerk will read.

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

THAT the increase in violent crimes in Manitoba since 1990 has been more than three times as much as the Canadian average; and

THAT crime can only be effectively dealt with through both prevention and suppression; and

THAT the tough talk of the Manitoba Justice minister has not been matched with action; and

THAT Manitobans want a positive, comprehensive response to crime and gang crime that provides alternatives for youth; and

THAT the New Democratic Party has put forward an 18-point plan to deal with gang crime; and

THAT this plan is divided into elements focused on both the justice system and families, schools and communities; and

THAT this costed plan has been subject to widespread consultation and has been praised as a detailed plan to fight youth crime that is well thought through and constructive.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) to consider using this action plan as a basis for provincial policy on organized criminal gangs.

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Youth Gangs Reduction Strategy

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

In the government Youth Secretariat report dealing with street gangs, the subcommittee report which was never released by this Premier and by this government, the government's own officials and advisers state that Manitoba clearly leads the nation for the highest rate of violent youth crime. We can no longer ignore this problem, the report goes on to say, and it is crucial that Manitobans work together now.

I would like to ask the Premier: Why has he ignored this major challenge in his government initiatives, and why did he not mention this and refer to this issue and this challenge to all of us in the Speech from the Throne that was read in this Chamber just recently?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, in fact the record is that this government has been acting in respect of this very serious problem. We are concerned with it. We are taking a number of steps, one of which includes the provision of 40 police officers to the City of Winnipeg to assist in this. In comments in public the chief constable has indicated that, through the provision of those 40 extra police officers every year, he has been able to start community foot patrols out of that contingent of officers.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this is the government and this is the Premier who has cut Access, has cut BUNTEP, has cut social assistance support for the most vulnerable. It has cut public education. It has cut evaluations for kids and young people all across Manitoba. When it comes to a program that helps vulnerable people, this government has cut it day after day after day.

I would like to ask this Premier: In light of the fact that on page 25 the government's own report states that there has not been a co-ordinated response to gangs, inaction, and is leading to potentially dangerous situations with government inaction, why is this Premier failing to act on the challenges in our community and why do his own officials even condemn his record of inaction here in this vital area?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I reject the allegation that there is not a co-ordinated approach. We in fact are working very closely with the City of Winnipeg Police where the bulk of the problem is in respect of youth gangs. We have provided extra resources for the Winnipeg city police, and we continue to have a very aggressive policy in respect of both crime prevention.

Indeed, when matters come to court, where the situation is warranted we take very strong steps in respect of transferring juvenile offenders to adult court. Indeed, Manitoba in that respect leads the nation in proceeding with those types of court applications.

Mr. Doer: On page 23 of the government report, it states there has not been a co-ordinated response on the part of the Corrections to develop a comprehensive supervision plan for youth gangs. On page 25, the report states that fragmentation of services and serious gaps in knowledge is resulting in inaction, miscommunication and potentially dangerous situations.

Who is telling the truth? I would ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) this question. Who is telling the truth, the Minister of Justice or the government's advisory group under the Youth Secretariat program, a report which we have in our hands today?

Mr. Toews: The Leader of the Opposition has referenced an allegation in respect of the Corrections division that is not correct.

An Honourable Member: It is the Youth Secretariat report.

Mr. Toews: As I indicated, the Leader of the Opposition has indicated an allegation in respect of the Corrections division that is not accurate. The Corrections division has in fact developed an institutional gang management strategy to assure the safe operation of its custodial facilities and to control gang influence.

* (1340)

Youth Gangs Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice, who seems to think that the only solution to our gang problem lies at the courthouse.

When we presented the Gang Action Plan to the government in September, there were 800 known gang members and associates in Winnipeg. Today there are 1,300, and yet still no response from this government.

My question is: With another terrible gang-related tragedy on the streets of Winnipeg this weekend, when will this government finally understand that it has the key role to play by ensuring a comprehensive response to street gangs rather than cut back on programs like the friendship centres, like Night Hoops and bury reports like the gang awareness manual for parents, for example? When will it start to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member is wrong in respect of his allegations. We have been making very concerted efforts in that respect.

As for the NDP action plan on gangs, I am surprised that his own colleagues in NDP provinces such as Saskatchewan have not even bothered to look at that kind of a strategy.

Mr. Mackintosh: My question to the minister, who should be concerned about justice in Manitoba—not Saskatchewan—the gang capital of Canada: Would the

minister at least now tell us that the new one and a half million dollar justice initiatives appropriation, a slush fund with no known parameters other than its vague title, be now earmarked specifically to deal and begin to deal with the gang challenge that we are facing in this province?

Mr. Toews: As I indicated to my colleague from St. Johns the other day, there are a number of concrete initiatives that this government has taken. The member for Riel, the Minister of Native and Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) in fact has outlined those. In fact, I would reject the allegation that the million and a half dollars is any kind of a slush fund. Indeed, I asked the member on March 27 if he had specific proposals that he would consider important for his constituency. I, for one, am willing to listen; I believe this government is willing to listen if he has anything positive to add to this dispute.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who has received from this side, from myself, the Gang Action Plan, which I would urge him to look at as a positive alternative, at least assure Manitobans of this narrower concern? What action is his department taking to guard against increased violence or gang retaliation in our correctional facilities in the wake of police warnings about that following this weekend's tragedy?

Mr. Toews: As I have indicated, the Corrections division has in fact implemented an institutional gang management strategy for the safe operation of the custodial institutions. My primary concern is the safety of the officers in that correctional facility, because I believe if we assure the safety of the officers in the correctional institute, we will also assure the safety of the public. We, in fact, have been making and implementing that plan, and I believe there is a measurable success in that respect.

Manitoba Community Services Council Funding

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for lotteries revenue. This government has seen lotteries revenues increase from \$50 million to \$225 million while at the same time has chosen to cut the Manitoba Community Services Council, which provides grants to

community groups, by half from \$4 million to \$2 million, while at the same time local community centres have seen dramatic losses of revenues because of this government's lotteries policies. The four community centres in my riding have each reported losses of \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually in addition to the GST loss of revenues.

My question to the minister: Will this minister restore the funding to the Manitoba Services Council to at least the \$4-million level?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the funding for the Community Services Council has been maintained at the same level in this budget as last year. I believe that is reasonable in light of all of the fiscal challenges facing our government.

*(1345)

Community Centres Funding

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): To the minister: Can he explain why this government is choosing to create new organizations, new programs to deal with youth and the gang situation while our community centres, which exist and know how to provide the programming, are forced to close the door because of lack of funding by this government?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, I encourage the member for St. James to get her levels of government right. It has nothing to do with the level of funding from the provincial government. Community centres are able to apply to the Community Services Council for support. That has ranged in the amount of \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually.

We are certainly looking at maintaining that level of funding, if not enhancing that level of funding. If she has any additional concerns, I encourage her to get her levels of government right and go to the City of Winnipeg, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, to clarify, it is this government that chose to cut the grants—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for St. James that no postamble or preamble is required on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, will this government make a commitment, a true commitment to communities and provide and restore the funding to communities through community centres to the amounts of money that they have lost because of this government's gaming policies?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I think the member for St. James understands the process, that community centres here in Winnipeg, through the greater Winnipeg community centres council, have been able to apply to the Community Services Council for annual funding support. They have been doing that, and they have been receiving funding I believe in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually. We are looking at some changes to provide additional predictability and stability around that level of funding, and our government will be coming forward with those changes shortly.

Madam Speaker, we have maintained our level of funding for the Community Services Council over the last two budgets. Our level of support, whether it has been for Community Services Council, for municipal governments which are the direct funders of community centres here in Winnipeg, our level of funding for the City of Winnipeg has basically gone up almost every budget year.

So we have made significant commitments directly through the Community Services Council and indirectly through our funding for municipalities across this province.

Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the United Way of Winnipeg consulted with 47 of their member agencies, specifically with their executive directors, and issued a report called Trends, Issues and Innovations in Winnipeg's Human Care Services. In

this report the agencies reported the double whammy of feeling the impact of cuts in funding for social services while at the same time being faced with increased needs of people who are affected by these cuts.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) what her department and her government is doing to respond in a proactive way to the increasing levels of anger and despair amongst young people, even in six- and seven-year-olds as reported by the executive directors, and what is she doing about the increasing levels of poverty and the lack of jobs also identified by these agencies?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. I am not sure if it was one question or three or four different questions, but as far as dealing with the issue of child poverty, we have implemented through our welfare reform initiatives such as Taking Charge!, which is helping single parents to become employed and off our welfare system, therefore benefiting their families. So that is one area where we have made a significant impact, and there are several single parents, into the hundreds, that have been employed as a result of our initiatives.

As far as the report from the United Way, I want to indicate that our government has been working very proactively with all of the funders in the city of Winnipeg through the inner-city review committee and my colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) is on that committee. What we are finding in fact is that there is overlap and duplication among agencies. We have not really measured the outcomes of the significant amount of dollars that, not only at the provincial level but at all levels of funding, are going into the inner city of Winnipeg, and we are not seeing the kinds of results that we need to see.

Madam Speaker, I will continue to answer my answer with the next question from my colleague.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister what her government is doing to address the concerns of the 47 agencies, many also funded by her department, who said that they see a link between poverty and increasing need, including increased

activities such as prostitution by very young boys and girls and increased involvement in gangs. Does this minister even understand that, by increasing poverty as her government's policies are doing, they are directly contributing to these problems as identified in the report, and what are you doing about it?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, again I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does provide me with the opportunity to say that all of us, right throughout Manitoba and right across the country, are struggling with the issues of child poverty and how we come to grips with dealing with that issue. The National Child Benefit is one initiative that has been undertaken in co-operation with the provinces and the federal government to look at taking children off the welfare system. We will continually look to measure the outcomes of the programs that we fund. We will continue to have the courage to reduce the funding where programs are not working and redirect the resources into areas that will make a positive difference.

* (1350)

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services why her government is shifting the focus from justice to charity as identified in this report and instead why they are not focusing on a prevention focus instead of a treatment focus also identified in this report. Why are her government's policies going in the opposite direction that the 47 agencies have identified in this report?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I do reject the premise that my honourable friend has put on the record. Indeed, we have a document that we have shared broadly with the community in Winnipeg called Families First, which is looking at proactive prevention initiatives which my honourable friend will hear about in great detail as we go through the Estimates process. There will be announcements that will be made that will look at a very positive, proactive way of working with families and not only government with families but with the whole community and families. It takes more than one level of government to solve the problems, and we will be working co-operatively with all of those that want to have a positive impact on families. I would encourage my honourable friend to

become involved in that process and support some of the initiatives that we will be undertaking to try to make things much better in our communities.

Snow Removal Financial Assistance

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Over the years we have seen a growing reliance on funding education onto property tax. If we take a look at the most recent snowfall, we have seen a record amount of snow dropped on municipalities and the city of Winnipeg, and once again there is going to be phenomenal pressure for increase in property taxes.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: Is the government prepared to take some money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to assist in compensating so that municipalities and particularly the City of Winnipeg will be able to address the snow removal, at the same time not necessarily have to raise the property tax to the degree they are going to have to?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it is April of 1997. The City of Winnipeg operates on a calendar year from January to December. They budget several millions of dollars for snow removal and for just this kind of occurrence, so hopefully not as bad as this one has been but generally for major snowstorms. I have not heard the numbers to date, but I am sure they are well within the 1997 budget at this particular point in time within the year.

I think it is an opportunity to acknowledge and to compliment all of the citizens of Manitoba and to recognize the many hundreds and thousands of volunteers who over this weekend gave of their time to help the citizens in need. It certainly is a compliment to the people of Manitoba and to the nature of the people of Manitoba. When they say, "friendly Manitoba," that came through loud and clear this weekend.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we are asking the Minister of Finance to use the rainy day fund or the snow fund, whatever it is you might want to classify it, in this particular case and ask the Minister of Finance whether he is prepared to recognize that this has been

a record year for snowfall and that in fact there is a need to assist our municipalities, in particular the City of Winnipeg, in trying to alleviate some of the pressures with snow removal.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I am becoming increasingly concerned that the member for Inkster does not understand budgets or budgeting. The City of Winnipeg has prepared a 1997 budget. It includes many millions of dollars for snow removal. To date I believe they have used very little of it, because during the early part of 1997 there has not been a great demand until this particular weekend. I would anticipate they are still within their snow removal budget.

As I indicated in response to an earlier question, our level of funding to the City of Winnipeg has basically gone up each and every year. It went up significantly again in 1997, because we do share our personal income tax and our corporate income tax and those are growing because of the growing economy. We are sharing those. We share some of the VLT revenues with the City of Winnipeg.

So the overall level of funding that we have provided in 1997 to the City of Winnipeg is higher this year than last year. Again, it is three months into their budget cycle, and I am sure to date they have more than enough money budgeted for snow removal at this particular point in time.

* (1355)

Mr. Lamoureux: Will the Minister of Finance acknowledge the offloading that is put onto the City of Winnipeg, in particular through the school boards, that causes our property tax to go up? We are asking the Minister of Finance to acknowledge that, yes, we are in the beginning of a new budget but half of that budget is going to be spent before we even get into next winter. Is the government prepared to be able to assist the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities with a legitimate concern and with the amount of snowfall that we are experiencing? We are in record numbers.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I find this the ultimate in hypocrisy coming from a Liberal talking about offloading when you look at what the federal

government has done to provinces right across Canada when it comes to transfers. They have reduced transfers by \$7 billion or over 40 percent. In Manitoba alone, in these two budget years it is \$220 million less in funding from Ottawa. Think what that \$220 million could do in our economy in terms of services or in terms of tax cuts to Manitoba.

So the member for Inkster has absolutely no credibility when he talks about offloading, particularly when our funding for the City of Winnipeg is up this year, year over year for the reasons that I have already stated. I will gladly share with him the numbers to show him that the City of Winnipeg, like all municipalities in Manitoba, is receiving more funding in 1997-98 than they received in '96-97.

Licensed Practical Nurses Role

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. In the last few years we have seen the LPN nursing profession eliminated from the Health Sciences Centre, eliminated from St. Boniface Hospital, eliminated from Concordia Hospital, in the process of being eliminated from Seven Oaks Hospital.

My question to the Minister of Health is: Will the minister at least keep the commitments of all of the other previous ministers and ensure that LPNs will continue to have a professional function within acute care facilities in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): The member for Kildonan has flagged, I guess, one of the great issues in nursing. As we see changes in roles and functions of various health care providers to get mixes of providers to provide efficient delivery of service, LPNs have found difficulty within the administrations or the administrators of various institutions have found difficulty in fitting them in within those new mixes.

I think all of us share our concern. There is a long history with the LPNs. There is a body of expertise that is important. How it fits in, in the changing roles of health care providers, is also of concern to us on this side. We are certainly willing to work with LPNs to find a new role within the system.

* (1400)

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister confirm that it is government policy that there will be a role and function for LPNs within the acute care hospital sector in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: I will not confirm or indicate what administrators will do in establishing their mix. Part of what is happening in the system—[interjection] The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) makes it sound as if there is some surprise.

I have had that discussion with representatives of the LPNs' professional organization. Administrators of our health care system, particularly under the 13 regional health authorities, will be making decisions for the right and appropriate mix. Professional bodies are often involved in that, and we are hoping that there is a role for LPNs within that system. It may be somewhat different than they envision today.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister confirm that at that meeting with the LPNs, he indicated to the LPNs that there was not a role for them as LPNs in the health care system within two years? Will he commit to something at least the other two previous Health ministers committed to, that there will be a role for LPNs within the acute care sector in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: My comments to the LPNs were in the context of what is actually happening within the system as hospital administrators are making changes within their mix.

We saw it in Concordia some months ago, as they actually, in changing their mix, added five additional people to their staff. I believe there are 195 who were affected to create 200 new positions. There were changes in function and role. The LPNs were the group that did not find a new role within that mix that they were satisfied with, but I am not going to commit.

I do not think it is appropriate for a Minister of Health or a government to dictate to those administering the system who they should be using and what specific roles. They have to find the best and most efficient mix to deliver the service. I do not think it would be fair for this Legislature to tie their hands.

Louisiana-Pacific Environmental Concerns

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when the Louisiana-Pacific plant was being built, the Department of Environment required as a condition of the licence that the company line the log yard with two to three metres of clay and a special pond be constructed to collect the runoff from the yard because they were concerned with the runoff from material in the yard. It was also required that the water up and downstream of the plant on the Sinclair River be monitored.

Can the Minister of Environment explain why requirements were put in place at the plant site to monitor the flow off of material in the yard but this government is not concerned about the seepage from chips and bark when they are moved off the site?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): We are concerned. That is why, in response to the issues raised by the honourable member, we went to such lengths to investigate the allegations that were being made to check out all those locations where wood bark and wood fines were being moved to from the Louisiana-Pacific site. Upon completion of my review of the report of the work done in this regard, I will perhaps be able to share some more information with the honourable member.

All sites have been found to be in accordance with the licence and have been found by the Environment department to be in a state that is satisfactory to the department, except in that one case that we referred to where bark was stored too close to a water course and the owner of the land in question immediately complied with the requirement to move that material back. So I think it is out of a concern that we take the steps that we do, a concern that licensing be appropriately rigid and that it be appropriately monitored and enforced.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister tell this House if it is necessary to monitor the seepage from the site, whether his department will be doing any monitoring of seepage of water from any of the sites that have been created outside the Louisiana-Pacific property to ensure that there is not runoff and contaminants in the water that is

running off? Will they be monitoring those sites as well?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, analysis has been made of the material that we are talking about, and the analysis indicates that levels of leachate metals, cyanide, carbonates, chlordane, 2, 4-D and pH are below or within acceptable limits listed in Manitoba Regulation 282 of '87, and that under those circumstances no special consideration is required for transportation or disposal of these materials. But out of an abundance of caution, it was felt that it would be reasonable to limit storage to being away from a certain distance—50 metres I believe it is—away from a water course. In one case it was closer than that, and it was immediately required to be moved back. The amounts of chemical involved here are very small as evidenced by chemical analysis and, therefore, the material is found not to be harmful to the environment. Still, out of an abundance of caution, that requirement was made.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, since there were similar problems in British Columbia where there was excessive weight and that was addressed in a positive way, can the minister explain why his government did not work with Louisiana-Pacific in a positive way requiring them to compost this material to a state where it would then be acceptable to incorporate into the land, rather than just moving the problem off their site onto the farmland? Why did you not look at composting and a positive solution to this problem?

Mr. McCrae: Well, Madam Speaker, I am not a chemist, but it seems to me that if the material, as alleged by the honourable member to have certain harmful qualities, those qualities do not disappear simply by the composting of the material. Now that is subject to further discussion and something I will indeed raise and look into as a possible way to deal with this matter. But, as I say and as I have said, it has been found not to be harmful to the environment in any event.

Computer Services Year 2000 Compliance

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Government Services.

In less than a thousand days the government's 8,000 computers will shut down as few, if any, are year 2000 compliant. This sorry state of affairs has come about because, unlike the federal government, this province has no standards requiring that new computers be year 2000 compliant.

* (1410)

I would like to ask the minister: Will the minister tell this House how many of the 8,000 computers are year 2000 compliant at this time?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I think it gives me a chance to give some background as to the direction that we are heading in terms of computer technology within the government. There is right now—at the present time many departments are going their own separate directions in terms of computer technology, which results in the problem with the year 2000 compliance, as the member has alluded to, but, in particular, it is now at a point where the government of Manitoba is now taking a corporate approach to the whole computer technology area and, as such, will be addressing that issue and be ready for the year 2000.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, my supplementary to the same minister is this—well, this government will not be around in the year 2000. I would like to ask the minister: When will this government adopt standards requiring year 2000 compliances in new purchases, because it is my understanding that even today purchases are being made that are not year 2000 compliant?

Mr. Pitura: Well, Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier, the direction this government is taking towards the standardization of the hardware system across government is going in the direction of having all our hardware and all the software 2000 compliant.

Mr. Maloway: My final supplementary to the same minister is this: Well, then, could the minister tell this House how many government departments and agencies have even begun work in this area, this problem with the year 2000 compliance?

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice and get that information for the member.

Grow Bonds Program Woodstone Technologies

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, while Manitobans and our party fully support the concept of the Grow Bond Program, we are increasingly troubled by the fact that the government itself does not appear concerned to take responsibility for what are serious and continuing breaches of the act and regulations that regulate this whole area, as shown by the Minister of Rural Development's (Mr. Derkach) acknowledgement that he has failed to enforce key provisions of his own act and regulations.

Will the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for the expenditures that go to pay off bonds in companies that have failed, confirm that, contrary to the requirements of the regulations, no risk factors were disclosed in the case of the Woodstone offering; the current audit with its going concern note was not disclosed although it was in the possession of the company and the department at the time; sales projections were for two months only instead of two years as required and that resulted in, according to Section 13 of the regulations, a false and misleading prospectus? Will the Finance minister confirm that?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): No, I will not, Madam Speaker, but I will confirm that there have been two audits by the Provincial Auditor of Manitoba.

The majority of the recommendations from the Provincial Auditor have been implemented in terms of the requirements of the Grow Bonds Program here in our province, and on an overall basis it is a very successful program. I believe there are about 20 Grow Bonds across our province right now.

We recognize, and we have said all along, it is a form of access to capital similar to venture capital, and when you provide access to capital there are, unfortunately, going to be occasions where things do not work out and you have to pay the Grow Bond, but on an overall basis in terms of the return to our Treasury, the return to our economy, the Grow Bonds Program is a very successful program.

Regulation Enforcement

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the Finance minister not confirm that his failure, his government's failure to enforce the act and regulations leads to a loss of credibility on the part of investors, leads to job losses that are unnecessary, leads to a worsening reputation by Manitoba as a reliable supplier of quality products? If the Minister of Rural Development will not take responsibility for his act, will the Minister of Finance take responsibility and ensure that the current operation of the program in fact complies with the regulations which the Minister of Rural Development agreed on Thursday it did not do?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, again I will confirm no such thing as outlined by the member for Crescentwood in his preamble. The Provincial Auditor has played a role in terms of the Woodstone initiative, audited that particular venture twice. The majority of the recommendations from the Provincial Auditor have been implemented. The Grow Bonds Program today is one that I believe is functioning well. The majority of the recommendations that have been put forward by the Provincial Auditor based on other reviews are now in place, and we have a program that can meet the needs in many rural communities for access to capital. That is part and parcel of why we are seeing the kinds of job growth that we are seeing right throughout Manitoba. For the first three months of this year, in 1997, the best job growth in all of Canada is right here in Manitoba. One of the many reasons are programs like the Grow Bonds Program.

Default Status

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance inform the House how many bonds at present are in default of payment of interest to their bondholders, and what is the total risk to the government at this time of potential failures of companies that are currently in default of the Grow Bonds?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I do not have the information before me today on all, I believe, approximately 20 Grow Bonds in the province of Manitoba. On behalf of the Minister of

Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), I will take the specifics of that question as notice.

Home Care Program Privatization

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, when the government announced its privatization of the home care contract last week, they went out of their way to try to portray the fact that the Olsten company that won the contract was a Canadian company. I am wondering why, in two parts in the press release, the government went out of its way to insist it is a Canadian company when in fact it is a subsidiary of a large U.S.-based multinational corporation from the United States, Olsten Kimberly. Has it anything to do with the fact that the government has been burned already through its experience with the Connie Curran contract which saw the loss of millions and millions of dollars to American multinationals with no benefit whatsoever to Manitobans?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am totally surprised why members of the New Democratic Party would have a concern as to who Olsten is. They have been operating in Manitoba since 1975, and when the New Democrats were in power they even contracted with the same company to deliver services.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my question remains that the minister failed to answer. Will the minister explain why they covered up the fact that this is a large multibased U.S. national firm and in their very press release they stated over and over again this is a Canadian corporation, when in fact we know it is the subsidiary of a large multinational U.S. corporation?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I hate to answer a question with a question, but why should this really be a concern to the members of the New Democratic Party, because they were perfectly comfortable—in fact, I believe it was the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) who was Minister of Family Services at the time—as a government to hire the same company that has been doing business in our province since 1975? They hired them back in I believe '85-86 to provide services to the Department of Family Services, so why was it not a concern to them back at that time?

Privatization-Layoffs

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): My final supplementary: Can the minister explain, the 150 to 200 people that Olsten has to now hire, whether any of the 107 that have been laid off from the Department of Health home care corporation, home care that the government laid off, government employees, whether any of those will end up on Olsten's payroll and whether or not they will be at the same rates and level of pay as they were under the government program? Why are they laying off 107 employees and letting this private company hire them back or hire others?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I will tell you I am really waiting for an explanation from the New Democrats as to why they would be concerned about the American parents of Olsten when they in fact hired—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I believe if you looked at Beauchesne's, a citation will indicate that the minister does not have to answer the question but he ought to confine his answer to the question posed or refuse to—if the House is prepared to give me leave, I am quite prepared to answer the minister's questions and explain to him the difference between having work done by Manitoba employees under the government system that has been recognized as the best in Canada or going to a large multinational private company that is going to make profits on the backs of patients.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable Minister of Health to keep his response specific to the question asked.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. Praznik: As we have discussed in this House on many occasions, the previous Minister of Health in bringing forward this plan was to enter into a test period in which to test the delivery of service by

various home care providers to ensure Manitobans were getting a high-quality product at the most efficient cost, and that is what we are entering into. But it is just amazing that the same company could provide service to New Democratic Party governments, and today it is some terrible thing because they are providing to us.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (1420)

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Winnipeg Sharks

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, may I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mrs. Mitchelson: I rise today to ask all members of the Legislature to congratulate the Winnipeg Sharks Triple A Peewee Champions who are 13 years of age. The Sharks won the city championships in the best of seven games. The final game went into sudden-death overtime, and both teams played extremely well throughout the playoffs.

I would like to just name the members of the team. Tom Boron, Stefan Colatruglio, Nicholas Enns, Cal Ladobruk, James Marquis, Kelsey Muggaberg, Cameron Ridley, Jared Schirmacher, Michael Wahl, Bryan Carpenter, Ian Darbell, Michael Hardy, Ryan Ledd, Michael Mendres, Darcy Nazar, Nicholas Sasaki, Ryan Starkell. The coaching staff were Kevin Benson, Scott Feasey, Mike Best, Geoff Girardin and the managers, Barb and Erin Lobb.

The team and coaches displayed great effort and determination and, most importantly, sportsmanship throughout the season and the playoffs. All parents and family and friends and those from River East constituency were extremely proud of the team, and I would just like to extend congratulations personally to them. Thank you.

Kelvin Clippers Junior Boys Varsity Basketball

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): May I have leave to offer a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Crescentwood have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Sale: I thank honourable members. I would like to rise and pay tribute to the Kelvin Varsity Junior Boys Basketball Team that won the provincial tournament on the weekend. It was a wonderful game to watch in the middle of a storm.

I think that those who know Kelvin—and I know there are members opposite who do—know what a United Nations community Kelvin School is. Indeed, many nations were represented on its team and among its skilled players. So it was also a proud moment from the perspective of Manitoba's great diversity of people to contribute to the many good things that are part of our life here.

I also want to say that the game was broadcast by the Tec Voc media program. They had their own commentators; they ran the cameras; they handled all the titling, and it was a very professionally handled broadcast. So I think there were two winners in this particular situation as well as all the competitors of course who are always winners. But Tec Voc's program showed the skills of young Manitobans of high school age in broadcasting a complex event that was a live broadcast. They did it with grace and with skill. Of course, the team that won also won with a great deal of grace and skill and accepted their winnings very well.

So I compliment Winnipeg No. 1 School Division for the program at Tec Voc and compliment the Kelvin Clippers Junior Boys Varsity Basketball Team for their good performance, Madam Speaker.

Variety Club Telethon

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Radcliffe: I am pleased to rise today and tell my colleagues, and through this Chamber, the people of Manitoba, that Variety Telethon for children raised \$757,544 this weekend on the telethon. I think this is sensational, Madam Speaker. I would like to congratulate all the participants and organizers of the telethon this weekend. I can tell my colleagues that I had the singular honour to represent all of us here, our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and all our colleagues, in the telethon. I brought them greetings and congratulations.

I had the occasion to walk from River Heights at the height of the storm to the Convention Centre, and I can tell you that I was only one of many, many participants and that Manitobans showed their true spirit on Sunday morning and afternoon. There were people who came by four-by-four, they came by skidoo, there was I think a woman in her '90s who walked from Colony court over to the Convention Centre, all to participate. Mr. Kubicek, who was the emcee, said that in any other town or any other province this event would have been cancelled but not so in Manitoba because of the spirit of Manitobans, and my hardest congratulations.

Madam Speaker: Orders of the Day.

Volunteerism—Snowstorm

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Actually, Madam Speaker, I was going to ask for leave to make a nonpolitical statement, a very brief one.

Madam Speaker: Oh, I am sorry. Does the honourable Minister of Environment have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, reference has already been made today by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe) to the spirit displayed by Manitobans from time to time and actually day in and day out, but it never shines brighter than during a time like we have experienced the last few days. I know that people who are recipients of home care, for example, have benefited because

somebody provided their four-by-four and themselves to help get staff to and fro, or to deal with people and help people get to work at personal care homes, hospitals and all kinds of essential types of services like that. So hats off to Manitobans who always come through in times like this.

I have a personal reason for rising because I got stranded this weekend. Thanks to the Brousseau family—Robert, Tara, Royden, Scott, Bryce and Katie—I was able to be here to do my work as a member of the Legislative Assembly because they helped get me here, and I am very appreciative of that. What that family did for me was replicated thousands of times, I suggest, throughout Manitoba this past few days, and I just wanted to call attention to that magnificent spirit of the people of Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), 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. Sveinsson) in the Chair for the Department of Urban Affairs and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Executive Council.

House Business

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, I have had discussions with colleagues opposite, and I believe there would be agreement amongst members of the House not to see the clock at ten o'clock this evening during the consideration of Estimates and to sit until midnight.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock at 10 p.m. this evening and continue to sit in Committee of Supply till midnight? [interjection] No? The honourable member for The Maples, on the same item of House business.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): A point of order, I am not too sure, I understand that you ordered that we break off into Committee of Supply. Can you ask for leave when you are no longer in the Chair, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: I recognized the honourable government House leader on House business and have not at this point vacated the Chair.

Mr. McCrae: It is my understanding of the practices here, Madam Speaker, that when any House leader rises on a matter of House business, it is essentially in the nature of a point of order, and so I was appropriately on my feet, may I suggest.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples, I understand, is withdrawing his point of order.

* * *

* (1430)

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader has asked if there is leave then to waive the adjournment hour of 10 p.m., when the committees are in Supply this evening, and move it until midnight. Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinsson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Urban Affairs. Does the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs have an opening statement?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Yes, I do, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson, I am pleased to introduce the Department of Urban Affairs Estimates for 1997-98. The government of Manitoba is committed to ensuring the long-term well-being of our capital city of Winnipeg and its citizens. During the past year, the government and my department specifically have been working to build on and strengthen our partnership and relationship with the City of Winnipeg in the support of this objective.

The province is aware of the significant challenges and opportunities facing the city, and we recognize the importance of working co-operatively with City Council to respond to these issues. In order to ensure effective communications with the city, provincial cabinet ministers meet formally and informally with the mayor and EPC, the Executive Policy Committee, on a regular basis. As well, provincial staff meet frequently with their counterparts in the civic administration to discuss and resolve issues of mutual concern.

I think it is important to acknowledge in my comments today in this committee the significant efforts which Mayor Thompson and her council are making to address the problems facing city government. I congratulate City Council for adopting the reshaping of our civic government strategy to achieve affordable local government. This strategy presents a host of innovations for restructuring civic administration and making it financially sustainable.

I would just like to point out a few of the initiatives that the city has brought forth after their election of 1995 and in its council of 1996 some of the initiatives that were put forth at that time in which they indicated the desire to work toward the contracting out of park mowing, the contracting out of library book delivery services and the shelving of materials, the contracting out of all of Handi-Transit service, which I believe they are in the process of doing right now, the increased contracting out of refuse collection services, the contracting out of quarry operations, the consolidation of their stores functions, the downsizing and/or the contracting out in their construction branch and the contracting out of janitorial functions in the Winnipeg Police Services.

In this year's budget of '97-98, some of the strategic initiatives that were also brought forth that are

mentioned for recommendations for pursuit are in regards to the exploring the full contracting out of solid waste functions by the year 2000, including the introduction of a uniform user fee, the contracting out of the operation, the maintenance and the management of civic golf courses, the contracting out of additional janitorial functions in civic buildings, the contracting out of the Animal Services program, including enforcement functions as well as the operation of the animal shelter. They are exploring the possibility of contracting out water operations, the development of a business plan to contracting out of street design, the payroll, the library technical services, park planning and other services that could be provided efficiently by outside suppliers.

I congratulate the City of Winnipeg on these initiatives and looking at areas of where there are possible savings that can be generated, because any type of savings naturally will result in savings to the taxpayers of Manitoba and to the taxpayers of Winnipeg.

* (1440)

So these are some of the initiatives I believe that should be made of record as mentioned by the city and her councillors in trying to address some of the directions that the City of Winnipeg is taking with their taxation problems.

Another significant initiative of City Council was the announcement of a red tape review panel which was to eliminate administrative red tape and the duplication between departments and governments. I believe they looked at the success that was initiated through the Government Services department here in Manitoba and how we have been able to cut down on the red tape review within our administration, and the City of Winnipeg has adopted this. The exercise will enable better and more accessible civic services for the citizens of Winnipeg, and I am pleased to report that my department, the Department of Urban Affairs, is participating on this review panel.

Another initiative that was just undertaken by the City of Winnipeg and just announced also was the fair taxation commission in which a panel of individuals from various components of Winnipeg and areas are

looking at a fair taxation commission and looking at the best way as to the levels of taxation, the administration of taxation and the direction of taxation that should or should not be taken by the City of Winnipeg. So I congratulate them on these types of initiatives.

Manitoba Urban Affairs plays a crucial role in facilitating and supporting intergovernmental relations between the city and the province. The department is responsible for the development and the maintenance of a legislative, financial and planning framework that supports Winnipeg's sustainable development and meets the needs of Winnipeg citizens.

There are several initiatives Urban Affairs will be implementing in 1997-98 to support our strong, ongoing partnership with the city.

In the area of finance, I am pleased to announce that operating grants to the City of Winnipeg in 1997-98 will increase to \$89.32 million, which represents an increase of 1.3 percent over the previous year. I should point out that this is an increase that has been ongoing in regard to our allocation of funding to the city. As the funding allocation clearly illustrates, the province continues to place a priority on the provision of sustainable and stable funding assistance to the city.

I would note that our government's recently announced \$6.2-million increase in municipal funding payments to the city has enabled City Council to significantly reduce its property tax increases.

The Manitoba government's generous funding support to the City of Winnipeg stands in marked contrast to the situation in many other provinces where governments continue to freeze or cut municipal support grants. I would just like to point out that in comparison to other areas, specifically in Canada, when we look at the operating grants, other provinces have been reducing their grants and some of them very, very significantly.

As I pointed out previously, our increasing has gone up continually. Over the last six years, our increase in funding to the City of Winnipeg has gone up by 24 percent. During that same time period in other parts of Canada, the government in Alberta has reduced their funding, their operating grants by 41.6 percent; the

Ontario government has reduced their operating grants in Ontario by 23 percent; in Newfoundland they have reduced their operating grants to the municipalities by 17.9 percent; in New Brunswick it has gone down by 8.3 percent; Nova Scotia, 7.3 percent; and Quebec by 6.8 percent.

Mr. Chairman, as pointed out and as illustrated, our support for Winnipeg has always been and continues to be the envy of other municipal governments all across Canada. We have continually been there for the City of Winnipeg in the support of our municipal grants.

With respect to capital funding support to Winnipeg, I will be announcing shortly the details of a third Urban Capital Projects Allocation to be implemented over a six-year period of 1997-98 to the year 2002-03. UCPA-III, as it is called, has proven to be a very successful partnership for the revitalization and the enhancement of the city's capital structures and assets. I should point out that this would be the third UCPA-III that we are in the process of announcing.

Under UCPA-II, which has been in place since 1991-92, the province has provided \$30 million in unconditional funds to the city for its capital priorities. A total of \$66 million has been provided to cost-share joint priorities such as transit bus replacement, street renewal and community revitalization. The renewed commitment of long-term capital funding under UCPA-III will give the city continued certainty and stability respecting revenues as it develops its future capital expenditure plan.

As the throne speech noted, the government places a high priority on the revitalization of Winnipeg's older residential neighbourhoods. The Manitoba/Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program, our partnership initiative with the City of Winnipeg, has been the focus of these efforts. The province and the city are currently reviewing this program, and the results of this review will be considered in the development of a new six-year community revitalization program. Announcements concerning this new program will be forthcoming later on in the year.

The co-ordination of provincial participation in the Winnipeg Development Agreement is another important focus of the department. The objective of

this five-year partnership agreement with Canada and Winnipeg is to implement programming which supports Winnipeg's long-term sustainable economic development through three major components, Community Development and Security, Labour Force Development and Strategic and Sectoral Investments.

Many exciting initiatives were announced by WDA, Winnipeg Development Agreement, programs in 1996-97 such as the Downtown Watch; CounterAction, a project to help businesses prevent crime; the establishment of a drop-in centre in the Central Park area to provide youth in the area with an alternative to gang activity; the restoration of the Low Line bridge at The Forks to provide pedestrian access to the historic South Point; also, other initiatives involving Rossbrook House which have proved to be very, very beneficial.

A program just this weekend that is in the continuous stage is called camp, which is for children, that kept them busy during the spring break in teaching them magic and circus tricks and the idea of accomplishment and participation. I had the opportunity to be there for the windup and to see the pride and the joy on these young people in performing before their peers and also their parents. It is something that I think that it is hard to put a dollar figure on, but it was very, very impressive and very satisfying.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, 1997-98 promises to be a year of even more intensive activity as all our programs come into full effect. Urban Affairs is also implementing several WDA programs. These include the North Main Economic Development. In 1997-1998 a commercial development action plan will be prepared which will set out funding criteria and priorities for this program.

Urban Safety, to date this program has funded nine projects for a total commitment of just over \$1 million. More announcements of these projects will be made in the future and, while I am talking about urban safety, I should point out that this has proven to be a very beneficial area in forming new partnerships, good-faith partnerships with various nonprofit organizations. The \$1 million that has been committed, as pointed out, has generated almost \$4 million in good-faith partnerships with other areas to continue the program, so it is almost a three-to-one or a four-to-one type of return on monies

that are invested by the province. It is good catalyst money. It gets other departments involved, like I mentioned before, Rossbrook House, the City of Winnipeg police force, Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club, the Downtown BIZ, North Main BIZ, just to name a few of the organizations that have taken advantage of the Urban Safety program.

Under the neighbourhood improvement program in 1997-98, a program delivery agreement will be signed with the city and a number of neighbourhood infrastructure projects commenced.

Riverbank development: New projects in addition to the Low Line bridge will be announced shortly, and we are in the process of looking at applications and evaluating them at this particular time.

Strategic initiatives: Various projects have been funded to date by the program including a feasibility study on establishing a Canadian fashion technology centre in Winnipeg. Further initiatives will be identified shortly along with this, too.

* (1450)

All of our programs are anticipating a very busy year of project activity. Over the next 12 months, Urban Affairs' programs will be making another significant announcement on projects which support Winnipeg's sustainable economic development.

I am pleased to report that progress continues to be made in the province's effort to address interjurisdictional issues in the Capital Region and to build regional co-operation. The Capital Region Strategy developed jointly by the Round Table on Environment and Economy and the Capital Region Committee was adapted by the government on March 20, 1996. The strategy provides a framework for planning and development in the Capital Region well into the next century.

Urban Affairs co-chairs the Capital Region Committee with the Department of Rural Development. This body which includes all mayors and reeves in the region is the focus of the government's efforts to forge an effective partnership between Winnipeg and its neighbours. The committee will play a key role in

implementing the Capital Region Strategy. With the strategy now in place, the province has created a task force composed of members of the Capital Region Committee to make recommendations respecting the enhanced operation and the structure of the committee and the effective implementation of the strategy. A task force has also been established under the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae) to develop a waste management action plan for the Capital Region.

In the area of transportation, now that public consultation has been completed, Urban Affairs is looking forward to the finalization shortly of the City of Winnipeg's new transportation plan, TransPlan 2010. This plan which has been jointly funded by Urban Affairs and the city will provide a 15- to 20-year framework to guide both short- and long-term transportation decisions in Winnipeg. Urban Affairs staff have participated in the TransPlan advisory committee and on the city-provincial management committee.

A steering committee of five citizens appointed to direct the development of TransPlan 2010 is presently putting the finishing touches on this report to the province and the city. The study of the feasibility of developing a permanent voters' list for use by all levels of government is a special project currently being co-ordinated by Manitoba Urban Affairs. A consultant has been hired to conduct the study under the direction of the trilevel steering committee. We expect to receive the consultant's final report before the summer of this year.

With respect to legislation, I will be introducing a bill to amend The City of Winnipeg Act during this session. The 1997 legislation will reflect Urban Affairs' ongoing efforts to update and streamline The City of Winnipeg Act and to respond to specific requests for amendments from City Council.

I would like to say in closing that the Province of Manitoba recognized the importance of a healthy and a vibrant Winnipeg to a strong Manitoba. The mandate of my government and this department and the initiatives that I have described are clear evidence of the emphasis that this government places on Winnipeg's development. My staff and I look forward to building further on the partnerships with the city as we work

together to address the urban concerns of Winnipeg citizens.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Urban Affairs for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Wellington, have any opening comments?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Yes, Mr. Chair, I do. I noted with interest the comments of the minister in outlining the activities, past, present and future, of the Department of Urban Affairs. As I have stated before in these Estimates, I think the actions of the government belie the comments that the minister makes and has made in all three now of his opening remarks about the long-term well-being and partnership between the City of Winnipeg and the government of Manitoba.

I think that we only need look at the answers of the government today and the questions that were asked about what is the province planning to do or does the province see any concern about the record snowfall that happened over the weekend, any assistance that might be presented to the city reflecting that. The minister's response—not the Minister of Urban Affairs' response but the minister who responded in Question Period today—I felt was flippant, especially coming from a former city councillor who should know better about the cycle of snow clearing and snow removal in the city and the budget process in the City of Winnipeg.

Anybody who was listening to his response to this very potentially problematic issue would see that the government does not care about the city of Winnipeg. They have turned their backs in many important respects on the city of Winnipeg. Their actions do not lead and are not going to lead to a healthy and vibrant city, but they continue to lead towards more, not to a coming together but a spreading apart between the city and the province.

I found it also very interesting that the minister, for the first time in my recollection, actually spoke about some of the initiatives that the city was undertaking. It is interesting because the only reason I think that the minister commented on the reshaping the city strategy that has been presented by the mayor and her EPC is

that it is all dealing with contracting out and downsizing and privatizing. In the past years the province has made very little comment on the actions of city government other than the Premier (Mr. Filmon) spouting off the odd time about how they should keep their house in order the way the province has kept its fiscal house in order. Now, finally, for the first time, the city is doing something right.

While the minister outlines the summary of what the city is suggesting, I found it very interesting to note that the minister did not reflect the very good brief that was presented to City Council on behalf of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and their president, Paul Moist, refuting virtually every single one of the arguments that the Reshaping Our Civic Government document brought forward. I could go along and refute on record this afternoon some of those concerns that the minister brought forward, but I will not spend much time on it.

I think it was very interesting that the minister is saying: Go for it; as long as you are talking about contracting out and downsizing and privatizing, you are right on our wave length. It does not matter that there is another side to this issue. It does not matter that virtually all of the financial concerns that were theoretically raised in this mayor's document could be addressed without the wholesale contracting out, downsizing and privatizing that this document outlines, that there are other ways to deal with the financial concerns of the City of Winnipeg. The minister is choosing to just come down on one side rather than recognizing the possibility of other answers to the issues.

There is no question that there are major financial issues and service delivery issues facing the City of Winnipeg, but for the minister to say that to reflect only the document brought forward by the Executive Policy Committee and the mayor without referencing at all the other suggestions brought forward by the workers who work at the City of Winnipeg is to my way of thinking not only unfair, but it does a disservice to the workers of the City of Winnipeg. It does a disservice to many of the citizens of Winnipeg who do not want to see their services further privatized, downsized and contracted out. It just sets the cat among the pigeons yet again and puts the provincial government on one

side of this issue without recognizing the fact that it is a very complicated set of concerns that have a number of possible answers to them.

* (1500)

I think the idea that the provincial government says that the city should look at contracting out or privatizing its water services, for example, is a dreadful idea and one that, yes, was in that document but should not have been supported by the provincial government without a reflection on the concerns that are raised by this.

The minister, in outlining his support for this document, in effect is turning his back on many of the citizens of Winnipeg, that the solid waste functions should be downsized, privatized or contracted out. Again, that is very consistent with the government's support for BFI and the way the Clean Environment Commission process was hurried through and the way the Clean Environment Commission did not follow its own mandate and its own terms of reference in dealing with the whole issue of solid waste management in the Capital Region. But that is consistent with what this government wants to have happen.

It is also consistent with the lack of awareness, whether it is done through legitimate lack of awareness or an ideological blindness, I am not sure, but it is consistent with everything that this government has come down in as far as solid waste management is concerned. That is a whole huge other issue that we could discuss for quite a long period of time.

The fair taxation commission that has been established by the city, chaired by the former Minister of Finance and the former Education minister, is interesting, not the concept of a fair taxation commission, I think that potentially has some positives to it, but asking Clayton Manness to chair this commission because the mayor says he has the ear of the government is quite telling, putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop, one might say. A man who has been in the forefront in causing some of the financial problems facing the City of Winnipeg is now being asked to chair a fair taxation commission. Please. If it were not so potentially damaging for the City of Winnipeg, it would be laughable. The minister says the

mayor chose Mr. Manness, and that is true. I am just saying that this is not a positive statement for the City of Winnipeg.

The minister talks about partnerships and he talks about how there is a 1.3 percent increase to the overall sums spent to the City of Winnipeg and how good this is. Well, my understanding, and I may be wrong on this, but it seems to me the overall budget increase for the whole government of Manitoba is about 1.8 percent. So the grants to the City of Winnipeg are less than the overall government increase in expenditures and less than, I might add, the estimated cost of living increase, or inflation rate, which is running at minimum 2 percent and maybe quite a bit higher if interest rates go up. So I would just like to tell the minister, that 1.3 percent increase, in light of the government's other budgetary actions and in light of the cost of living increases, is not even standing still. It is in effect a reduction in the support that the province is giving to the City of Winnipeg.

Then the minister talks about the fact that while other provinces are decreasing their grants to their cities and that while Winnipeg continues to be the envy of other cities in the country, one of the reasons why Winnipeg gets a high percentage of its money in the form of grants from the province is because the province has not given the City of Winnipeg or other municipalities the kind of ability to raise their own revenues that other cities do.

The City of Winnipeg has a higher reliance on property taxes than virtually any other major and middle-size city in the country. A reliance on property tax, as I think everybody would agree on, is not the kind of taxation reliance that is fair or equitable or can engender the kinds of revenues a city needs to do the business of keeping a quality city going. Winnipeg has to rely on that kind of proportion of property taxes because the province has kept for itself virtually all of the revenue generating methods.

Let us have all the facts on the table here. Winnipeg may be the envy of other cities in the country, but I am not sure that Calgary or Edmonton or Regina or Saskatoon, cities in the west that are comparable in, if not size, in composition to Winnipeg, would want to exchange their taxation ability, their revenue generating

ability with the City of Winnipeg continually having to go to the province cap in hand. Nor, I suspect, would they want to give away their autonomy to the reliance that the City of Winnipeg has on the provincial government.

The minister does not talk anything about urban sprawl in his opening remarks. He does not talk anything about the concerns about Eaton's in his opening remarks. He does not talk anything—well, he mentions the Main Street redevelopment project that is underway. He does not talk anything about the major issues that are facing downtown urban Winnipeg. He does not talk anything about the poverty that is becoming a huge problem, continuing to be a huge problem for Winnipeg neighbourhoods, does not talk anything again, as I have said, about the province's responsibility to work with and assist its two-thirds of the residents who live in the city of Winnipeg, residents of the province, with their huge problems with the floods and the snow and does not talk at all about the whole problem of gangs that is becoming a huge problem for the residents of the city of Winnipeg and the underlying causes for the rise in gang membership and gang violence.

He does not mention anything about Winnport. Now, Winnport has, over the last few years, been a major feather in the government's cap and a concept that we on this side of the House have continued to support all the way through. There are some major problems currently with Winnport. I am wondering if the minister did not mention it, because there are some major problems with Winnport right now, and I will be asking him some specific questions in that regard.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I do not think the Urban Affairs Estimates nor the record of this government over the past years leave any room for positive thinking on the part of the residents or the government of the city of Winnipeg. It does not address the major issues that are facing the city of Winnipeg. It does not deal with an understanding other than on the most cursory fashion in the overview of the fact that what benefits the city of Winnipeg ultimately benefits all of the province of Manitoba and what is a problem for the city of Winnipeg ultimately is a problem for the entire province of Manitoba. Those words may be stated, but the actions of this government

give the lie to those words this year as they have in years past.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the official opposition critic for those comments. Under the Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the department. Accordingly, we shall defer the consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line. Before we do that, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister if he would introduce his staff present.

Mr. Reimer: Certainly. With me is my Deputy Minister, Mr. Bill Kinnear; my financial analyst Henry Bos; Ray Klassen, one of my senior analysts; Jon Gunn, another senior analyst; and Marianne Farag, who is one of my senior analysts, who knows everything about urban affairs.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Ms. Barrett: A procedural matter, Mr. Chair, in the past, because it is a small department, although a very important one, we have not gone item by item but have generally discussed issues and then dealt with the Minister's Salary at the end. So I am wondering if there is a willingness on the part of the minister to carry on that process this time as well.

Mr. Reimer: I have no problem with that. I think the member and I have sort of informally talked, and if there is something that we do not have the information right readily that we will certainly get it for her at the earliest convenience. I have no problem with sort of a free-ranging discussion on the department.

Mr. Chairperson: If I might just summarize then that in fact it will be a, what would you call it, free-ranging discussion, and that is it. After that discussion, of course, we will pass all those lines that we have in fact discussed within the report. We thank the minister.

We now proceed to line 1(b) Executive Support \$218,100, on page 126 of the Main Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

* (1510)

Ms. Barrett: Having just said that I would like to go free ranging or, as my colleague the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) said, free-for-all, I would like to ask a couple of questions about the Estimates book itself. First of all the org chart, there are some changes from last year. I would just like to ask the minister about some of those changes, at least from my reading. Now, if I have made some mistakes, I am sure that the minister will point that out to me.

It appears to me that the job of assistant to the deputy minister is a new position?

Mr. Reimer: Yes. I was pleased to see that there was a promotion of one of our senior analysts, Ms. Heather MacKnight, and we do now have what you call an ADM or assistant deputy minister in this department.

Ms. Barrett: And there is an assistant to the deputy minister as well, so there is a second additional staff addition?

Mr. Reimer: I am sorry. I was looking down the line. I believe what you were talking about was the assistant to the deputy minister I need to keep. Yes, this was a promotion to that department for this individual, yes.

Ms. Barrett: So in the deputy minister's area then, there are two new positions.

Mr. Reimer: In a sense, we have always had two positions there. It is in the definition, I guess, of the two individuals is what is now transcribed in the organizational chart, but there were always two individuals working with the deputy minister. Previously, there was a secretary to the deputy minister and then another individual working there which was what they call an AY3. We have now just raised them to one category above so that there is the assistant to the deputy minister and the secretary to this deputy minister.

Ms. Barrett: I am sorry, I do not have my last year's chart in front of me, but I do not see—well, I see two positions that are no longer there. One is the director of Urban Planning and Development and the other is the WDA Program Manager position which was a term that is now vacant. There are a couple of other new

positions, so I guess what I am asking is, has the staff complement increased?

Mr. Reimer: The number in the department has remained the same. There has been no change. As mentioned by the member for Wellington, the WDA Program Manager term position is vacant. It is in the process of being filled from within the department right now, but the complement of people has remained the same.

Ms. Barrett: So the WDA Program Manager when it is filled, when the position is filled, there will not be another name attached. It will be someone who is currently doing a job within the department.

Mr. Reimer: Where we are looking at moving someone on a career enhancement situation is out of our Housing department. The member is aware that the Department of Housing and the Department of Urban Affairs work within the same facilities. There is an overlap of various components, so we feel that there is an opportunity for someone out of our Housing department to move as an enhancement. This is where we feel that we can fill this position from.

Ms. Barrett: All the way to the left-hand column, the Admin Secretary position. Is that a new position?

Mr. Reimer: No.

Ms. Barrett: Okay. To the far right, finally. I am assuming that what this whole set of columns starting with the Winnipeg Development Agreement and going down to Capital Region Committee, these are the roles that the minister undertakes.

Mr. Reimer: Right.

Ms. Barrett: Again, on chart 1, which is a pie graph there, the financial assistance to the City of Winnipeg, my reading from 1996-97, the estimates were that 94.2 percent of the department's expenditures would be for financial assistance to the City of Winnipeg as compared to 92.4 estimated for '97-98.

I am wondering if the minister can see if my math is correct and, if so, why that reduction?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, I think that that pie shape there, the 92.4 will continue to go down a bit as the Winnipeg Development Agreement funding and the allocation of funding on that will increase. So this is why there is a difference in numbers, but it is mainly because of the fact that the Winnipeg Development Agreement funding is starting to flow more through that piece of the pie. So that will grow and the other area will even though it is still going to the City of Winnipeg.

Ms. Barrett: I have a few questions, if I may bring forward, if you will, minutes or business arising from last year's Estimates. The first thing is, and this is, I think, the third time I have brought this up, the suburban Growth Management Study.

In the annual report of '95-96 on page 36, it is called the Growth Management Study, and I am wondering if the minister can give me an update on that. What happened in last year's Estimates was, we were talking about at the Urban Development Institute, I believe, and the city and the province were all going to get together, come up with terms of reference for a Growth Management Study and the institute was having problems and was unable to complete their part of the terms of reference or doing that. I am wondering if anything has happened in that regard at all.

Mr. Reimer: It has been brought to my attention or I am of the understanding that the other two partners of the joint venture, if you want to call it, the city and the UDI are the ones that have come back and said that they do not want to proceed with this at this time. So, as the third partner, we have not initiated any type of further action on it, as mentioned, mainly because the other partners have no willingness to proceed at this time.

* (1520)

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister share with us the reasons for the city as well as UDI being unwilling to deal with the situation at this time? My understanding was that last June when we discussed this, the city was willing. It was UDI that was having problems, and now the minister is saying both other partners are not prepared to go ahead at this time. Could the minister explain the reasons that they have given to the government for not going ahead with the study?

Mr. Reimer: The only thing I can refer to is the fact that I have a letter from the city that has indicated that they have been in contact with UDI, and they, I guess in conversation, concur that the study be held in abeyance.

To the best of my knowledge, we were not made privy to their discussions as to the why and how they came to that decision other than they conveyed that decision to us in saying that they felt at this time that they would like to hold it back.

It does not say that they would not reconvene it or reintroduce it or restart it. It just said to hold it in abeyance at this time. So I can only surmise that, if there is a willingness on their part to revisit it, that is how it would come up again. But, to the best of my knowledge, it was in conversation between the city and UDI that they came to that decision, and they gave us that indication.

Ms. Barrett: I wonder if the minister has something further to add in that answer before I carry on with my questioning.

Mr. Reimer: Other than the fact that the point has been made that, I guess, in the discussions, the resources with the UDI were not available, and that was part of their decision, I guess, in talking with the City of Winnipeg.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister tell us the date of that letter from the city, and, if possible, who sent the letter?

Mr. Reimer: The letter that I am referring to, which we have a copy of, was sent from Mr. Holmes of Land Development with the City of Winnipeg to Mr. Chris Leach in our department of January 8, 1996.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Deputy Chair, so in effect, six months prior to our discussion of last year's Estimates was the last time there has been any communication on the part of the province—not communication on the part of the province—communication on the part of the UDI and/or the city dealing with this study?

Mr. Reimer: To the best of my knowledge, that is the last written communique that we have had from the city regarding their position.

Ms. Barrett: Well, I do not want to spend a whole lot of time on this, but I think that this is a really important issue. I think part of the importance of this issue is the lack of action or even reaction on the part of the government.

Now, when we discussed this last June, the minister stated that it was not the province's role to take a proactive, initiating function in this regard. Well, I disagreed with the minister in that context then; I will disagree with him now.

I want to know why the minister has not directed his department to contact the city and say, why are you not prepared to do this or we should be doing this because in the annual report of '95-96 under the Growth Management Study it says that there was to be "a joint Provincial/City study of the costs and benefits associated with development in Winnipeg. City and Provincial staff were requested to prepare draft terms of reference . . . in consultation with representatives from the Urban Development Institute. City and Provincial staff met on a regular basis and completed the draft terms of reference for the Growth Management Study in 1995-96. Decisions by the Province and the City relating to the draft terms of reference and implementation of the Growth Management Study are pending."

Now the way I read that paragraph in the annual report for '95-96, UDI was a consulting member; the province and the city were the initiating members. It was a joint study. Now the minister in June of 1996 says that because the other two partners, and he intimates that both UDI and the city are peer partners with the province in this—that because UDI was having a problem and the city was not responding, nothing was going to happen, and the province was not going to take any initiative in this regard. According to the annual report, the province is at the very least on a par with the city and UDI in developing this study, that the draft terms of reference had been done.

Can the minister explain what the situation is now? Is the annual report incorrect, or is the annual report correct, and the city is a full, functioning partner who could and, I would say, should have taken the initiative in getting this Growth Management Study off the ground?

Mr. Reimer: Well, I guess it is like any type of good-faith partnership that you develop with any types of organizations, and when you have a three-tiered partnership—a good faith-partnership, I should say—in trying to come to some sort of understanding, that you have to rely on the other partners' willingness to participate. If the partnership is one-sided by the insistence of the province to initiate all the actions, with the other two partners saying that they are not willing to proceed at this time, it makes it a very difficult situation to come to any type of resolve.

We as the Province of Manitoba can always take the position, because we are the administrators of The City of Winnipeg Act, that we should be the be-all and end-all to all decisions, but at the same time I think it is much better—and I know the member would agree—that to work in co-operation and consultation and try to come to some sort of resolve whether it is a growth management study or any type of situation that develops as a potential of a conflict between two governing bodies.

The fact that we have three partners here even makes it more tenuous because we have to be cognizant of the fact that UDI has priorities and directions that they feel they would like to go, and that the City of Winnipeg has their considerations that we as a province have to take into consideration in any type of decision making that we do. So I think it is better for us to work in a consultatory and consensus-building manner and try to come to some sort of resolve. The fact that I have been told that there have been conversations between the department and the various components in trying to come to some sort of resolve or a possibly more definitive direction and answering of questions as to what is going to happen with the Growth Management Study, that these are some of the things that we can continue to work on.

But I do not believe that it would be apropos for the province to be the total instigator of direction on something that involves a partnership with another level of government and a part of the private sector as to how things are implemented. I would think that there is still room for a direction on this, but we will continue to try to work in a co-operative manner with the other two partners here. I feel that there is room for optimism, that this is the best way to proceed with it.

* (1530)

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Deputy Chair, first the minister answered my first question about the status with a reading of a letter from January of 1996, six months before last year's Estimates, in which the city stated that the city and the UDI did not want to proceed at this point. I assumed from that, that was the last communication on this issue that had been undertaken on the part of the Urban Affairs staff. Now the minister is saying that there have been communications ongoing between the department and the other partners in this process, so I would like clarification on that.

I would also like clarification on the statement in the annual report from Urban Affairs '95-96 that stated that there were draft terms of reference for the Growth Management Study undertaken. If there are draft terms of reference, is the minister prepared to share them, and does the minister know, after these ongoing discussions that have taken place between the partners after January 1996, what the reasons are for the city and UDI being unwilling to carry on the Growth Management Study process, and if he does know that, could he share that with us?

Mr. Reimer: I have not been made privy to the draft terms of reference that the member is referring to, but what I can do is I can instruct the department to try to get some sort of more definitive answers regarding whether there has been something that has been completed and whether there is the ability to share this type of information with the member, taking into consideration whether the information is of a proprietary nature because of the fact that we are dealing with the other two partners of it.

If there is information that is available and there is a willingness to share this by the other partners, I would certainly make every effort to try to make this available to the member for Wellington. So I really have nothing to hide on this or—I can only share what I have, and I do not have anything of that nature, to my knowledge, before me now.

Ms. Barrett: I am not for a moment suggesting that the minister is hiding anything or trying to hide anything. If I left that impression, I apologize for that, but I do think that—[interjection] Mr. Chair, if I may, I

would like to ask that the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) keep his comments to himself, or if he must share his comments with the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) across the table, that he get on the same side of the table. I am finding it very difficult to hear myself and the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: For all members around this committee table, if any of you would like to carry on conversations, I would ask that you do it at the back of the room or out in the hall, and the member for Wellington can continue her comments.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that.

I am actually trying to get some clarification on what I see as a cloudy—not a cloudy issue but a lack of clarity in the comments that were made by the minister in last year's Estimates regarding the Growth Management Study and the statements that were made in the annual report, so I would appreciate whatever updating the minister can get, not only about where the draft terms of reference are, if there are any, and sharing those with me if they are not proprietary—that would be great—but, also, if the minister could find out why the city and the UDI are saying that they do not want to proceed with this management study.

I would think that that would be something that you would want to do because it is going on now six years since the province and the city agreed to undertake this study. Costs associated with development in the city of Winnipeg are very important, and the knowledge of what those costs are, who they are currently charged against, is essential in determining, I would think, the future direction of development in the city of Winnipeg.

There are a lot of issues surrounding that that we could go into, but I think that there was a commitment made on the part of the city and the province six years ago that the province has, I would think, not only an interest but a responsibility to carry through on or to find out why the other partners are unwilling or unable to deal with this issue at this time. I would really like to have it done, so I do not need to bring it up next year.

Mr. Reimer: I share the concern that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) has because you know anything that has a benefit to any type of planning for

the city of Winnipeg that the province can assist in is something that we should all be conscious of.

Just in talking with staff, they have informed me that, even just before Christmastime, there were conversations to the effect of regarding the Growth Management Study and where it was happening. It has been indicated that there seems to be a fair amount of reluctance, as indicated, that UDI did not want it to proceed at this time because of a lack of the resources available to put into the project. The city's Land Development department has also indicated this report is not a priority on their side, so this seems to be more of an indication as to why the reasoning behind the nonaction, as the member has indicated, is coming about. So it is something that has been conveyed to us outlining the positions by the city and by UDI as to why we are not going to proceed with it.

I think as conscientious as the department is in regard to the City of Winnipeg and its relationship that there will continue to be an ongoing contact by Urban Affairs with the city just to keep an update anyway as to what type of enthusiasm they have to initiate the Growth Management Study. I can only give the member the assurance that our department will be diligent in its—the bell is ringing.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We will recess this committee to return to the Assembly for a vote. Thank you.

The committee recessed at 3:38 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:41 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We will resume the Estimates of the Department of Urban Affairs. I believe that the minister was answering a question. I cannot remember what the question was, offhand, but—

Mr. Reimer: I cannot either, so we will go on.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, everybody else seems to be happy to go on.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Mr. Deputy Chairman, I would like to direct my questions in two areas: one, a constituency-focused series of concerns that is related to Omand's Creek; and the other area is related to potential mineral resource sterilization due to the effects of Winnport, airport development and urban sprawl. So one is based on my critic area, minerals, and the other one is constituency based and that is Omand's Creek in the heart of Winnipeg.

I am going to start with Omand's Creek. It is the centre of a great deal of my attention lately as we attempt to pull everyone in together to develop the creek, primarily north of Portage, which has been basically left to its own meanderings and not many of those since it was actually reconfigured into a fairly straight ditch used for water runoff, but the community has a vision to use that creek, in fact, as a natural green space, linear parkway.

I have talked to the minister about looking ahead, becoming more visionary in terms of the creek itself, looking in the long term and asking the minister to look at all types of aspects, such as the linear parkway development, which I just mentioned; water quality; the impacts of the airport development which we will anticipate higher water levels runoff in the creek. So there are a number of impacts that we anticipate, and I think that clearly what is needed is co-ordination as we are looking at a development of something that goes through the heart of Winnipeg in an area that has high levels of tourism and can also play a community resource facility.

I ask the minister: Is the ministry prepared to take co-ordination lead? Do they have plans, or are plans underway, in terms of developing Omand's Creek?

Mr. Reimer: I think the member for St. James brings up a very interesting topic in the sense that through the Winnipeg Development Agreement we do have the availability of looking at riverbank enhancement projects, and Omand's Creek would definitely fall within the category of any type of projects for redevelopment or for greening or for any type of enhancement along there.

I am not exactly privy to all the applications that have come forth through the Riverbank Development

agreement. I know we are in the process of doing an evaluation on the proposals rights now, and we will be looking at proceeding through the Winnipeg Development Agreement, through the various strategies.

I believe that we have \$2 million earmarked through the Riverbank Development program as the Manitoba contribution, and also Winnipeg has \$1.5 million allocated through the Riverbank Development project.

Omand's Creek, being part of not only the member for St. James' constituency but also the member for Wellington's constituency—

An Honourable Member: And Wolseley.

An Honourable Member: And River Heights.

Mr. Reimer: —and Wolseley, pardon me, and River Heights—my gosh, I am being inundated by MLAs—is something that I think that warrants attention. I know that the members along the Seine River have done the same thing in looking at enhancing that stretch of the waterway; it has become quite an attraction not only, as the member pointed out, as a tourist attraction but also as a place for community, for people to gather and to partake in the amenities of any type of water, river or waterways through our city. So I would look forward to applications, working with the member if she is willing to bring forth applications to my department for Omand's Creek. It is something that I believe that is warranted here in Winnipeg.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Deputy Chairman, a recent development on the creek is actually under construction, and that is the Home Depot site, and one of the concerns that the local community has was the impact of that development on water quality and specifically the surface drainage from the parking lot in terms of contaminants coming in, both particulate and oil and transmission fluids, from the parking lot, which will be a substantial size coming into the creek. The development has followed what the required regulations are. However, it seemed there was unanimity between the people that meet in terms of environmentalists, the Department of Environment, consultants, that further improvements or regulations requiring certain filtration systems, which have been

used in other jurisdictions, would actually improve water quality by limiting particulates and capturing pollutants. Has there been any consideration, or would the Department of Urban Affairs look into the measures suggested such as a storm receptor or other pollutant control measures which have been used in other jurisdictions? Has the ministry—or would the ministry take the initiative to look at upgrading the regulations to ensure that water quality will actually be enhanced? What we need is leadership, and so I am asking the minister to take that visionary role and ensure that developments in the future will include that type of pollution control systems.

Mr. Reimer: One has to look at the flow of Omand's Creek and some of the areas that it goes by and some of the various industries that are located along Omand's Creek. I am sure the member knows that it runs very, very close to a fairly large marshalling area for the railway where there is a certain amount of runoff. It also runs very, very close to a steel foundry where there is a possibility of runoff from that side also—not saying that there are contaminants, but it should be recognized where there is the possibility that various components of contamination can enter Omand's Creek, plus the fact that it is right—it runs very, very close to the old Saskatchewan Avenue dump, which is continually leaching contaminants out of the hill back into the water source.

* (1650)

I am quite familiar with that area as I have a business that is right on Omand's Creek. So I am fairly familiar with the creek itself. In fact, I have noticed quite regularly that there is a testing that is going on there quite regularly that I have witnessed. In fact, it happens right in front of the business that I am located where there is a group that comes in with testing materials, and I know that I have personally seen them test at least half a dozen times at various times during the summer when there are various flows on the creek.

In the springtime when there is a heavy flow, it is monitored right through to when Omand's Creek is almost a trickle where you can almost walk across it and this testing crew still comes down to test it. I do not know where they are from. I am only assuming that they are there under some official sanction from either

the Department of Environment or possibly the City of Winnipeg or possibly even the University of Manitoba or some other testing outfit, but they are there quite regularly test-monitoring that water. That is doing it very, very close to the dump site.

Now, as to where the member is referring to with Home Depot, my recollection is that the water that is coming off the Home Depot parking lot is going into the storm retention sewer system and not into Omand's Creek. That is what I have been led to believe. So I would think that it would appear that there would be minimum flow from the parking lot into Omand's Creek.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, just for the record, the project for Home Depot in my riding, actually the parking lot is going directly into the creek. The loading dock facility is going into the storm, the combined storm and sewer system for the city, which is a higher potential for contaminants than the parking lot, as I understand it, but the parking lot itself has been directed to flow right into the creek at this time.

I would like to move away from Omand's Creek and just ask the minister if Urban Affairs has done an analysis of the potential loss of mineral resources, the value of mineral resources due to further development along the northern corridor, the Winnport-Rosburn development area. Has there been an assessment of the potential loss of revenue due to mineral sterilization?

Mr. Reimer: Regarding the mineral rights, I would not be able to comment as to the ownership of the mineral rights in the proposed section of the property that has been looked at for the Winnport development. The lead departments on that would be Industry, Trade and Tourism and also Transportation. We would not have, to the best of our knowledge anyway, any type of input as to the land rights or, pardon me, the mineral rights on those properties.

Ms. Mihychuk: Recently at the mines convention that was held before Christmas there was a display by a geologist who had assessed the mineral potential that looked like it was going to be impacted by urban sprawl. It worked out to millions of dollars worth of potential there. So I am not talking specifically about mineral ownership. My concern is that there is co-

ordination between the Department of Mines and Urban Affairs which, I understand, provides urban policy formulation, planning advice and intergovernmental advice. So I would urge the ministry to in fact take that role and look at providing urban policy in this area.

Mr. Reimer: So noted.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I wonder if I could shift gears for a minute and ask the minister a question with regard to libraries.

Earlier when the minister delivered his introductory address he spoke about the document Reshaping Our Civic Government, and in his discussion of this document he spoke about the practice in the city, current practices of contracting out. He specifically spoke about library services, and I know that he identified certain activities within the library with regard to contracting out.

I think shelving was one of the activities, and I cannot quite recall what the other activities were, but in view of this contracting out, this move to contracting out, which apparently is embracing certain parts of the Winnipeg Public Library system, I would like to ask the minister if he could make a commitment today that he will not be putting forth the enabling legislation which would allow the Winnipeg Public Library to implement fees for library services.

Mr. Reimer: When I was referring to the City of Winnipeg's Reshaping Our Civic Government, I was referring to one of the initiatives that they had brought forth for consideration. What it was was the library book delivery services part of it and also the shelving of materials. To the best of my knowledge, that is the only thing that they have indicated towards that particular component of libraries.

The member's comment about a library card, I believe she called it—[interjection] A fee, yes, that has been brought forth in previous times to the Department of Urban Affairs for enabling legislation for The City of Winnipeg Act, and we have rejected it. We have no plans to reintroduce that.

Ms. McGifford: As well, then, the minister spoke about certain amendments or certain legislation that

would be tabled in the House in this session, and I believe the minister said that the legislation would reflect the wishes of the city councillors.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, with a very short answer.

Mr. Reimer: The City of Winnipeg Act is under the jurisdiction of the Province of Manitoba. Any time there is a change that is requested by the City of Winnipeg, it comes through in a resolution put forth by the City Council.

Those are the initiatives that we respond to. Some of them we take under consideration. Some deserve further input. Some deserve further discussion, but in general we try to accommodate the city in their requests. They are brought forth in a priority manner in discussions with the city as to what they feel they want to have done as soon as possible, and we try to respond in a manner that way.

Ms. McGifford: Then, Mr. Chair, I understand the minister to say from his previous answer that the legislation would not include user fees for library cards.

Mr. Reimer: That is correct.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour is now 5 p.m., and I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee for private members' hour. The committee will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening. Thank you.

* (1430)

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of Executive Council. Does the honourable First Minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Chair, I have copies of my opening statement, and I will just pass them out. There are about a half a dozen for any members who might want to follow along.

Mr. Chair, I want to begin by just saying thank you to all members of the House and thank particularly members of the opposition for their courtesy in ensuring that the business of the House is able to proceed today. Given the inclement weather and the difficulties caused by the storm, we recognize that a number of members on both sides of the House were unable to be here. I appreciate the desire on the part of everyone to get on with the business of the Legislature and to ensure that we had the opportunity to begin the debate on Estimates and all the various parts of the business of the Legislature, and I appreciate the rather significant and impressive showing, given the significant disruption that has taken place across the province.

I want to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, as you resume your responsibilities as Chair of this committee. I know that you will fulfill them with the same distinction you always have.

Since this marks the start of the debate on the Main Estimates, I also want to recognize the many hours of work which went into their preparation by members of the Treasury Board, under the able leadership of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), as well as by the Treasury Board staff, my other cabinet colleagues and the many departmental staff involved in the process.

The 1997-98 Estimates for Executive Council are identical in total to last year's vote, that is, \$3,168,100.

The only differences within the individual appropriations are the salary items under 1.(a) and 1.(b)(1), which are balanced off by corresponding reductions in Other Expenditures under item 1.(b)(2).

The staff year complement in Executive Council, at 44, is also exactly the same as it was last year.

I should add that the staff working on the Service First Initiatives, including Better Methods and Better Systems, also report to the Clerk of the Executive Council. Their activities are funded through the Internal Reform enabling appropriation.

Similarly, the French Language Services Secretariat continues to have a reporting relationship through the clerk. Their funding is provided through the

Department of Health, whose minister has responsibility for French Language Services.

In recent years, we have taken the opportunity provided by the discussion on Executive Council Estimates to go over a wide range of topics, including Manitoba's relations with other governments, both in Canada and elsewhere. I believe it is appropriate to do so once again.

This year's Speech from the Throne pointed out that when the federal government and the provinces have been able to work together as partners in recent years, the results have been extremely positive. The Team Canada missions to Asia and the national infrastructure program are both examples of what positive partnership can achieve.

Another example is the joint work now underway on a national child benefit.

Although the federal government is sometimes assumed to have initiated these joint efforts, the reality is that their origins can be traced to proposals made by the provincial governments. For example, in the case of the infrastructure program, the provinces for a number of years prior to its inception called on Ottawa for such a program and now actually manage the program and, along with other partners such as municipalities, are paying two-thirds of the costs. So the leadership and the responsibilities for these important initiatives are shared, and the benefits are real.

The throne speech also made reference to what happens when the partnership approach has not been followed by the Government of Canada. Unfortunately, there have been plenty of examples of federal unilateralism, and we are all aware of the massive cuts in transfers for social programs.

I hope the lessons of the past few years, that partnership works, will not be lost on this federal government, if it is returned to office, or on its successor. It is difficult to understand why, when it has seen how the partnership approach has worked so well under the national infrastructure program, the federal government would turn around and ignore it in other program areas such as determining project priorities

under the Western Grain Transportation Adjustment Fund.

Of course, we have heard it said that there are different visions within the federal government about its role relative to the provinces. Some federal ministers are said to believe in partnership and others in old-style unilateralism. The obvious problem is that when both approaches are applied at the same time, it can be very difficult for provinces to work with the federal government in a spirit of full trust, co-operation and good will. So, as I said, I hope some lessons will be learned from the experience of the past few years, and that we will see the federal government recognizing increasingly the real benefits of genuine partnership with the provinces. That is a message which the Western Premiers have been sending to Ottawa for years. It has also been endorsed regularly at the Annual Premiers' Conferences.

Members may be interested to know that this year's Western Premiers' Conference will be held at the end of May in British Columbia. The agenda has not been finalized as yet, but it is expected to focus on economic and social policy issues and on efforts to extend practical co-operation among the western provinces. This year's Annual Premiers' Conference will be held in New Brunswick in August. It will be an important meeting for sustaining progress in our efforts to achieve some needed rebalancing and the roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial governments.

On the international front, we are delighted that the federal government remains committed to the Team Canada approach to trade and investment promotion. That same approach is being applied throughout 1997 as Canada serves as host of the Asia-Pacific Leaders' Summit and a number of preparatory and related activities. For Manitoba the opportunities presented by the Pan American Games are growing as increasingly Canada focuses on improved trade with Central and South America. We are working with our Pan Am partners to ensure that our province derives the maximum benefits from these initiatives. My colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) will be in Mexico next week to continue trade development work there.

We are also looking toward new opportunities in Europe and South Africa. Only a few weeks ago a Manitoba trade mission visited our South African partner, the North West Province, and I understand the results were quite promising. We are proud of the fact that we were the first Canadian province to sign a formal co-operation agreement with our sister province and to build a trade development component into our relationship. Our governance agreement is also working well with the welcome assistance of CIDA and the International Development Research Centre. In fact, a small delegation of Manitoba officials were in South Africa in March to provide specific advice in the areas of agriculture, tourism and financial and general administration. Later this week a delegation of senior intergovernmental relations officials from South Africa will be in Manitoba to meet with several of the staff in our system who deal with the Canadian federal government on a regular basis. We are gratified to be able to contribute through these contacts to the strengthening of democracy in the new South Africa.

I want to conclude my introduction by acknowledging once again the very hard work of the staff in Executive Council. They are relatively few in numbers, but they make up for that in dedication, skill and, at times, very long hours. Their efforts are much appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

* (1440)

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the First Minister for his opening comments. Does the Leader of the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and just a few comments before we get into the specifics of the Estimates. We were quite concerned, and the Premier may have noted that in our questions today, about the kind of cynical nature that this government is operating in and the kind of heartless attitude it has had over the number of years and the consequences of what is happening in our province. Today again I was citing reports, and we have cited them time and time and time again, where there is a pending crisis in our communities.

Young people feel they have no hope, no opportunity, and we get just a few words in a Speech from the Throne because the government is worried about its heartless reputation or image. We get cynical responses, a few new secretariat announcements here and there, but cynical in the sense that the spin is the most important part of the government as opposed to the substance.

I know that it is naive to think that communication is not important for any government or any political party, but there is so little, there is so much lacking in terms of substance with this government when they put words in the Speech from the Throne on child poverty or children. They put words in the Speech from the Throne on First Nations people and aboriginal people that I just cannot basically fathom this anymore from this government and this Premier.

Day after day after day they reduce the opportunities for kids, for First Nations people. They have systematically hurt the most vulnerable people in our society. We get report after report after report from groups of people outside of government, and even when we get reports from government people inside government in the youth secretariat, they are lost on deaf ears with this government and this Premier. In fact, people tell us they have quit in despair about what is not going on in this government, that unless the Premier engages in the project, unless he takes some leadership, the proposals and the ideas will go nowhere.

Today in Question Period—this is not the first time we have raised this. Manitoba clearly leads the nation for the highest rate of violent youth crime. We can no longer ignore the problem. It is crucial to Manitobans that we work together, but there is huge fragmentation and miscommunication between the government departments, so who is responsible? It is the member for Tuxedo, the member opposite that is responsible for the lack of leadership, the lack of co-ordination, the lack of substance, the lack of any hope and opportunity for people that are feeling the most pain in our society.

And so we will not just sit idly by when there are a couple of little sentences, token sentences, in a Speech from the Throne, with no action or the opposite action that has taken place in the last number of years. We believe the Premier should be held accountable for it,

and we believe the Premier also has to be held accountable for some of the more cynical actions we are seeing inside his own government operation.

I am not talking about the long-term, meritorious public employees that work in the Premier's Office. I am talking about the fixers and spinners and other people in his office that are using taxpayers' money to get out the Tory message and the Tory communications strategy. We are not going to take that as a given in our society in terms of the morality that a government and a Premier must bring to the efforts of its office. Whether it is phoning our offices inside the government building or writing letters to the editor, et cetera, I think this Premier has got to start taking some leadership.

It is kind of interesting, the new Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) took a stand, I thought, of leadership on morality and ethics. I think it is time this Premier started doing the same thing in his own operation instead of just saying, well, it is not on their time, et cetera.

So there will be parts of the Premier's Estimates that we will—the long-term, meritorious people that work on behalf of all of Manitobans that we respect and I will give credit to. I have given credit to them in the past. But other kinds of standards that I see in the Premier's Office I think are rotten and I think require leadership, requires integrity, requires ethics and requires action which I do not see taking place, regrettably, from our Premier.

I will be dealing with other specific issues as we go through the Estimates of the Premier. Why are we agreeing to a three-year devolution agreement in human resources? When we complain about offloading of the federal government, why are we agreeing to the kind of devolution agreement that we see in New Brunswick and Alberta rather than a more sensible longer term approach.

The Premier has mentioned the national infrastructure program and the child benefit program. The combination of government action with the most vulnerable children is scandalous. The federal cuts have trickled down to the provinces. The provincial cuts have trickled down to the municipalities. The municipal cuts have trickled down to children. I have

mentioned this before, babies getting 24 percent less food allowance as a result of, quote, Team Canada. In terms of child benefits, I think this is absolutely cynical.

I think the idea of the Romanow government, the initiation of doing something on child benefits, I give credit to, but you cannot sing the hallelujah chorus to child benefit proposals when you have systematically cut babies by 24 percent, while you have cut public education by \$43 million, while you have cut evaluation programs for our kids who need it at the earliest preschool ages, while you have cut child care programs. You increased the fees and then decreased the enrollment and then decreased the funding. It is cute in terms of being sneaky, but the results mean that fewer people have opportunities. You have cut Access; you have cut New Careers; you have cut Student Social Allowances; you have cut the Indian and Metis Friendship Centres; you have cut programs that have made a difference.

We are starting to pay the price now. This is a government that does not believe in prevention. This is a government that does not believe in working in the community. This is a government, quite frankly, that is out of touch with what is going on in the community. When we asked about hungry kids to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) just recently and nutrition programs, she said that the model we should follow is the Fort Garry School Division model, where you import immigrants at \$20,000 a year to deal with the hungry kids in your school division. Why did we not see the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stand up and say that is not our view.

I listened, I read Hansard, and—[interjection] Perhaps the minister would like to discuss this with the Leader of the government, the Premier. I am sure she has. I am sure the Premier, if he was concerned about children, would have discussed this with the minister—[interjection] I beg your pardon?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable Leader of the official opposition to put his remarks through the Chair. It will avoid the unnecessary debate that might happen otherwise.

The honourable Leader of the official opposition, to carry on.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, I assumed if you did not call the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) to order, that she was rising on a point of order, and I was trying to hear whether she had, which obviously she had not, so I guess, I hope that she will follow our rules.

We have a number of other questions on First Nations people. We have had these debates before, and we will have them later on in Estimates. I am concerned that the minister again today did not mention the whole issue of flooding and municipal costs. I am sure this is an area where we are on the same page in terms of the offloading of responsibilities onto municipalities by the federal government two years ago. I will be asking the Premier (Mr. Filmon) whether he did raise this in the many hours he was travelling with the Prime Minister and what the response was from the Prime Minister. It is an area, I know, of concern before the massive snowstorm this weekend, and I know it will be an even greater concern following the storm.

* (1450)

I, again, believe that the Premier has mentioned the whole issue of other federal-provincial programs. The whole area of immigration and settlement responsibilities, I will want to ask the Premier about that again. It is not in the communique from the Premier in terms of a federal-provincial issue of concern. The Premier mentioned the whole infrastructure proposal and the ability to move on a transition strategy from the former transportation system. I still think the Premier's position of sitting on the fence on the Wheat Board is not a position that is in the best interest of Manitobans. Not taking a strong position on the two Alberta court cases and kind of trying to say we are in the middle of single-desk selling versus dual marketing to us is a feeble response.

I think if you are in favour of dual marketing, you should say it. If you are in favour of the single desk, you should say it. We are proud to say what we are in favour of, and we are not just talking about improving the Wheat Board governance body which all of us are in favour of, greater farmer control; but the Wheat Board, I notice the Premier likes to be there for the announcement of sales in his Team Canada tour. I thought it was kind of ironic. I guess that was the day after the federal government had allegedly screwed up

on the presentation of the food fare in Asia that we stood by the Canadian Wheat Board with a major contract that was signed. We think that there are lots of jobs and lots of producers that still support the single-desk selling of the Wheat Board.

There are other economic issues that I think this Premier has had great responsibility on—Repap, Bristol, Eaton's and others—that we will be asking on later on. Suffice to say the area of the greatest priority for us in these sets of Estimates with the Premier is what we perceive to be the lack of leadership when issues of integrity in his office have been raised and we feel have not been dealt with. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I am going to ask for leave, if I can give opening remarks for four or five minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to make opening remarks? [agreed] The honourable member for Inkster, with his opening remarks.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I appreciate the opportunity to add a few words from our party's perspective. In listening to the Premier's comments, I picked out a few points on which I would like to be able to comment on. I see some value when the Premier talked about global markets. No doubt as we move more towards a global economy, the role of the government in the future is going to be more and more on trying to ensure that Manitoba is making those inroads into the many different economies throughout the world. We acknowledge the need to be aggressive in trying to secure those markets on behalf of Manitoba companies and so forth.

The Premier spent some time on federal-provincial relations. No doubt as we go into the Estimates, the relations between the feds and the province will come up time and time again. It virtually comes up every Question Period. We have seen some positive things as has been pointed out, whether it has been the infrastructure, there is the leader of the Democratic Party talked about the immigration. We had a wonderful bilateral agreement signed by this government and government in Ottawa, the infrastructure is indicated.

Mr. Chairperson, there are some other issues that are out there, the GST versus PST. I look forward to getting into somewhat of a discussion with the Premier with respect to that. The whole area of federal versus provincial relations and how the governments get along is a very interesting one, to say the least. I look forward to having some dialogue in terms of some of the power struggles between the two constitutional discussions that could come as early as August as we try to redefine or better define in terms of the federal state that we live in.

Also, Mr. Chairperson, where I think the Premier was a bit off, he is not talking about some of those local issues. The job markets, jobs are a major issue. We looked at Molson's and other companies that are closing shops. I am interested in knowing what it is the Premier did. Did the Premier do anything? What sort of representation? The Leader of the New Democratic Party brought up Bristol Aerospace. Today Manitoba has, I believe, it is somewhere around 9 percent, and I will get the actual percentage, of the aerospace industry located in the province of Manitoba. It seems what we want to be able to do is protect those jobs as much as possible. I look at Bristol and compare it to de Havilland in Ontario. Governments assisted, got involved, and ultimately I believe saved de Havilland. We need the Premier of this province to be involved in certain sectors, where ultimately we believe that the government can buy its involvement, can in fact make a difference.

The Leader of the New Democratic Party made reference to crime. That is a very serious issue. I have been surveying my constituents of late. I can assure you that the perception of the amount of violent crime in the city of Winnipeg has been increasing, and it has been increasing dramatically. Whether it is real or not, the perception is that the violent crime is going up. It saddened me greatly to hear of the case over the weekend, as I am sure it did for all members, where you get a group of young adults beating to death another member of a gang. Whether the person is a member of a gang or not, it is just revolting to see that sort of barbaric actions being taken against a fellow human being.

Health care is again and always will be a major issue inside this Chamber. I am very sensitive in terms of the

amounts of cuts that have been coming down from Ottawa. At the same time, I am pleased with the commitment, of the long-term commitment, to fund health care from Ottawa, because that has been guaranteed, Mr. Chairperson. That was not there before.

We want to be able to talk a little bit about the education and the funding of education and where the Premier (Mr. Filmon) sees the funding of education, because we have seen that growing reliance on property tax over the last 10-plus years.

With those few words, Mr. Chairperson, I am done with my opening remarks.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I will, just in response briefly to comments that have been made by the members opposite, say that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) used the terms "cynical" and "heartless," and I think that there has been in the last few decades of this province's history nothing more heartless than the actions of the Pawley government, of which the member for Concordia was a part, was a cabinet minister in fact, nothing more heartless than their actions when they ran interest costs up from—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I interrupt the honourable First Minister for just a minute. This is not a time for rebuttal at this time. Is there leave for the honourable First Minister—

Mr. Filmon: No, I will open up the next segment with my comments then.

Mr. Chairperson: I appreciate that.

At this time, I would remind all honourable members of the committee that debate on the Minister's Salary, item 1.(a), is deferred until all other items in the Estimates of the department are passed. At this time we invite the minister's staff to take their place in the Chamber.

Is the First Minister prepared to introduce his staff members present to the committee at this time?

* (1500)

Mr. Filmon: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. For member's opposite, I am sure that they know my senior staff, who have not changed since last year, but we have to my left the Clerk of the Executive Council, Don Leitch; next to him, we have Karen Popp, who is the Admin and Finance Officer for Executive Council; we have to my right my Chief of Staff, Taras Sokolyk; and next to him the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Jim Eldridge.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister.

The item before the committee is item 1. General Administration (b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Doer: I wonder if the Premier can give us a breakdown of who is in that line and what the salaries are, please.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I think that perhaps the easiest thing to do would be to hand out copies of the listing as we have always done in the past. It gives the entire listing of staff in Executive Council, including those in the intergovernmental office. So these are all the ones that are covered in that line, I believe.

Mr. Doer: I am just wondering, in terms of the major staff representatives under 1.(b)(1), I would like to just ask a few questions about salary increases over the last couple of years.

Can the Premier indicate the Clerk of Executive Council, this is the '97 salary—there will be no obvious adjustment April 1, notwithstanding MLAs' salaries on these Estimates. Can the Premier indicate the salary increases in the last two fiscal years, that would be '95-96, '96-97?

Mr. Filmon: May I clarify. Is the member asking specifically about the Clerk of the Executive Council?

Mr. Doer: Yes.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, he has received no increases in the last two years. He is at the maximum of his range, and he is subject, of course, to the reduced work week as everyone else is.

Mr. Doer: Thank you for that information. Can the Premier indicate in the same two fiscal years the director of Cabinet Communications?

Mr. Filmon: The director of Cabinet Communications, not being at the maximum of her range, has received the standard merit increment in each of the previous years.

Mr. Doer: The Chief of Staff, salary increases for the same two fiscal years, please.

Mr. Filmon: The Chief of Staff received a reclassification in the spring of 1995 and merit increments in each of the previous two fiscal years.

Mr. Doer: We had a salary level for the Chief of Staff quite a bit lower than what is recorded here. Can the Premier please indicate the reclassification for the Chief of Staff? You will be aware that not all salaries are available from the executive level in the same way they used to be where they were Order-in-Councils, et cetera, the O/Cs. So I just want to know, given that we are dealing with the senior staff of the Premier, whether the same belt tightening is still taking place with all people equally.

Mr. Filmon: My recollection is that the Chief of Staff took the place of what was then known as principal secretary. We did not change the title to principal secretary, but he was given the same level of classification as the principal secretary had previously been to the office, so that was the adjustment that took place.

Essentially, he has assumed all of the responsibilities that formerly were taken by the principal secretary. I do not have in front of me what the salary level was two years ago. That would be available in, I guess, Public Accounts.

Mr. Doer: I believe the last amount of money we had is \$86,920. I will double check the fiscal year of that. It would appear that that would be a \$6,000-increase. Notwithstanding an increment, that would look like a fairly substantial increase. Can the Premier please indicate what the reclassification percentage was, please?

Mr. Filmon: We have a basic rule of thumb that says that in these reclassifications, we do not move them up any more than one increment. So it is possible that there is one additional increment contained within that gap that is referred to.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, there has been some controversy and public attention to letters that have been drafted by caucus staff and sent out under the signature of other individuals in the public. Who in the Premier's Office is responsible for the caucus staff? Would it be the Clerk of cabinet, the deputy minister of intergovernmental affairs or would it be the Chief of Staff of the Premier?

Mr. Filmon: None of those. Caucus staff reports to the chairman of caucus through their administrative structure.

Mr. Doer: We have been informed by a number of people that caucus staff have considerable direction from the Chief of Staff of the Premier's Office. Does the Chief of Staff of the Premier's Office have some communication function with the caucus staff who are drafting these letters?

Mr. Filmon: No, Mr. Chair.

* (1510)

Mr. Doer: Well, people in the Premier's caucus have been telling us that the Chief of Staff has a fair degree of power and influence over all the political affairs of the government including the caucus staff, the people on the Conservative side who have been telling this to us. Who should we believe, the members of the Premier's caucus or should we believe the Premier today?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I do not think that anything I could say would persuade the Leader of the Opposition. He will believe what he wants to believe, but I have told him the facts.

Mr. Doer: Does the Premier have any problems with the integrity of people who write letters, draft letters to the editor and have other people go out and sign them on behalf of the government's "communication message"?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I think I have responded to that issue publicly, and I think we have established that that is not under the responsibility of my staff.

Mr. Doer: Well, the Premier is right. We will believe whom we want to believe and we have seen a pattern. Who was responsible a couple of years ago when the Premier's communication staff were phoning open-line radio shows and claiming to be certain citizens and constituents on government time on government payroll? Who was responsible for that kind of what we would call political trick campaign out of the Premier's communication staff?

Mr. Filmon: I think, Mr. Chair, that that matter again was well discussed and debated publicly, and the individuals involved indicated that they had made an error in judgment and were, in fact, disciplined on the issue.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, I do not know what the specific discipline was, but I know they were all working the next day after the controversy happened. In fact, some of them have even been hired to work in subsidiaries now of government that have major government contracts, that first of all—[interjection]—SmartHealth and other organizations in particular, so I would like to know what discipline did take place, and is this the kind of cultural integrity that we have in the Premier's Office?

Mr. Filmon: As is often the case with individuals who do things as a result of a lapse in judgment, they are given a warning, a written warning indicating that that is not acceptable, and that happens, I think, in most organizations. People do not get their heads chopped off for one offence.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairperson, do they get their heads chopped off if they deny the—when confronted with the truth, do they get their heads chopped off if they deny the fact that they are in fact working out of the Premier's Office until two or three days later in the controversy and it is proven otherwise?

Mr. Filmon: Again, that matter was well canvassed publicly. It is two—or how many years old? It was 1993, I think, the fall of 1993, and as I say, that matter, after having been brought to the attention of people

responsible, resulted in disciplinary action. That matter has, I think, been well discussed.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, and we note that the letter-writing campaign that was exposed in the media, does the Premier feel it is wrong for his government to be writing letters to the editor just for the mere function of other citizens, then signing them? Does he feel that is a correct way to act? Is that the kind of integrity and open government he wants to be in charge of, a government that writes phoney letters to the editor for other people's signatures, paid for presumably by taxpayers' money? Is that the kind of operation that he feels proud about, or what kind of action has he taken on this kind of exposé of the integrity of the Premier's Office?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I think we have established, as I indicated before, that that was not done by the Premier's Office. It was not done by staff that are covered in these Estimates, and I think it was also established publicly that they were acting on their own time and so it was not paid for by the taxpayer.

Mr. Doer: The Premier would be aware of a letter signed by one Alan Richer appearing in the Free Press in 1995, complaining about the slanted news coverage. The name Alan Richer is totally fictitious. No such person exists at the given address. Has the Premier investigated that matter, and what action has he taken?

Mr. Filmon: Again, Mr. Chair, I indicated that that letter did not originate from my office, has not in any way been worked on by my staff and so is not the subject of this Estimates discussion.

Mr. Doer: Well, with the greatest of respect to the Premier, we have been told by a number of his caucus people that his Chief of Staff basically co-ordinates the communication political message of the government through the Premier. Now, we know this Premier is not one of these—he cannot claim to us, he may try to claim in these Estimates he is one of these hands-off people in terms of his “communication” message. A cabinet minister cannot even go out in the hallway without being told by one of the Premier's handlers and spin people what to say and how to say it.

We have been told that ministers cannot even talk to the press without getting the kind of marching orders from this Premier. So when we hear from caucus members of the Premier that the Chief of Staff of his office is the person in charge of this kind of political message from the Tory government, who are we to believe? The Tory caucus members, who are quite concerned about this ethical lapse from the Premier and his staff, or the Premier, who says, I know nothing, I did nothing, I see nothing, I hear no evil, I see no evil, I speak no evil.

We know the Premier operates in a different style. We know and he will acknowledge that his office controls the message of all the cabinet ministers and controls the kind of communication message that takes place. We know he is a highly centralized, controlling person, so it makes sense to us that the message we are getting from members opposite about the chief political operator in the Premier's Office, being no disrespect to the individual, I am sure he is operating under instructions by the Premier, but the Chief of Staff in his office is of course, what we have been told, the chief political fixer for the Premier. Is that not true? Can the Premier not acknowledge what his caucus members have told us repeatedly?

* (1520)

Mr. Filmon: We can, if the member opposite wants to debate the way in which the Pawley-Doer administration handled communications and the way they spent I believe it was almost \$3 million annually more than this administration did, employing more than 50 people more, spinners buried in every single department, in every single area of government, all of which was reduced substantially by us as we did indeed look for a way of having a co-ordinated message as opposed to having the kind of messaging that was done at much greater expense and at much greater use of taxpayers dollars and taking much greater liberties, I might say, with respect to spinning the public. We did indeed reduce by several million dollars a year the amount of money that was being spent and we did indeed do this by having a co-ordinated approach to ensuring that government message was consistent.

I make no apologies for it. I think it is a better way, it certainly is a less expensive way, and it certainly has

resulted in our having a much more cost-efficient government than the members opposite did. I might say that that recommendation as to getting a more centralized approach to the message came right out of an analysis that was done for the Pawley-Doer administration. The report I think was the Weppler Report that recommended that approach to ensuring that there was a co-ordinated, consistent messaging, and at much less cost. I do not apology for that. I think it is a better way of doing it. Does that mean that anybody is getting more spin by this government? The fact is they are probably not getting as much spin as they were getting from the Pawley-Doer administration, Mr. Chairman, but we believe that it is more consistent, it is more coherent and it is a more co-ordinated way of getting the message out as to what indeed the government does.

The member opposite cannot have it both ways. He will stand up and argue, what is the Premier's point of view. He does not ask the questions every day in the House of the ministers responsible; he asks them of the Premier because he assumes that there is co-ordination. Indeed, what is wrong with that? If there is co-ordination, there ought to be consistency in the government message. There ought to be consistency because they are always looking for contradictions. Every day in this House he will stand up trying to find a contradiction. The whole purpose of this Estimates process is for him to try and find a contradiction, so it is important. He acknowledges that it is important to have consistency and to have co-ordination of message, although he cannot have it both ways now saying that is a bad thing.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairperson, it would be nice if we got some answers from the Premier in Question Period. I am hoping this new speech here today will allow us to get some answers from the Premier in the Question Periods to come. It is traditional that the Leader of the Opposition does pose his question to the head of government. It is not traditional for the head of government to do a full fetal every day and refuse to answer questions.

I think if I go back through the last five weeks, the Premier has stood up on maybe two or three questions, where he sits in the bushes and waits till the third question so he cannot answer the question and uses that

kind of—he is obviously really committed to these decisions his government is making, that is why he does not stand up and defend them.

So if the Premier finds offence with our asking the questions, oh, I am very sorry but we are not going to stop asking questions tomorrow. It goes with the territory. You would not see a Prime Minister or actually a First Minister in any other Chamber in this country, I dare say, that sits down and has so much to say from his seat and so little to say from his feet as when we watch the member opposite. I mean, today we were asking questions about children in gangs and the Premier just sat there laughing about this issue through Question Period. I know he will say I was not laughing at the issue; I was laughing at you—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Filmon: On a point of order, I would ask that the member not put false information on the record. I was not laughing at the issues of children in poverty and children living in difficulty. I never would, Mr. Chair, and I would just ask the member opposite not to further diminish his credibility by putting false statements on the record.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: I was just conferring with my colleague here and it—[interjection]

If the Premier wants to answer the questions in Question Period, we would be very happy that he would do so. If the Premier wants to respond to the fact that there is no co-ordination after eight or nine years in office between one government department and another that he is responsible for, we would be very happy if he did. If the Premier wants to answer why they censored the report from their own Youth Secretariat after taxpayers paid hundreds of thousands of dollars—the only thing we can get from this Premier is censorship and that is the kind of spin and deceit we

get from the member opposite—we would be happy. We do not mind engaging in an argument, a discussion, a co-operation.

I wrote the Premier on this issue in September. I have not even got a reply yet. I do not know who is responsible for not replying on youth gangs. We sent out our 18-point plan; we did not even get an answer back from the Premier. I guess he was too busy to deal with this issue. We actually do believe that things are very serious in our communities. We have been saying it for the last number of years. We said that to you when you cut programs in 1991 and 1992, that we are going to pay for it later. You did not listen to us then. Hopefully, you are listening to the public now.

We talked about the cuts in education and what will it mean to our future economy and what it will mean to our future opportunity for our kids. You did not listen to us five years ago or four years ago or three years ago and, again, you continue on with freezes and cuts. Children are telling us that every time you cut a course out of a school, it shuts another door for opportunities for all of us as young people, and we are hoping that the Premier will take some leadership over this approach continually. [interjection]

Well, I do not know who is the Charlie McCarthy and who is the Edgar Bergen here between the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) and the Premier. [interjection] I did not hear the Minister of Education, but her record speaks for itself. It is an absolute disgrace and she knows it and we know it and the Premier should know it, and the Premier will do what he always does and just change his minister just before the next election because the heat will be too great.

Mr. Chairman, getting back to the Lyon, Lyon-Filmon years where these spin people were established, and I would admit that they were carried on, to some degree, in the Pawley years and they have been really carried on and sophisticated in terms of their central political message by this Premier in the Filmon years as opposed to the Lyon-Filmon years. The Lyon-Filmon years started with a couple of people; as I recall, there was a person who worked in the Department of Labour who used to work for the MMA and, I think, was a former reporter of the Winnipeg Tribune, a guy named

Kustra. As I recall, it was the first one and I remember being worried about it then, even though I had played hockey with Mr. Kustra well before he was appointed a communication person in the Department of Labour.

Then there was the layoff of numbers of people in the Tribune when the Tribune closed down, and Lyon hired a number of other people. I remember Harry Marsden being hired by the former Minister of Finance, Craig, and a number of other people were hired and off we were with this new profession of communication people in departments and communication people in government.

I happen to be very concerned about that. I know you need a contact for offices and the Premier needs a contact for his office, but I do not believe we need a filter and I do not believe we need a censorship between the elected representatives, whom I have more faith in, quite frankly, of all political parties and the media and the public.

I know when I was first appointed a minister and there was a vacant communication position in the Department of Urban Affairs, I cancelled it. I always personally—[interjection] beg your pardon.

Mr. Filmon: Did you have a communicator?

Mr. Doer: No, and if I had, of course, the Premier would have been the first one to raise it because he would have had my comments about the times when the Pawley government hired people and he would have had those comments and would have used them appropriately as Leader of the Opposition then. I am not naive enough not to believe that one should try to practise what one preaches.

However, this has gone to a new level, I believe, of not only sophistication but I believe a new low standard in terms of what people do out of the Premier's Office in terms of the communication message and spin. This is not as if it is the first example of where the Premier has been caught and the Premier's operators have been caught in doing and fixing the "media." We have the example on open-line radio. We have the example of people phoning in to open-line radio from the Premier's Office, saying, I am Mary McGillicuddy and I am a constituent of the Crescentwood constituency and I do

not like what—I think it was Avis Gray was doing then or Tim Sale or whatever else. You know, we went on for two or three days saying—and Frank Smith. I am Frank Smith—it was kind of curious that he had this good radio voice—and I am phoning on behalf of my constituents in that constituency.

* (1530)

For two or three days, of course, the Premier stayed behind the closed doors. He did not answer these questions. He sent his deputy premier out to answer the media who said, oh, I do not recognize those voices, and of course that is the kind of honesty that we got from the Premier in his office then. Oh, I do not recognize those voices. People played the tape back—oh, I do not recognize those voices, and two or three days later it became revealed that this kind of dishonest campaign was being conducted right out of the Premier's Office. I happen to believe—and many members have told me—that that is the kind of political tricks that the Premier likes to have out of his office, and that is of course what we saw.

Now we again see, and obviously for every time the Premier is getting caught on these things we think there are many more incidents taking place, but then we see the Premier's caucus people, through what we have been told, the Premier's principal secretary, writing phoney letters to the editor, the Winnipeg Sun, the Winnipeg Free Press, writing phoney letters to the editor, dishonest letters to the editor and having somebody else sign them, some people who do not even exist, and other people who exist and sign them on behalf of the Premier's message.

We also know that when something happens that the government does not like, our phones light up with phone calls. Right? Now, you think that people do not understand. It is surprising to me that the Premier does not understand that on some of these phones you can actually tell where the phone calls are coming from, and every time there is a controversy we always get all these phone calls from inside the building from public employees that say, oh, we do not like what you did in committee last night—yes, there were thousands of people watching committee last night, that is why we got lots of phone calls the next day—we do not like what you did in committee and we really want you to change

it. I am a citizen of Transcona or I am one of your constituents in Concordia, I am a constituent in Crescentwood or St. James, out of this building, which are obviously planted calls again from this government and from this Premier. [interjection] Well, if you do not—we do not like it. We have better things to do with our time.

Maybe the Minister of Education has nothing better to do than answer phoney calls in her office, but we have more things to do than get calls from the building from people who are claiming to be constituents at a committee where there were no more than four people watching it, and we get 12 calls from staff inside this building. It is part of this dirty tricks campaign that we see from this Premier. We see absolutely no action at all, no integrity, no honesty and no leadership from this Premier. What has he done about this to clean up the mess in his communication branch and his political communication?

Mr. Filmon: I have indicated, Mr. Chair, that those calls or whatever he is referring to, and this is the first time this has been raised, so if he wants to give me names and phone numbers I will look into it. I think it is a typical fabrication that we get from the Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier tell us what he has done about the fabrication of letters to the editor? What action has he taken?

Mr. Filmon: I repeat that has been well canvassed publicly as to what were the circumstances, and I have spoken publicly on it. For the purposes of these Estimates, none of that is as a result of any actions by any staff contained within these Estimates, and it is not a matter for further discussion under these Estimates.

Mr. Doer: We believe it is a matter of public concern. We believe that this Legislature should take a leadership position. We believe that the public interest is served by a Premier that says no to dirty political tricks, whether they are phone calls to the open-line shows alleging to be certain people that they are not or whether it is phoney letters to the editor. We believe that the Premier is not being forthright with us when we hear from members of his caucus that there is an organized political activity from the Premier's Office,

that that activity flows from the chief political operator in the government, and that is the Chief of Staff of the government of the day.

I would therefore move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that the Executive Council Estimates be reduced by \$92,580, the amount of salary for the Chief of Staff of the Premier.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that the Executive Council Estimates be reduced by \$92,580, the amount of salary of the Chief of Staff. The motion is in order.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I will not speak at any length about this because I think this speaks volumes about the Leader of the Opposition and his party and the depths to which they have sunk. We have seen the evidence as to their going away from discussing matters of substance, issues of substance, and going on to personal attacks on individuals. It is the kind of thing that has been led by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and it is a kind of what I would call bottom-feeding politics that have been brought into this Legislature by members of the New Democratic Party, principally led by the member for Crescentwood, who is now obviously yanking the chain of the Leader of the Opposition to encourage him to take attacks on individuals. They have done it to the Speaker. They have done it, obviously, to specific members of government that they choose to devote their attention to.

I think this is something that there is no place for in this Legislature, but the Leader of the Opposition is welcome to spend all the time he wants on this kind of tactic because I think it will forever, forever reserve a place for him in opposition in this government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I was just wanting to ask a question or two prior to having the vote, and it is with respect to—the Premier made reference to the fact when he tabled the document that indicates the Executive Council—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the honourable member, but there is a motion before

the committee at this time. The motion has to be dealt with before you go into the line of questioning. If the honourable member is speaking to the motion, that would be in order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, it is actually with regard to a salary for one of the members of the Executive Council. Would that be in order?

Mr. Chairperson: I hate to interrupt the honourable member, but that would not be relevant at this time. At this time we have before the committee a motion moved by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, and it has to be dealt with prior to moving on to any more questioning. Is the honourable member going to speak to the motion?

Mr. Lamoureux: We will continue after the vote.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question? The question before the committee is, it has been moved by the honourable member for Concordia, seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley, that Executive Council Estimates be reduced by \$92,580, the amount of the salary of the Chief of Staff.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion? All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it. The motion has been defeated.

Formal Vote

Mr. Doer: Yeas and Nays.

Mr. Chairperson: Yeas and Nays. A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Both sections in Chamber for formal vote.

Report

Mr. Chairperson: In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates for the Executive Council, a motion was moved by the honourable leader of the official opposition. The motion reads that the Executive Council Estimates be reduced by \$92,580, the amount of the salary of the Chief of Staff.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote and subsequently two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

The question before the committee is on the motion of the honourable leader of the official opposition.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 20, Nays 26.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of departmental Estimates.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, we just want to indicate due to the circumstances of weather, which is beyond our control, we had agreed to abstain from voting.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: This section of the committee will now continue with consideration of departmental Estimates.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Chair, just should the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues want to continue to play their petty games with respect to my Estimates, I want to just indicate to them that the amounts that are shown on the salaries of the various staff positions are without the reduction for the reduced workweek, and should the motion have passed, for instance, there would have been approximately some

\$3,500 that would have had to been removed from other salaries in order to make up for that resolution. So I would just ask the member opposite that he could apply a factor of 3.8 percent reduction to any of them if he really does want to remove the salary amount from anybody in the future.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Chairperson, that means that the Premier handed out false information in his material. If his staff cannot get it right, do not hand it out. I do not need any lectures from the member opposite. I recall the Premier moving a motion to delete all the money for Handi-Transit one year. I guess he was proud of that, in fact. I remember him moving a motion for the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), so if he does not like it, tough, we are perfectly prepared—

An Honourable Member: I know you are embarrassed for your stupidity.

Mr. Doer: No, no, we are not embarrassed.

An Honourable Member: We will take your apology.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Chairperson, I would ask—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask all honourable members to refrain from entering into debate. They will all have an opportunity to put their questions when the time arises.

* (1640)

Point of Order

Mr. Doer: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, my rights and privileges as a member of this Legislature have been violated by the fact that, first of all, the Premier handed out false information and had no information contained on the document that these numbers were wrong because we had to subtract 3.8 percent.

Now, this is the Premier that has chosen to hide the salaries of the Executive Council by no longer providing Order-in-Councils to provide full disclosure. So when the Premier comes to this House after

changing the practice of having full disclosure for salaries by hiding the Order-in-Councils, he should at least have the competence and integrity to hand out numbers that are accurate. If he cannot hand out numbers that are accurate about his senior staff salaries and if they are indeed 3.8 percent wrong, the Premier should have the integrity and the foresight to hand out and correct the record when he hands out the numbers, not some two and a half hours later.

Mr. Filmon: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: I am on a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: I would like you, Mr. Chairperson, to ask the Premier not to hand out any information that is false and hand out information that is accurate to members of this committee dealing with his Estimates. We are, after all, approving money in the Estimates. The money that we approve in the Estimates should be accurate. If the Premier wants to hand out salaries and subtract 3.9 percent, which we are capable of doing if he is not, then I suggest that he do those calculations before we get the document or correct it on top of the document. When it says, as at March 28, 1997, he could have put, and please subtract 3.9 percent. He could have done that, but he did not do it, and so do not give me your little lecture after. I would ask the Premier to apologize.

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

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I am interested to watch, on the same point of order, the Leader of the Opposition display his ignorance, particularly when he asks questions earlier on in this debate on Estimates and he was told specifically that on these salaries there would be a reduction of 3.8 percent. This is totally consistent. I said this with respect to his question on the salary of the Clerk of the Executive Council, the Director of the Cabinet Communications Secretariat and, indeed, the position that we were just debating moments ago, that is, the Chief of Staff.

I might say that these are specifically the salaries that are listed on the pay stubs that are issued to each and every one of these employees and, if he may want to

check on this, the pay stubs then show an applied deduction.

Having said this to the Leader of the Opposition, I assumed he was listening to the answers that I gave him and not choosing to be as ignorant as he is by not listening to the answers that he was given in this committee. He can stand up and feign indignation, Mr. Chairman, because of his embarrassment over this issue, but the facts are on the record, and he only has to go and listen to the facts and read the record to know that they have been given to him, and he should just get away from all this game playing and get on with the business of debating Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) did not have a point of order. It was a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Yes, continuing on the Estimates, and if the members of his staff did say it and I did not hear it I will, unlike the Premier—

Mr. Filmon: I said it. It is on the record. Read. Read Hansard.

Mr. Doer: Well, when is the Premier going to institute the practice of having Order-in-Councils fully disclosed to all members—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I had called the honourable member to order, because we were starting to get into debate between each other and stopping the questioning from coming through the Chair. So the honourable member's question was not put on the record. I would ask the honourable member to repute his question, but put it through the Chair rather than directly to the First Minister.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we know, the Premier changed the practice of having full disclosure of salaries and benefits for the senior staff of the Premier's Office and other senior staff of government. It used to be the practice in the public sector that all senior staff salaries, reclassification, and benefits were recorded on Orders-in-Council. So I guess I will have to go back and be very specific on all the staff.

Can the Premier indicate whether the clerk of cabinet, does he still receive the extra pension proposals that are not recorded on this sheet of paper? Is it still as reported in the past, the extra amount of money for pensions, as part of his private contract that is available to the public, and can the Premier please divulge the amount of contribution from the taxpayers and the amount of contributions from the employee?

Mr. Filmon: Again, the Leader of the Opposition is full of wind and rabbit tracks. He does not recall that we had this debate two years ago. Indeed, every Order-in-Council does have the job classification, the salary level on it, so that it does say all these numbers that are here. These are a matter of public record, and they are available on the Orders-in-Council appointing these people. He is wrong again, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Thank you then. The Premier will please tell us and the House the employer percentage contribution for the clerk of cabinet.

Mr. Filmon: It has not changed from two years ago when the same information was provided. It is approximately 11 percent.

Mr. Doer: So the highest paid civil servant working for the Premier gets an employer-paid pension plan of 11 percent from the taxpayers, is that correct?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, I guess the Premier wants to discuss all his staff's salaries and rant and rave about it. We will go through it. Does the Premier think it is fair and just for somebody as the highest paid civil servant in—well, he may well be. First of all, I will ask the question: Is the clerk of cabinet the highest paid civil servant in government?

Mr. Filmon: The Clerk of the Executive Council is at the top of the deputy minister range. There will be other deputies who are similarly at the top of that range. I think that is the answer to the question.

Mr. Doer: So the contributions for the Clerk of the Executive Council working for the Premier, the employer portion would be how much per year? At 11

percent, you have got the calculators there. It would be over 12 or 13,000 a year on the employer portion?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, 13,500 is the amount. In lieu of this, of course, the individual is not entitled to any ongoing pension. I would say from having looked at the salaries that are paid by other governments, including New Democratic governments in British Columbia, and a former New Democratic government in Ontario, that this, of course, is substantially less than what is being paid for people in similar positions by New Democratic governments elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate who is the Secretary to the Premier in the job descriptions, or the titles that are here? I am trying to read it quickly. I have just got it today. We did not get detailed Estimates, and I do not want to suffer the wrath of another Filmon lecture here, but can he please indicate who is the Secretary to the Premier?

Mr. Filmon: The second person on the list. Bonnie Barley is her name.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate what the pension contribution is, the employer contribution is, for the Secretary to the Premier?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, I do not have the number at my fingertips. It is the Civil Service Superannuation plan. It would be whatever is the normal contribution.

* (1650)

Mr. Doer: So the secretary making \$35,000 or so a year, now give or take the 3.9 percent that was provided—and I apologize if it was provided to me and I did not hear it; I am human. As I say, we do not get these Orders-in-Council like we used to.

Mr. Filmon: This is not an Order-in-Council appointment, the Secretary to the Premier.

Mr. Doer: I was talking about the 3.9.

Mr. Filmon: The ones that you have asked about, you do get the amount in the Order-in-Council.

Mr. Doer: That is why we saw it just ring right out there when the Orders-in-Council were signed for these excellent benefits in the pension plan. That is right. We really saw it.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We are starting to drift again.

Could we try to refrain from getting into debate without coming through the Chair? We tend to drift and I understand that, but it will be much better decorum if we keep the questions coming through here.

Mr. Doer: So the Secretary to the Premier making \$35,000 minus the 3.8 or 3.9 percent subject to what is happening in negotiations this year, subject to increments, et cetera, et cetera, does that individual get—what would be the employer contribution, less than 7 percent?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chair, on average I believe that is the figure.

Mr. Doer: Does the Chief of Protocol receive the civil service pension or receive the Super pension that some other members get in his office?

Mr. Filmon: The Chief of Protocol is a civil servant and is a member of the Civil Service Superannuation plan, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Does the Tour and Itinerary Co-ordinator get the 11 percent employer-paid pension plan or the one that most of the rest of the public employees get?

Mr. Filmon: My understanding is that the individual who is the Tour and Itinerary Co-ordinator has opted out, has chosen not to be a member of the Civil Service Superannuation Fund and gets a payment of approximately 7 percent in lieu of that.

Mr. Doer: The secretary to cabinet—well, we can do the deal with the secretary to cabinet under the later intergovernmental affairs. The special assistant, can the Premier indicate whether that individual gets the 7 percent or less public service plan? Have they opted out, or do they get the 11 percent?

Mr. Filmon: The special assistant, Lizanne Lachance-Mann, has also opted out and is getting the 7 percent payment in lieu.

Mr. Doer: The press secretary to cabinet, has the individual opted out? If they have opted out, do they get the 7 percent pension that everybody, most public employees get, or do they get more than that?

Mr. Filmon: Both people who are listed as press secretary to cabinet, Michelle Bailey-Picard and Roger Matas, have opted out and get the payment in lieu.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate whether it is 7 percent or below, or is it the 11 percent employer-paid portion?

Mr. Filmon: It is equivalent to the normal Civil Service Superannuation levy, which is approximately 7 percent.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier please indicate whether the Chief of Staff, notwithstanding, does that individual receive \$92,000 minus 3.9 percent plus what percentage of employer-paid pension plan?

Mr. Filmon: I am informed it is the Civil Service Superannuation Fund equivalent, which is approximately 7 percent.

Mr. Doer: The director of communications, I do not know whether I heard it right or not; if he had already stated it, that is fine. I heard Matas and Bailey. If there is the director of communications, can the Premier please indicate the employer-percentage portion of pension, please?

Mr. Filmon: The individual has also opted out and gets the equivalent 7 percent Civil Service Superannuation levy.

Mr. Doer: So am I to assume then the only individual salary in the Premier's line—the Premier gets a 7 percent employer-paid pension under the revised rules. It appears that the majority of his staff, if not all of his staff, do as well. Is it only the Clerk of the Executive Council that receives the 11 percent employer-paid pension plan payment?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, in terms of my Executive Council staff, he is the only one.

Mr. Doer: We are dealing with the salaries and the fairness, not any individual, and I want to make that clear.

An Honourable Member: Are you looking at me, Gary?

Mr. Doer: No, no, the person beside you on your left.

I have a question. The Premier hires and fires the Secretary to Treasury Board. Does the Secretary to Treasury Board still enjoy the 11 percent pension plan as well?

Mr. Filmon: I do not have that information here, because he is not a member of my Executive Council staff. The Leader of the Opposition will have to ask that question under the Estimates of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being five o'clock, it is time for private members' hour. I am therefore interrupting the proceedings but will resume this matter at 8 p.m. this evening.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business. Proposed Resolution, Resolution 2.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—Spousal Travel Policy

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that

WHEREAS the current provincial government has adopted the practice of bringing spouses on national and international trips at public expense on some inappropriate occasions; and

WHEREAS when asked directly about his own spouse's expenses to travel with him to South America in 1996, the Deputy Premier said that she had been asked to attend on behalf of the Pan Am Games; and

WHEREAS it was later found that the minister's office had approached the Pan Am Games Society; and

WHEREAS at the same time, the then Minister of Northern Affairs indicated that it was his understanding that spouses' commercial tickets should never be paid for by government; and

WHEREAS in the 1980s the policy on spousal travel required that specific and formal approval be obtained from the Premier or his designate, but that policy has been loosened under the current provincial government so that now cabinet ministers may, but are not obliged to, get the advice and consent of the Clerk of the Executive Council for spousal travel; and

WHEREAS since there is clearly confusion on the part of some members of the provincial cabinet over what are and what are not acceptable spousal travel limits; and

WHEREAS there must be greater accountability on the matter of spousal travel.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider amending the General Manual of Administration to make it clear that publicly paid spousal travel is not normally approved, and that all approval for publicly paid spousal travel must be accompanied in writing by the Premier; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to implement legislation to require that all publicly paid spousal travel be declared on the Conflict of Interest form filed by all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, integrity and forthright accountability on the part of government at the highest levels is a value that is extremely important in any democracy and not any less so in this one. We have all

been at many doorsteps in the past number of years and heard from those doorsteps the general level of low esteem in which elected officials are held. When elected officials are in a position to make decisions that benefit themselves or their spouses—and in the process of doing so are not forthright with the public about the reasons for those decisions and then invent excuses and other pseudo explanations for their behaviour—it simply brings the elected office in which we all have a role into even lower esteem and repute on the part of the general public.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, during the last summer of 1996, the summer period, there was a very serious example of a cabinet minister travelling with his spouse and then attempting to mislead the public about the nature and purpose of that travel and the auspices for that travel. I am sorry that we have to bring forward this resolution. In fact, publicly paid travel for spouses of cabinet is a metaphor for the spending priorities of this government which has a history of rewarding friends, associates, and allies. Remembering people like Barb Biggar and Mike Bessey, civil servants who have done very well by doing good I guess is the old song, while programs that Manitobans need are cut and curtailed. Things like food allowances for children are cut by \$65 a month. Why would that matter? So long as we could travel with our friends and keep the company in which we have become accustomed.

So we question a policy which justifies and legitimizes spousal travel for events, like for example, the Taiwanese Trade Association Conference in New Brunswick, while forcing social assistance recipients with children under six to go out and find work, and if they cannot find work, to face a cut to their social allowance.

Spousal travel expenditures are a significant concern because in the process of trying to defend the indefensible, the Premier as well as other members of his cabinet, denied that there had been major changes in the written policy. They said no, there has never been any changes. Madam Speaker, 1980, January 1, a policy came into place which said Part 3(b)(13) Travel. Advance Treasury Board approval is required for a civil servant to travel with his or her family on government business or on business at government expense. 3. Advance approval from the Premier or his

designate is required for an MLA or minister to travel with his or her family on business at government expense.

Very clear, the policy is four points. It is extremely unambiguous. Very easy to understand. Now what was the nonchange that took place, Madam Speaker? Well, the nonchange that took place in October of 1993, PA 1127 was to replace that very simple and clear policy with three pages of various kinds of provisions, none of which even mention spousal travel on the part of ministers—not even mention. All it says is that out-of-province travel should be authorized only when it is of a high priority, relative to the function of government, the mandate, the department and the goals of—and I love these words—corporate government. Corporate government. We might as well say government of and by the corporations.

So this nonchange is one of the strangest nonchanges that I have ever seen, in my years as a civil servant or as a public administration official, where four points are replaced by a page or two and where words that are in one section disappear in the new section. That, somehow, is not, according to our Premier, a change. I think it is very clear that there was a change. The change was, specifically, to enable ministers to approve the travel of their own spouses with them at public expense when they thought that this was a good thing related to government priorities.

Now it is a very interesting ability that has been defended here. First of all, we are supposed to accept that it is a good thing to travel with your spouse, but only, apparently, if she is a woman, because we did not hear any defence, any kind of requirement, for having men around at ministerial functions where the minister is a woman. The defence was always in terms of the appropriateness of having women around when the minister was a man, and so there were spousal programs.

An Honourable Member: What is your point?

Mr. Sale: Well, the member for River Heights says what is my point. That is the member for River Heights' problem. He could not see a point if it was right in front of his nose. The member is a constituent

of mine, Madam Speaker, but I despair, I despair sometimes.

An Honourable Member: He voted for you.

* (1710)

Mr. Sale: Well, he may have voted for me in a momentary lapse, who knows.

So what were we told about this travel? We were told, first of all, that the Pan Am Games Society had just heard that Mrs. Downey was going to South America and said: Hey, I think she would make a great rep; I think we should phone up the minister and recruit her to represent us. Well, that is what we were told. That is what the public was told when he came down the airport ramp, right? But a little while later the Pan Am Games said no, no. No, no, that is not what happened. What happened was the minister's office called us three weeks before he left and said: Can we negotiate a role for my wife because I would like to take her with me?

An Honourable Member: What is the point?

Mr. Sale: What is the point? The point very simply is you do not lie to people when you are coming down the airport ramp and tell them someone invited your wife to come when they did not, and if you do not understand that point, you have a serious problem.

Now the minister is a man from rural Manitoba, and he knows how to dig. So, once he got himself in trouble in terms of who invited his wife to go there, he tried then to defend the notion that she had achieved some remarkable good, in which case he tried to then tell this House that her presence had resulted in securing travel of some 15 Argentinian travel representatives who were coming here, by golly, to put Manitoba on the map. Well, we phoned up that travel association and said: We hear you are coming to Manitoba, that is great; we are glad to know that; when are you coming? They said: Oh, well, it is kind of in the early planning stages, I think was the phrase. We are going to have a meeting and we always consider a trip somewhere in the world each year as a kind of highlight of our year's planning for our women travel operators, and we have put Winnipeg on the list of places that we are considering.

So this sure thing, 15 women coming here to put Manitoba on the map, turns into an agenda for a meeting at which Winnipeg was one place among a number of others, and we hope they do come. I do not know whether they are going to or not. I do not know whether the minister knows. But if they come, I hope they will, and I hope we will all have a chance to welcome them. But the minister, instead of simply saying the truth, which was: We met some women travel operators and they are thinking about coming here, said: We have secured their coming here for sure, and this has justified the first story, which was that the Pan Am Games had invited her to go in the first place. That was not true either.

So why do we need this policy? Madam Speaker, we need this policy because all political people are in a position to do themselves benefits if they have the power in their office as ministers to make decisions about spousal travel. That ought not to be the case, not just for you, not just because you misused that particular power, but it ought to be the case for all of us because there is a requirement for accountability that we ought not to be able to advantage ourselves behind closed doors with no one else knowing what is going on. That is the point of this motion. It is to be able to ensure that, basically, not only will the minister plan in advance with a real reason for taking his spouse or her spouse along, that there will be a real job for that person, and that the Premier has agreed that this is a reasonable thing to do, so there is public accountability.

The second part of the motion, which is just as important, is that okay, fair enough, there may be occasions in which spousal travel is justified. We have never argued that. That has never been the point. The point is that it ought to be transparent so that when you or I file our conflict of interest forms, we ought to declare if we have had the advantage of a family member going with us to some event or other at which public funds have been expended, not because there is anything necessarily inappropriate but because transparency and openness is what the public expects and what the public has a right to expect.

Now, in terms of the question of defence, the Premier in particular I thought was very, very sexist, very, very sexist in his defence of this particular practice as used by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr.

Downey). He made the point on CBC that there were some functions for which attendance by spouses was a strategic benefit. That may be the case. The Premier said that spouses can help smooth the way for constructive personal connections. The quote which I found disturbing: At the end of the day, he said, to get a couple of extra people there so that when you are entertaining, you are not just men in suits that are trying to entertain these people who bring their own spouses along to all of these events. I mean it only makes common sense.

Well, it may make common sense to the Premier, but I am sure that we might reasonably ask, does Don Mitchelson accompany the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to conferences and provide the function of the spouse who attends the spousal program? Did Mitch Vodrey take a few days from his practice to accompany the then Minister of Justice on her ministerial conferences at government expense so that he could help with the spousal programs and smooth the way when we are negotiating around drinks at night?

It seems to me there are a lot of problems with a premier who defends the notion that we need women around at night for decorative purposes but somehow men are not mentioned. I think the Premier should consider his defence. It is a double standard that I am sure he is not comfortable with on reflection.

Madam Speaker, I hope that all members will support this resolution, even though I know they scoff at it. If they stopped and thought about it, they would support it in a minute because what does it do? It allows them to justify clearly when they wish to take their spouse with them for good purpose, and they can defend it because the Premier has agreed to it. They are so confident of the rightness of taking their spouse along that they file this in their conflict of information statement so that they disclose for everyone to understand that this was something they did because the purpose was defensible.

So why would this resolution not find support, unanimous support in fact, from all members of the House because it puts on the record decisions which ministers feel are defensible and which the Premier of the day, whether it is an NDP Premier or Conservative

Premier, can sign his or her name and say this is a defensible kind of travel, and we are going to reveal it for all the public to see if they wish to check the conflict of interest form, and feel confident that, indeed, the public will understand that this was a good thing to do and it was done in Manitobans' interests instead of, first of all, suggesting that the purpose of the travel was something other than it really was, suggesting that the invitation for the travel came from some group other than it really came for, and suggesting that the results of the travel were something that in fact has not happened or been confirmed as yet, though I am still hopeful that we may be able to welcome those travel representatives at some point to our good province.

So instead of that terrible web that got woven over those five or six days of Question Period, we would have a simple declaration. The Premier says it is a good thing to do. The member declares it on the conflict of interest forms. It is all in the open, end of story, no press, no problems, Madam Speaker. So I urge all members to support this resolution towards transparency and accountability.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, unlike the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) who claimed he was not pleased to be speaking about this resolution today, all the while smiling like a Cheshire cat, I, on the other hand, am very pleased to rise in my place today to address the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Crescentwood. The reason for my pleasure is not so much for what this resolution says but for what it reveals about the honourable member for Crescentwood and some of his colleagues opposite who have a consistent problem. That problem is they are unable to address real issues in this place, because the real issues of importance to the people of Manitoba are not the issues addressed in the resolution by the honourable member but are those issues addressed in the budget brought forward by our colleague the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

* (1720)

Madam Speaker, as the honourable member proved himself to be nothing more than a railer in this place, one who can do nothing but rail away at issues that have already been dealt with in this House in a very

public way, the honourable member, I guess, because he felt this might be a matter of interest to somebody at some point—that he ought to have it on the Order Paper. The matter has been canvassed rather thoroughly and very publicly already in this place and in a very public forum, but the honourable member raises these types of issues simply because he has nothing else to do.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the budget, which is the statement of what the government is all about, there cannot be anything more fundamental to explain what this government is all about than the budget that we produce on an annual basis. The honourable member does not want to talk about that. There are reasons for that. One of them is that there is overwhelming support amongst the people of Manitoba for the types of measures that are being brought forward by this government. The honourable member for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McCrae: For example, Madam Speaker, I think this is the 10th budget brought forward by this particular administration. This budget, like all the others, does not raise major taxes. In fact we have the most—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood, on a point of order.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I believe that Beauchesne makes it plain that debate should at least touch occasionally on the point at hand, but so far the member opposite has been talking about the budget. In case he missed it, it was passed to committee about eight days ago.

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and what the honourable member has just raised by way of a point of order is an issue about spending priorities and saying that I should not be talking about them because of its matter of relevance. In his own speech, which no one complained about in terms of relevancy, including

yourself, he made reference to spending priorities. That is exactly what I am doing, remaining on the point raised by the honourable member as he discussed the resolution before us.

I want to talk about spending priorities, because the honourable member raised them in his contribution today, and that is my contribution to the point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood, in my opinion it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

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Mr. McCrae: There are other rules too, which I am not raising by way of any point of order here, but you are not really supposed to be debating more than once in a Legislature, or in a session of Legislature, matters already debated at length and decided upon. If any issue falls into that category, the one addressed in the resolution today is one of those because it certainly is very clear what happened. The honourable member has a tendency to beat on a horse that has already passed away. There is an old expression: If your horse is dead, get off it. The honourable member might well remember that very wise expression.

This is the honourable member, by the way, who proclaims publicly, Madam Speaker, that the people in this province have not had it up to here with taxes. They would like to see more taxes according to the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and he is quite unabashed about it. If he were on this side of the House, that is exactly what the people would get, is more taxes. He supported the Pawley-Doer administration which raised taxes like no other administration in the history of this province, and he has the nerve and the gall to stand in his place here today and talk about the spending priorities of this government.

We on this side recognize very well, Madam Speaker, that taxpayers' dollars ought to be spent appropriately. For example, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) in his travels on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, with or without Mrs. Downey, achieved the indications of interest by, for example, Taiwanese business leaders

who have been persuaded to meet here in the city of Winnipeg in June as a result of travels by the Deputy Premier and—

An Honourable Member: Why is she not a minister then?

Mr. McCrae: Well, now the honourable member wants to have another go at his speech. I guess he feels he did not do well enough in his first 15 or 20 minutes. Well, Madam Speaker, I suggest he did fine. He did a good job, but he was way off the point where the people of Manitoba are.

The people of Manitoba are very interested in job creation, for example, and how do you create jobs? By taking that monkey called the payroll tax off the backs of the business people of this province, because those are direct taxes against jobs in this province. They are direct disincentives compliments of the Pawley-Doer New Democrats. Today they will not support the budget because we have cut the payroll tax, because we are against taxing jobs, and they will not support that. They are for taxing away the jobs of our people in this province. To hide behind a resolution like the one they have before us today is simply to provide a smoke screen for the position of New Democrats which is tax, tax, tax, and let the people be damned. Madam Speaker, that shows less respect, that shows less integrity, that shows less leadership than anything complained about by the honourable member in Resolution 2 that is before us today.

Spending priorities: Madam Speaker, let us talk about how many trips were involved to lose \$27 million on the sands of the desert in the Far East through MTX. How many travel dollars must have been spent in those days in order to bring about that kind of a mess compliments of the member for Crescentwood and his friends on the side of the New Democratic Party? How many more bridges to nowhere? How many spouses went on those MTX trips abroad to help make sure we lost \$27 million? I do not want to know exactly because I have had enough dreams sometimes, thinking about some of the policies of New Democratic members opposite. How many more bridges to nowhere would they have built had they been given a chance at a cost of millions and millions and millions of dollars? But, no, they would rather hide behind

Resolution 2 today, so that we would not have to discuss things like that.

Where are the spending priorities of honourable members opposite when they choose through their policies to send to the bankers and the creditors of the people of this province \$500 million, \$600 million every year, the same honourable members who talk about their priorities being health and education and family services? They would rather send money to the bankers in Switzerland and Tokyo and New York and all over the place than to look after the little kids in our province who need the kinds of things that they rail about today.

What about all the flower counters that honourable members opposite put to work, so called, under the Jobs Fund and the money that they spent just telling the people of Manitoba about the wonders of the Jobs Fund and how it created jobs that lasted, how long? Maybe six weeks. Then at the end of that six weeks, there was no more government money left and no more jobs and what? Despair. Despair is what the NDP left behind. When I look across the Chamber opposite, Madam Speaker, what I see is unhappy, very sad people, and the reason is they think every problem they ever have is somebody else's fault.

That is what is wrong with the ideology of the New Democrats. There is no sense of responsibility for what goes on in this world amongst honourable members opposite; blame somebody else because everything is going to be okay with us. Well, it is not when we have to send \$500 million to the creditors. I know, Madam Speaker. I was Minister of Health, and I know how much, how nice it would be and how easy it would be to administer a health system if we had \$500 million extra in our hands that we did not send away to bankers compliments of the New Democratic Party.

They talked about integrity and setting priorities. Now, what kind of integrity is it that allows a government to apply political interference in the setting of the rates for us to insure our cars? Now, what kind of a thing is that? What kind of integrity is part of a government that uses political interference to set the rates for our insurance for our vehicles in our province? Well, we fixed that so that governments cannot do that anymore. I think that was the right thing to do, and I

support it wholeheartedly. But no, we look at Resolution No. 2. This is the priority of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). It is the first one, I think, that he has got on the Order Paper, this No. 2. That is the kind of priority.

* (1730)

Honourable members could easily have offered to put this one to the bottom of the list and discuss things like jobs, things like the capital tax exemption, things like no increases to the sales tax, things like having three surplus budgets in a row, things like taking a \$75-million crack at the debt that honourable members opposite delivered to the people of Manitoba. I wish I had a copy of the budget with me. They could have addressed the statistics in the back of the book that show how Brandon, Manitoba, for example, and Winnipeg figure very well when it comes to being competitive to attracting business investment to our province.

We could even spend some time talking about the photograph on the front of the budget, the picture of the city of Brandon. It is a picture that includes reference to the Canada Games coming up in Brandon later this year. These are the things that are important to people of Manitoba, and honourable members opposite tend to like to smoke-screen and hide behind other issues because they simply do not have good issues to bring to the people of Manitoba because the people of Manitoba are well governed, Madam Speaker, in this particular decade and will be for decades to come with the present administration.

The honourable member did not like talking, in his comments, about the growth that this minister, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) of Manitoba, in concert with other ministers, has made to happen in this province. It is exceedingly good news. Well, the honourable member for Crescentwood is a stranger to good news. It is an aversion to him. It gives him a rash. He gets lumps all over his body every time he thinks about the kind of good news that emanates from the policies of our government.

He did not talk about expenditures in Health, in Education and Training, and in Family Services. Why? Because what is going on today in Manitoba is far

superior to anything the honourable member ever helped bring about during the NDP years. Those were sorry, sorry years, best put behind us, best forgotten, but the trouble with forgetting history is that we might by accident somehow repeat it.

I guess it is my job to remind Manitobans of the sorry, sorry history of this province under the administration of the New Democratic Party and, Madam Speaker, no one is going to go on record as saying that inappropriate expenditure of tax dollars is the way to go, of course not. The honourable member simply is out of touch with the people of this province. He hides behind resolutions like this because he cannot talk about issues like taxes, about issues like growth and jobs and all of those issues that are so important to Manitobans. He simply cannot do it because he has nothing to offer to the people of Manitoba.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I too would like to tell my colleagues today that I am very pleased to rise in opposition of this motion that has been brought by the member opposite, the erstwhile honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

I heard the honourable member across feign grief and sadness to have to bring this motion to this Chamber today, but Madam Speaker, with the greatest of respect to the honourable individual across, I would suggest that there was malice, that if I were to impugn any intent—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister is impugning motives, and I think he should withdraw the comments unconditionally.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) to pick and choose his words carefully. All members in this Chamber are to be referred to as honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, if in fact the erstwhile honourable member across has been offended by my alleging that he might have brought some nonsalubrious intentions to this House, then I would be most quick to withdraw such comments. But I would like to echo the comments of my honourable colleague who spoke before me here when he mentioned that we were dealing with rant and with railing, with railing. These are railers, and Scripture enjoins that one must not rail. I am sure that a man of the cloth, of whom the erstwhile honourable member opposite indicates that he is, that he would descend to this form of verbal abuse.

Madam Speaker, I think that what we should do is try to analyze what the motion or the resolution is that the member opposite has brought and see how spurious this attempt at any sort of intellectual acuity is that he is presenting for the consideration of our members here today.

Madam Speaker, the title to this resolution is Spousal Travel Policy. Well, if the member opposite was going to be up to date, and I am surprised that the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) has not been on her feet before this, objecting to this sort of comment in the House today, as the honourable member for Osborne indicates that she is the critic for women's affairs or feminine issues—

An Honourable Member: Status of Women.

Mr. Radcliffe: And Status of Women. That is correct. Now today I would suggest, Madam Speaker, from my observations, and I am sure that the honourable member across has been perceptive enough, but maybe again I am taking liberties with his visual acuity or his perceptions, that he could not conclude that there are many, there are a plethora of domestic arrangements that we find in our community and society today, and that he is trying to restrict his resolution to spousal relationships. So is this indicating that he is restricting his views to one type of relationship only, and that it is something that is only relating interspousal? I do not know if we are being invited to ignore certain parts of our community and not make laws of broad-reaching effects.

Madam Speaker, I would bring this with some temerity to the member's attention that I think once

again honourable members across have missed the boat. They have missed the boat. They are wrong again.

An Honourable Member: They have not only missed the boat; they have missed the ocean.

Mr. Radcliffe: There you go. Madam Speaker, this resolution which so fecklessly has been brought before this Chamber today indicates that if the Premier agrees with something, or if it goes on some sort of list, it must therefore, ergo propter hoc, be correct. Ergo propter hoc.

Madam Speaker, with the greatest of respect, and I do not know whether my honourable colleague across can grasp this, but in fact maybe it might be more appropriate to discern whether the individual travelling with the minister at government expense was going to be providing good service to the people of Manitoba? Might not that be something more relevant?

My honourable colleague before us, before me, commented on relevance. What is the honourable colleague across the way really trying to address? Unfortunately, I would suggest that the honourable colleagues across really have trouble discerning and appreciating people who are successful.

Our honourable minister involved here went to South America as an ambassador to our fair province, introduced our industry, our population, our geographic advantages to the peoples of South America and made such a sufficiently attractive impression that we now have reciprocating relationships that will become evident this next summer. But do we hear anything about that? Do we hear anything about success? Does the honourable member across get up and say, minister, well done. We the people of Manitoba, we the honourable opposition—

* (1740)

An Honourable Member: It is not only minister, well done; Linda, well done.

Mr. Radcliffe: Indeed, that they are to be congratulated for travelling endless miles, working endless hours for the benefit of the people of Manitoba. I do not hear one scintilla of acclamation coming from

the benches opposite. No, Madam Speaker, to the contrary. They want to pick, they want to denigrate—[interjection] Denigrate, I am sorry. I do hear somebody opposite correcting me on my pronunciation, and perhaps that is all that they can comment on.

I would suggest that they would be much better served and the people of Manitoba would be much better served if they started addressing what are the concepts on which a spouse should be travelling, not whether the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism approves it, or the honourable Minister of Housing approves something, but is the concept well founded. Are the people going to be well served? Is our money going to be frugally spent? Are we going to get value for these dollars? In fact, not a syllable of this resolution addresses that fact. That is indeed—

An Honourable Member: Not a scintilla.

Mr. Radcliffe: A scintilla, that is right.

The honourable member opposite is again talking about greater accountability on the matter of spousal travel. Just because you put something on a list does not make it accountable. You have to have the initial perception; you have to have the innate ability that this is going to serve our citizenry, our industry well. In fact, the speaker before me has commented that we really ought to be addressing the real issues and not being salacious, not levelling calumny at individuals who are trying to serve our province well, who spend endless hours without recompense, without acknowledgment, and then in this forum this is the recognition that erstwhile honourable members across try to devote to this sort of service to our province?

An Honourable Member: Do not forget spuriousity.

Mr. Radcliffe: Spuriousity. No, I think I shall refrain from making such a comment.

Now I heard some maunderings from some of the individuals opposite while the honourable House leader was commenting earlier. One of them was what do we do about young children in this province. Madam Speaker, I do not hear a single member across the way commenting either to the media or to their own

publicity people, or even in this Chamber, that when we have people on public assistance in Manitoba, as regrettable as that may be—and some people do have to look to the public for support, and we recognize that, and the Filmon government is there to support them. I want to tell you, Madam Speaker, and I want to share this with my colleagues opposite because I believe it bears repetition because they obviously have great difficulty grasping this particular fact. The fact is that in the category, the age group of zero to 6, infants are best supported in Manitoba in comparison to any other jurisdiction in this country.

Now do I hear cheering opposite? Not a bit. There is stony silence. There is derisive scowling across the way, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): On a point of order, I would like to ask the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), as long as he is on the topic of support for people on social assistance, if he would explain the comment in his latest letter to his constituents and why he did not talk about the support of infants zero to six and instead talked about support to people from 12 to 17.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), who has two and a half minutes remaining.

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, Madam Speaker, I would like to now wrap up just by submitting a few of these humble comments that I am proud to stand up—

An Honourable Member: Humble, and then he said, “I am proud.”

Mr. Radcliffe: You liked that.

An Honourable Member: You could be proud and humble.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, that is right. I am inalterably opposed to this motion going forward, and Madam Speaker, if I viewed the world through the lenses which our honourable colleagues opposite obviously view them, and all the world events, as evidenced by their attitudes, by their words in this Chamber, by the documentation that they present here, I could not raise my head. I would be so depressed because of the ceaseless, senseless criticism, day after day after day, having no thought at all to any sort or sense of factual reporting to this House.

So, Madam Speaker, I would say with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleague who does happen to be my representative in this Chamber, and so I have the opportunity to sit and observe his performance day after day after day.

An Honourable Member: Does he send you mailers?

Mr. Radcliffe: He does send me mailers, yes.

An Honourable Member: I get mailers too.

Mr. Radcliffe: He does not draw the line at that. He is indiscriminate in his communication.

An Honourable Member: I strictly am, in your case.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I find not a scintilla of merit in this resolution and I can only urge my honourable colleagues in this Chamber to out of hand dispense with this and do not show it the modicum of respect that this shows or displays to the individuals involved, to the concepts that are at stake, nor to the people in this Chamber, nor basically to the people of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity of being able to put a few of these comments on the record.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to add just a few words to the resolution. Generally speaking, in reading it, I would rather not necessarily comment on the WHEREASes, but the principle of publicly funded—when public finances go into the travelling for one's spouses, I, for one, do not see too much of a problem in terms of having some

record in essence that clearly demonstrates that this is in fact occurring, whether it is a letter from the Premier—[interjection] Well, I think that might be going a little bit over potentially. But there is no doubt that there is a need for something with respect to it.

I know personally, for one, any and every opportunity I have in which I can go to an event with my spouse, a person in which, Madam Speaker, I take great privilege in being with and care dearly for her, I think it is wonderful if in fact we take our spouses out to the many different events that are out there. Where on occasion, I would imagine in particular with government, there might be a need for some public assistance in terms of finances, as long as it is clearly made known that this is in fact occurring, I would not, for one, because I realize the importance of having your spouse with you, or common law or whatever the proper terminology might be for a particular incident, partner, that that in fact be allowed.

So the principle of the resolution's THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED is something in which I would speak in support of but not necessarily that it has to be a letter from, for example, the Premier. But there is a need for something. Thank you.

* (1750)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am rising today to speak against the resolution which has been put forward by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and I speak against it for a number of reasons.

I am also the Minister responsible for the Status of Women in this province, and I do have some concerns about some of the comments raised by the member opposite and what they mean to particularly women in Manitoba. However, I am aware of the fact that the resolution speaks about spouses. I am not sure if he intended that to mean also partners. There has been some real difficulty in this Chamber understanding the intention behind the member's resolution but, as a member in this Chamber, I would rise to speak on behalf of families, because I think that is really the important issue here in terms of whether any one of us in this Chamber, a male member, a female member travels with a spouse or partner, and that is the intention of families to remain together.

I listened with interest as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) spoke for this resolution, and it is my understanding that the Prime Minister, the head of the federal Liberal Party, in fact does support spouses travelling so that when ministers are doing business on behalf of the country, in this case on behalf of the province, that families in fact can be together.

The member across the way, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), has not experienced very much time being elected, no time in government and, therefore, I can only assume that the draw on his time in terms of his own family is perhaps not very great. Perhaps there does not seem to be an issue of consideration for him, that families in fact should remain together. But, Madam Speaker, I certainly stand today in support of families, the time that they would spend together.

Then I would say to the member that, as family members travel together, there are often official duties in which families being represented speak very well for our province. They speak very well for the values of this government, and very well for the values of the individuals on this side of the House. It seems to be giving rise to a lot of laughing and comments from the other side. I speak most sincerely, Madam Speaker, on behalf of this side of the House.

There are official duties which often family members will participate together. There is assistance, information and support in a very important way for members. There are often spousal programs. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) spoke about this in a way that tended to denigrate a spousal program that in fact really could not have been of much importance or perhaps would only have been of value to a spouse who was a woman. I would tend to disagree with him. I would say that each one of our spouses in this Chamber brings something to a program. Whether that spouse is a children's dentist such as my husband or a homemaker and a mother, I think that there is something that they all can add to spousal programs, to the contacts, and to the way that we represent Manitoba, in fact, around the world. So I think that it is often very important.

Madam Speaker, I hear members across the way refer to the business that we do abroad as jaunts. I believe

the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) now just used that word, characterized the work that government does abroad as a jaunt. Well, it is clear that she has never had the opportunity or ever been required, probably never will be required to represent her province in another part of this country or perhaps in other places around the world.

These trips are not holidays. I think that is well known by members, certainly, on this side. They are in fact their work. They require a great deal of planning. They require a great deal of information, and they require work on behalf of the people of Manitoba. So trips abroad are not holidays and members on the other side, who admittedly are recently elected and have no experience on the government side, may think of them as jaunts, but they would be very wrong, and those people who work very hard to put the trips together and also the benefits that come back to Manitoba as a result of these working trips show in fact that they are clearly not jaunts.

Also I can tell you that ministers who have to make this decision do in fact have responsibility, which is discussed in this House, for in all cases millions of dollars, in some cases hundreds of millions of dollars, in which their decisions have to be made on a regular basis. To determine then if a trip on behalf of our government would be appropriate to have a spouse attend along with them, I believe that they are in fact able to make that decision.

Colleagues before me have spoken about the term "appropriateness" being the measure, not whether or not there is a note from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or a note from members opposite which would provide approval, but rather the note is not the significant thing. What is significant is the appropriateness of the work that is to be done and whether or not that work may legitimately involve a spouse and also legitimately involve families, that being of value of our province being represented on the work of government and representing that to places around the world. As the member knows, there are many countries that we do business with—I believe he knows this—in which families are a very important part of the way they assess whether or not business should be done. Whether this is the kind of place that they wish to do business and to have a family representation is often seen in a very

positive way, and may also influence whether or not—be one of the influencing features of whether or not that business would be done. I believe the member's experience should have shown him that, perhaps not everyone on his side, but I think that his experience should in fact show him that.

So, Madam Speaker, I know that there are a couple of other people who would like to speak, so with that I will say that I do not support this resolution, and one of my main reasons is I believe the member has spoken against families with such a resolution. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I too rise in speaking in opposition to this resolution. I would like to just expand on the comments that the Minister for Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Vodrey) was talking on, the whole area of family, of being able to be together with spouse or with your partner in travelling. I believe it is important that we, on a continuing basis, do that.

I would like to speak from my own experience, Madam Speaker, of having been involved in business, of having had the opportunity to take my spouse with me, and I believe, as we meet with other jurisdictions, with other people, that they respect that, that they want to see that, and I am amazed and appalled at the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) that he would come up with a resolution of this nature which would oppose the whole area of family, would oppose the opportunities for families to go together, to travel and in fact be able to represent whether it is a business or whether it is the province in this case in this way. I believe it is important that as we meet with other leaders that we represent our province, that we represent Manitoba in a way that is appropriate.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the policy which the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has been referring to, in fact, remains as has been since the 1970s, in which the ministers, the cabinet ministers and their spouses—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) will have 13 minutes remaining. I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 7, 1997

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

		Louisiana-Pacific Wowchuk; McCrae	986
Reading and Receiving Petitions			
Gang Action Plan Mackintosh	979	Computer Services Maloway; Pitura	986
Tabling of Reports		Grow Bonds Program Sale; Stefanson	987
1997-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, Ministry of Health; '97-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Praznik	979	Home Care Program Chomiak; Praznik	988
Supplementary Departmental Estimates '97-98 for Manitoba Seniors Directorate; '97-98 Departmental Expenditures for Manitoba Housing Reimer	979	Nonpolitical Statements	
		Winnipeg Sharks Mitchelson	989
		Kelvin Clippers Junior Boys Varsity Basketball Sale	990
Northern Affairs Estimates Newman	979	Variety Club Telethon Radcliffe	990
Oral Questions		Volunteerism—Snowstorm McCrae	990
Youth Gangs Doer; Toews	980		
Mackintosh; Toews	981		
Manitoba Community Services Council Mihychuk; Stefanson	981		
Community Centres Mihychuk; Stefanson	982		
Poverty Rate Martindale; Mitchelson	982		
Snow Removal Lamoureux; Stefanson	984		
Licensed Practical Nurses Chomiak; Praznik	985		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)	
		Urban Affairs	991
		Reimer	991
		Barrett	995
		Mihychuk	1003
		McGifford	1005
		Executive Council	
		Filmon	1005
		Doer	1007
		Lamoureux	1010

Private Members' Business

Proposed Resolutions

Res 2, Spousal Travel Policy

Sale	1022
McCrae	1026
Radcliffe	1029
Vodrey	1032
Dyck	1033