



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
on  
**Law Amendments**

*Chairperson*  
*Mr. Jack Penner*  
*Constituency of Emerson*



**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
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DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
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KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**  
**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AMENDMENTS**

**Wednesday, May 19, 1999**

**TIME – 10 a.m.**

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**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Jack Penner  
(Emerson)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Peter Dyck  
(Pembina)**

**ATTENDANCE - 11 – QUORUM - 6**

*Members of the Committee present:*

Hon. Mr. Stefanson

Messrs. Ashton, Dyck, Helwer,  
Laurendeau, McAlpine, Penner, Reid,  
Sale

*Substitutions:*

Mr. Doer for Ms. Barrett  
Mr. Fauschou for Mr. Sveinson

**APPEARING:**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux, MLA for Inkster  
Mr. Gary Kowalski, MLA for The Maples  
Hon. Mr. Darren Praznik, Minister of  
Highways and Transportation

**WITNESSES:**

Mr. Don Fotti, President, Emergency  
Response Services Employees  
Association of Winnipeg  
Messrs. Wes Shoemaker and David  
Shepherdson, City of Winnipeg  
Ms. Janice Johnson, Private Citizen

**MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:**

Bill 27—The Essential Services Amend-  
ment Act

**Mr. Chairperson (Jack Penner):** Good morning. Will the Standing Committee on Law Amendments please come to order. This morning the committee will be considering Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act, and before proceeding with the bill the committee must elect a vice-chairman. Are there any nominations for vice-chairman?

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** I would like to nominate Mr. Dyck, the member for Pembina.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Dyck has been nominated. Any other nominations? Agreed. Thank you. Mr. Dyck will be the vice-chairman.

To date, a number of persons have registered—

**Committee Substitutions**

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Mr. Chairperson, I move, with leave of the committee, that the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) replace the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) as a member of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments effective May 19, 1999.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is there leave? [agreed]

There is leave. It has been moved that the honourable member for Concordia will replace the honourable member for Wellington.

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Chairman, perhaps with leave also, I would like to replace the member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Sveinson) with the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou).

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is there leave? [agreed]

There is leave that the honourable member for Portage la Prairie replace the honourable member for LaVerendrye. Agreed? [agreed]

Any other changes? I will indicate to the committee then that both those changes will be moved in the House later on today. By the way, are there any other changes that we need to make? No, okay.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Today a number of persons have registered to speak to the bill. I will read the names of those persons aloud. In addition, if there are any other persons in attendance who wish to speak to the bill who have not already registered, please see the Chamber Branch personnel at the back of the room and indicate to them that you have a presentation to make.

I would also like to remind presenters wishing to hand out written copies of material to the committee that 15 copies are required. If you need assistance to have photocopies made, please see the Chamber Branch personnel at the back of the room, and they will assist you and ensure that copies will be made.

I would also like to advise the committee that a written submission has been received from the City of Winnipeg, and I have also further been advised that the person for the City of Winnipeg will be reading that to us. I believe that the distribution of this material has been made to you.

Did the committee wish to use time limits for the consideration of the presentations? What is the wish? No?

**An Honourable Member:** Not necessary.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. Not necessary.

I will then call on the first presenter, Don Fotti, the president of Emergency Response Services Employees Association of Winnipeg.

Mr. Fotti, would you come forward, please. Have you a written presentation for distribution?

**Mr. Don Fotti (President, Emergency Response Services Employees Association of Winnipeg):** No, I apologize. On this short notice, I have rewritten my draft here about four times since eleven o'clock last night. So, again, I apologize; I do not have a written copy to hand you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Fotti, you may proceed.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Just on a point of order, not to interrupt. I am wondering if we can be provided a list, if there is a list of individuals who are making presentation—all members. Oh, that is fine, we have now been provided a copy.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Lamoureux. Mr. Fotti, you may proceed.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Fotti:** I have been a member of our executive now for 10 years and negotiations chairman for the last seven. I think it is important that we discuss what got us to this point today. In 1994, the city came out with something called the New Directions wherein it was stated that merging the fire and ambulance departments was something that was desirable. To that end, in 1997, the city hired Garry Richardson, a former fire chief from the city, to be a consultant for this process. He had done a thesis, and his prime thing in his thesis was that employees should do it and there had to be equity for it to work. In the fall of 1997 and spring of 1998, I was on the committee, and we spent eight months developing a plan as to how this was to go.

There were four guiding principles. One of them was that there had to be equity and equality amongst all of the employees in the new department. In July 1998, when Mayor Murray was still a city councillor, he apologized to us for the atrocious working conditions that we have suffered for the last 20-some-odd years. He made no bones about it that he hoped that he could help us to improve things in our department. In the fall, our association split away from a major union that had represented us, solely on the basis to help this merger happen. Also in the fall, the city hired a new chief, Mr. Wes Shoemaker. He was originally from Edmonton where there had been a merger of fire and ambulance there. It failed miserably, largely because it was a partial merger where

people were not completely cross-trained, people were kept at separate pay scales, all the rest of that.

\* (1010)

It split apart after it got to violence in the streets amongst the employees. We saw that as that Mr. Shoemaker would come forward with some good ideas and be able to prevent that from happening here. This last winter here we started collective bargaining. We had held off for a number of reasons I will not get into, but our whole gist of our thing was that there had to be wage parity—it was one of the guiding principles—and that we wanted to be included in binding arbitration that the firefighters had so that we would never ever put the citizens at risk with any kind of job action or anything like that.

In bargaining, the city says we are not amalgamated. Well, I have to beg to differ. There is no more ambulance department or fire department. It is the now the Emergency Response Department. All of our upper management, or I should not say all of it, but the upper management is gone. We all, the firefighters and we, report to the one person, the new chief. In the last few months, four out of our nine stations have been moved into fire halls. We are cohabitating. The office staff have gone together under one roof at the Public Safety Building. The training is all done under one roof on McPhillips Avenue. The stores are being combined; they are purchasing things together for a cost saving. Some of our upper echelon have already been, shall we say, promoted and paid according to firefighters' pay schedules in acting positions. We changed our shifts so that they coincide with the firefighters, albeit a couple of hours out of sync, but it is two days, two nights, four days off.

There are degrees of amalgamation. We are already amalgamated, not to the full degree but to a good portion of it. In March, the mayor in his budget speech said there is an 11 percent differential between firefighters and paramedics, and he said that it needs to be addressed. Not once have we ever been told that we do not deserve to have the same pay scales as the firefighters. Our jobs have drastically changed

over the years. Fifteen years ago we were simply ambulance workers. Now we see ourselves as sophisticated paramedics who bring the emergency room to your living room. We work side by side with the firefighters, and we both feel we have equally important jobs. We have mutual respect with the firefighters and full support of the firefighters.

The city says they have offered us parity. What they have offered to us is a deal where we would be tied in for five years on something that they could opt out of at the drop of a hat. Their thing says if council approves the plan, if there is further integration, if there are cost savings, by what degree the integration is, and then they want to compare to other services only in western Canada, again outside of Manitoba, but they do not want to include all of North America. It has got to be absolutely their way or the highway.

There are so many caveats in here that the stars would all have to line up for this to ever see the light of day. The city wanted the merger. We did not ask for it. The city only wants to deal with the things that they want to deal with. Anything that has a cost attached to it, well, sorry, they do not want to deal with it, and all we are doing here is we are heading for an Edmonton catastrophe if this is not resolved. The city says the parity is too big of a cost to address. They say that they will do it next year. Well, next year they are going to have a three-year budget in place. Then they say, with a little bit of flexibility in the budget, they will be able to slide it in. Well, which is it? Is it too much to deal with or is it so small it can be dealt with in the flexibility of a three-year budget?

We have changed our proposal on parity several times. We started out with it having some back dating, knowing that that probably would not fly. We offered to do it next year as opposed to the '99 budget that is already set, figuring maybe they would take the hint and space it out. They did not. We spaced it out for them, changed the proposal so that it would be more cost-efficient for them. They still adamantly say they will do it if, if, if, if.

We are not unreasonable people. Binding arbitration is something we have asked for in

every proposal we have put forward. As in the past, as is now, or up until now I should say, we have been told: You are not an essential service; you are a utility, and you are not entitled to binding arbitration.

Yes, there has been a breakdown in talks, and yes, we have called for a strike vote. The city told us that if we did not take this back to our members, they were going to file with the provincial government to force us to take this back to our members.

We let it be known, through a number of channels, that they need not fear that we were going to go out on strike just at the drop of a hat. We let them know that we were aware that the mayor would be away and that they would not be able to deal with this effectively until he returned. We let them know that we were looking at June 2, after they were going to have an executive policy committee two days after the mayor returned, that we would not be looking at doing anything other than collective bargaining until that time. They have turned around and asked for the province to get involved in this and declare this an essential service. They never came to us after we took our strike vote. They did not have the decency to call us in and say: Look, we are going to ask for this legislation.

They asked for the province to get involved in internal politics. That said, we have no problem with being declared an essential service, none whatsoever. The only proviso we want is to be treated as fairly as the firefighters and the police are, that binding arbitration be applied so that there is never any fear that the citizens of Winnipeg will be compromised. We would ask you to please do not pass this bill unless it includes binding arbitration.

The city made it clear that they would not take us seriously until we had gone back to our membership for a strike vote. We did. Instead of dealing with us like they should, solving problems with us, they ran to you. Unlike what has been portrayed in the media, it is not in our nature to put the citizens at risk. We were not going to go onto a strike immediately. Nothing like that. We make our living by reducing the risk of citizens. It is just not in our nature to put citizens at risk.

\* (1020)

I implore you to send us back to the bargaining table with a fair backup of binding arbitration and send the city a message to deal with their own problems and not put the citizens' lives at risk by allowing us, shall we say, if we cannot do anything with them because we do not have binding arbitration, that something comes out of this, that there is an Essential Services agreement. We are already working at such an overload situation that, for an essential service to be declared, what are you going to do? Say that 50 percent of the ambulances are essential, and what corner of the city are you going to just leave out as being covered? We do not want to even deal with that. We simply want them to take us to binding arbitration. We will abide by that. We are tired of being treated like second-class citizens within our own department.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I hope that our message is clear. We save lives. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Fotti. I want to remind all those that are in attendance today that normally during proceedings we ask that those that are sitting and listening and are in attendance maintain a decorum, and that means that we normally do not allow applause in committee or cheering or heckling. We have, from time to time, seen chairmen indicate that if order cannot be maintained in the room, then we have the right to ask for clearance of the room, although we have never done that, but we have that right. All I ask is that we maintain decorum in the room.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and thank you for the excellent presentation.

I want to get to the issue of the public risk and the public interest. I think you have made an excellent case on the issues in dispute in collective bargaining with the merger. This Legislature, as you know, cannot deal with collective bargaining between the city and the employees, but we can deal with the way in which disputes are settled and the way they are resolved. We can deal with the issues of public

services to the citizens that we are responsible for.

Let us take a typical evening in Winnipeg where there are lots of calls on your services. What would be the proper standard of the number of ambulances that would be available for the citizens of Winnipeg if we had the proper standard and proper staffing?

**Mr. Fotti:** This government has put out a document, I believe it was two years ago, that said that the city needs to have three or four more ambulances. There was an addition of one ambulance, I believe, after that.

**Mr. Doer:** About 12 an evening would be a standard, a proper standard?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Fotti. What I am going to do, Mr. Fotti, seeing you probably have not appeared here before, before your mike is turned on, I have to recognize you. So I am going to recognize you and then you may speak, the same as all the other presenters. You will hear me indicate their name and then the mikes switch on. So it is just a matter of a formality and ensuring that your comments are being recorded. So, Mr. Fotti.

**Mr. Fotti:** It should be 13 or 14. It is currently sitting at 10.

**Mr. Doer:** Right now, we are understaffed in terms of the standards of the province to the citizens of Winnipeg in terms of ambulance services. It should be 12 or 13 ambulances or up to 14 ambulances, and on a Friday night there would be 10. I know from talking to your people before this dispute, you are under a lot of pressure to respond. So there would be 10 ambulances. Is that correct?

**Mr. Fotti:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Doer:** So this is what I do not understand. We have a situation where The Essential Services Act would designate some of those ambulances to be essential, to allow some of the other ambulance workers to be on strike. If we had arbitration, all the ambulances would be there. If we have this Essential Services Act, it is quoted today that half of the ambulances

would be there. So I do not understand why, in the public interest, does it not make more sense to have arbitration and all the ambulances available to all the public, as opposed to half the ambulances?

**Mr. Fotti:** That is exactly what we are asking for is that this be settled so that this never comes to any deal where we are less than we are now in terms of numbers of ambulances on at any given time.

**Mr. Doer:** So your interpretation of The Essential Services Act would provide half the essential services for your services to the public versus arbitration that is used for firefighters that provides all the essential services. So, in essence, a term of essential services is really just half of essential services and half going on strike.

**Mr. Fotti:** Yes, that is correct. Again, I have to reiterate that we do not want any part of putting anybody at risk, and we do not want to have the numbers reduced. Our whole front all along has been that we want to increase the number of ambulances available for the public.

**Mr. Doer:** The communities of Brandon and Thompson also have ambulance services working for the community, paid professionals as well. Can you inform the committee how they resolve their disputes?

**Mr. Fotti:** Brandon and Thompson both fall under The Fire Departments Arbitration Act and have binding arbitration to solve their differences. They are amalgamated services, as we feel we are.

**Mr. Doer:** So this Legislature is then being asked to pass one law for half the essential services for the city of Winnipeg, yet the citizens of Brandon and the citizens of Thompson are protected in all of their ambulance services through arbitration. Is that correct?

**Mr. Fotti:** Yes, that is very correct.

**Mr. Doer:** It seems to me, then, that the argument being made by the City of Winnipeg for designating The Essential Services Act, why do they reject arbitration if the goal is to protect citizens? And that is why this Legislature has

been asked to deal with the bill quickly. Then it appears to me that the only way to protect the citizens fully is to have binding arbitration. If the issue is public interest, it seems arbitration serves the public interest. Why is the city rejecting arbitration, which is the more complete answer for the public?

**Mr. Fotti:** I do not really have an answer for that. We have asked for binding arbitration, and they flatly refuse to address it.

**Mr. Doer:** The city employees now have The Labour Relations Act; they have the binding arbitration for police and fire. Have there been any consultations from the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe) to you, or have there been any consultations from the Minister of Labour, as you understand it, to the city administration? Has there been any discussion of a provincial set of labour laws, one law in Brandon and Thompson, another law now, on the run, it appears, in Winnipeg?

**Mr. Fotti:** I spoke to Mr. Radcliffe at some length yesterday, and he seemed to understand our point of view. I do not know if there has been any discussion between the city and him on declaring us an essential service along the same lines as Brandon and Thompson are protected.

**Mr. Doer:** If the argument is the public interest, then arbitration is the solution. If the argument is short of that, in the public interest, what would be the advantage—the advantage of the citizens is obviously arbitration—to the City of Winnipeg not agreeing to this proposal of arbitration? Is it merely just they fear the financial ramifications of it, or are they giving you any other reasons besides at the table or in the public arena why they would say no to arbitration?

**Mr. Fotti:** There has not been any direct, that I recall, thing. All that we have been told is that there is no political will for them to give us binding arbitration. We suspect that it is that we would maybe fare better at binding arbitration than something they would impose on us as they are trying to do now.

\* (1030)

**Mr. Doer:** The people that you work closest with in the city, as you mentioned in your brief, you are in the fire halls, four to five of them, you work as first or second responders with the firefighters, you trained with the firefighters, you work with the firefighters considerably. Why does the city not agree that you are closer to a firefighter in the terms of essential services than you are to another employee that would be not deemed to be essential?

**Mr. Fotti:** I do not know why they staunchly refused to recognize us in the past as anything but an essential service. They always insisted we were a utility, and you just do not give a utility binding arbitration.

**Mr. Doer:** So as I understand it, this Legislature is being asked to pass a law that would go from The Labour Relations Act, with full strike, to the Essential Services legislation with half the ambulances on a Friday night, and if we were to go to binding arbitration, we would have all the ambulances available to our citizens. So the Legislature is asked to pass a law, in essence, that would provide half the number of ambulances that would be there if we had binding arbitration. Is that not correct?

**Mr. Fotti:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Doer:** The minister has indicated that he has discussed this issue with one party, the management side, the elected management side. Has the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) discussed this with you before the bill came before the Legislature yesterday?

**Mr. Fotti:** No, it was not discussed with us at all. We were quite surprised when we heard this yesterday afternoon. We had no idea that this was going to happen with such speed.

**Mr. Doer:** I am wondering: Would you be available to meet with the Minister of Health after this committee? I know he is presenting publicly at this committee, but I know the minister has indicated he has had discussions with the city, he has had letters from the city.

It seems to me if the Minister of Health is as concerned about all the citizens of Winnipeg as

you are, he would want all 10 ambulances on on Friday night, as opposed to five of them on, and this Legislature has to balance the public interest, the workers' interest, and the management interest. There are three interests here to deal with. It seems like the public interest would indicate binding arbitration. Obviously the employee interests, based on your presentation, is binding arbitration, and we have one of the three parties I would say, with the public being paramount, offside on that. Now I would ask: would you be willing to meet the Minister of Health after this committee?

We have already publicly stated we are going to move amendments on binding arbitration, but the Minister of Health can move amendments, I would suggest, with our approval, if he agrees with you, at third reading as well, or at committee stage. Rather than getting a letter from one side without considering the public interest, if this Legislature cares about the public interest, it has got to go with binding arbitration. To me, it is just absolutely the only sensible way to go, and I would ask whether you would be willing to meet with the Minister of Health if he is willing to meet with you. I cannot ask him to meet with you, but I can ask you to meet with him.

**Mr. Fotti:** Actually, Mr. Doer is not aware I met with the Minister of Health this morning for a short period of time and spoke to him at some length about our issues, and we hope we got our point across.

**Mr. Doer:** The members opposite always think all our questions and answers are engineered, but I just proved that it is not.

How did the meeting go with the Minister of Health? Does he see the sense of 10 ambulances are better than five ambulances? Does he get that issue?

**Mr. Fotti:** He listened very intently and put his point across that, in his view, it is two separate issues. We disagreed with that. We thought that this is the province, shall we say, I do not know what other word to use than stepping into city politics and unfortunately stepping in in a way that it actually is going to possibly compromise the citizens rather than giving us the binding

arbitration rule that would never compromise any citizens.

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** Mr. Fotti, in your statement you said that they said you were not an essential service but you were a utility. Could you tell me who made this statement, was it within the bureaucracy or was it at the political level, and when this statement was made?

**Mr. Fotti:** My first recollection of being told that we were a utility was at the bargaining table in the spring of '93 when we were asked to take a rollback like all other civic departments were being asked. We had a year to go in our contract at that time. We asked for binding arbitration for any future contracts and we would be good, little citizens and take the rollback. In the end, we wound up taking the rollback and not getting binding arbitration.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** Would this bill not serve your purpose then, going back to the bargaining table and saying: now that you have listed us as an essential service, should we not fall under the arbitration, now that you have taken away their ability to say that you are a utility? So is this bill not positive to you then?

**Mr. Fotti:** The bill is not positive because it does not lay out that binding arbitration has to be, shall we say, the backup. Their stance is, I am sure, that if this bill is passed, we will go back and they will just say: the final offer is the final offer and that is it. Take it or leave it. You cannot do anything anyway.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** I guess I am going to be asking an obvious question, but the passing of this essential services change here to put you under essential services, does that give the city the upper hand in bargaining?

**Mr. Fotti:** Very much so. Actually, my worst fear here is not so much what is going to happen to do with this contract that we are talking about now, because they would have a hard time withdrawing their proposal, but what would happen next time we come to the table is that we would be offered absolutely nothing because we have no recourse because, again, we do not want

to put any citizens at risk. So what kind of action can we do? Nothing.

**Mr. Kowalski:** Well, looking further down the future with this amalgamation and the possibility, have there been any talks with the firefighters' union as far as amalgamation of your two unions?

**Mr. Fotti:** There have been some informal talks with the firefighters. Our stance on it was that we wanted to wait and see to what level the integration was going to be done so that we could properly address our members' concerns in any kind of merger of the unions in terms of how it would work for our members.

**Mr. Kowalski:** If your unions merged and this bill was passed, you would have a situation where two groups in the same bargaining unit, one group, the firefighters, would have the right to arbitration, and the other group, the ambulance workers, would be not able to go out on strike. They would be covered under essential services. They would be limited. Would that not be unworkable?

\* (1040)

**Mr. Fotti:** Actually that was a question I had. I did not know how exactly that would fall if we joined their association, but if it is like you say, this would just create more of an untenable situation within the department. My worst fear is that it would cause for a total breakdown.

Currently we get along fine with the firefighters for the most part. They are very supportive of us, but if it comes to the fact that we are divided like that, this would just be bad news all around.

**Mr. Kowalski:** I may be telling you about my perception, but when you were talking about the history, maybe some people do not realize I was on the police force in 1974, when still the fire department and the police were doing some of the ambulance duties here. When the Winnipeg ambulance service was first brought forward, there was a tension between firefighters and ambulance attendants.

The firefighters came from the grab-and-run school. You know, pick them up quickly and get them to the hospital. A lot of times they were making snide remarks about the ambulance attendants thinking they are doctors, and about why they are taking so long to get them to the hospital. I have seen over the years a growing respect by the firefighters for the work of the ambulance attendants, the emergency workers.

I have been at many scenes where members of your bargaining unit have saved the lives of firefighters. They have worked together. I think there is a mutual respect for them and a lot of times they shared space and that. As a police officer, I have been constantly amazed at the lives that have been saved, people that in no way I thought they would live, and by the good work by your attendants they lived.

I am going back to the police force and maybe some day one of your members will save my life. Back in '74, the police had the right to strike. I cannot remember what year, when we had taken a strike vote. That was my worst fear. That was my worst fear, that we would be asked to go out on strike, and it would be a trial of conscience. It is true of many of your members. Do you put people's lives at risk, because you are not being respected by the city, not getting fair compensation, or do you go against your own union and cross the picket line to save lives of the citizens of Winnipeg?

Eventually the police were given the right to binding arbitration, but if my memory serves me correctly it was a request by both the city and the police union that they requested it. I believe the same thing happened with the firefighters. I am disappointed that the city cannot see the value of binding arbitration. What they want it appears is an upper hand in negotiations without taking any financial risks here. So I am speaking for myself here. I am very much in support of your cause. Your members do wonderful work. I think in the future eventually there will be wage parity. Eventually you will have binding arbitration. It is just a matter of time, but I do not think now is the time to give the city an unfair edge in bargaining without giving you the right to arbitration.

So what is your prediction for how this will turn out?

**Mr. Fotti:** If there is not binding arbitration given here, I do not want to speculate on what my members will do. At no time have we ever wanted to put anybody at risk here. As you said, about the firefighters saying we think we are doctors, we have expanded our skills in the last few years tremendously. We have different levels of caregivers, but the vast majority of our people are able to give a whole bunch of different drugs for different circumstances at the homes. Our level of training has escalated in the last three or four years phenomenally.

We are that kind of people. We have gone out of our way to take that training. Not only have we gone out of the way to take the training for ourselves, we have taken it on ourselves to train the firefighters in defibrillation so that they would be able to better help us. Now what other group goes out of their way to train somebody else to do their own job? That is the kind of people we are.

**Mr. Kowalski:** Are you surprised that the mayor who has made this request, or any of the city councils, did not think this committee hearing was important enough to attend, that there is other business more important than the lives of the citizens of Winnipeg? Are you surprised?

**Mr. Fotti:** I am disappointed to see that there are so few of the politicians from the city and the management from the city here. I do not know whether they are going to make a presentation or not, but I will be very interested to hear what they have to say.

**Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek):** I guess my concern is I know that certainly you are an essential service from my point of view. You have indicated that you are not going to put the residents at risk and in jeopardy, but I do not have any comfort, at least, I have not seen anything here. I do not really know what other alternative you would have as a group other than to strike which is going to put our citizens in jeopardy. I have some comfort in the fact that you are prepared to negotiate but I do not have the comfort, and maybe you can tell me, when

push is going to come to shove. You are going to have to make this decision to go on strike whether or not you have the control over your membership to be able to continue to negotiate until this is all done.

**Mr. Fotti:** The media has in some cases portrayed us—we have had a little internal dispute with our past president, and we have been portrayed as a little bit of radicals. We have solved that problem. We are united in our displeasure with the city's contract offer. As to whether or not we are planning to put anybody at risk, like I said, is not in our nature. Give us binding arbitration; this will never ever be a problem.

**Mr. McAlpine:** What do you want this legislation to do here right now?

**Mr. Fotti:** What I want the legislation to read. We have asked in the past when we were told we were a utility, we asked them to submit to the provincial government to be declared an essential service so that we would have binding arbitration. We were under the impression that one went hand in hand with the other. That is what we need, somebody else to settle it, so that we do not have it on our heads that we never have to make a decision that is going to tear at our hearts and possibly put anybody at risk. We do not want to do that.

\* (1050)

**Mr. McAlpine:** Just one more question. This bill does not include binding arbitration. What I would like to know is: What do you want this committee to do with the legislation as it now is presented here to this committee?

**Mr. Fotti:** We would like to see this legislation modified or whatever, amended—I am not up on the terminology—whatever has to happen to allow us to have binding arbitration like the firefighters have.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I did have a couple questions. The police department and fire department have binding arbitration. My question is: if they did not have binding arbitration, then would you be arguing for binding arbitration?

**Mr. Fotti:** That is a very good question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I will interject here. Just a minute. Could I have order, please, at the table. Members, if you need to discuss something, could you please move back from the table so we could have order.

**Mr. Fotti:** It is a very good question. We look at the firefighters and the police as to how they settle their problems and saw that they have a way that never is anybody put at risk and thought, that is the perfect thing. If that was not there, we would probably still be looking for a third party to solve the negotiation situation so that we, again, never had to put anybody at risk.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I pose that question because I think it is important to recognize that there is a need for Essential Services legislation. It covers many different areas. The provincial government has implemented that over the years and expanded it and so forth. I was quite disturbed and disappointed, as you made reference, I believe you found out yesterday that this was even on the legislative agenda. Like you, we found out yesterday. It is unfortunate when things of that nature occur. It would have been nice to have had some sort of representation, whether it is from union, from City Council, as to what it is that they are looking at doing.

I would not want to minimize the role that a committee of this nature can play. I can recall a number of years of ago, I use it as an example, where legislation came up and I believe it was the police service that it affected. Through participation from the police department in terms of attendance here and making presentations and so forth, it ultimately led to a compromise where we actually saw a change in the legislation. By coming before the committee, I think that is a very applaudable action in trying to making us a little more aware of the situation that you are in.

I see it, and I have always believed in essential service legislation. What I find unique about your presentation and Mr. Doer's comments yesterday was the fire department and the police department with the binding arbitration. I am inclined to agree with you in terms of that you are amalgamated, in essence,

into one or definitely moving in that direction in which there really will not be that difference. There is a need to ensure that there is a sense of equity. For that reason I am very sympathetic to what it is you are suggesting, that there be some form of binding arbitration.

I would be interested in hearing from others in terms of what they feel on this particular issue. I am interested in knowing if you have any thoughts about just essential services generally speaking that are out there. I say that because we had the nurses, who were offered binding arbitration and they did not accept binding arbitration, whereas now we have a union that is suggesting that they want binding arbitration and the other side does not want binding arbitration.

I am interested in just your quick comment on the concept of essential services. Is that a positive thing? Is that a negative thing? If you could add to that binding arbitration, is that something that should be negotiated through the bargaining process, or agreement process, because I understand that is actually what happened with the police and fire? Please correct me if I am wrong on that.

**Mr. Fotti:** We realize that this is, shall we say, a departure from the typical union stance that we would be asking somebody else to settle this for us, but that just goes with our nature that we are not here, or we are not the kind of people that are radical rabble-rousers.

We come to work to save lives. We do not come to work to be pounding a union drum and all the rest. That is part of the reason we split apart from a major union. We see this binding arbitration as a fair and equitable settlement to all of our things, so that we do not have to do anything that would put us at a disadvantage in terms of having to deal with our conscience, that if you did this or did that, that somebody's life might be impacted.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Mr. Chairperson, I have an interesting perspective on this because, first of all, as NDP House leader I first learned about this yesterday. It was the first contact that we received in our caucus about the city's request which, I believe, was made last

week. In fact, the government immediately wanted to waive notice procedures, deal with this yesterday. We actually took the initiative of contacting both yourself and the city before we looked at our response, and we will be moving a number of amendments later on, based on what we have been able to determine.

But I also have another perspective which I find interesting, and that is I am the MLA for Thompson, and I just for the life of me cannot figure out why in Thompson and in Brandon we have one system, and now in the City of Winnipeg, if this legislation is adopted, we are moving completely in the opposite direction. It is ironic because I think the government yesterday may have thought that what it was doing was—and I think there is a headline in one of the newspapers, that he is limiting strikes, limiting this potential strike.

The way I look at it as compared to the option that we will be proposing, which is to treat ambulance workers the same way in which we treat firefighters. What we are doing is providing an alternative to strikes, and that is something that has worked well in Thompson. Believe you me, I am sure everybody in my community feels a lot better. In fact, when it comes to contract negotiations, no one has to worry that we might have only half an ambulance service. For the life of me, I do not understand why the government in this particular case is setting up a situation. I disagree by the way with Mr. McAlpine, the Conservative member, who seems to view this—and I think he is maybe getting a little bit into some of the internal dynamics here, but what will essentially happen is, if there is a strike, and I do not want to even assume that, having a strike vote and having a strike are two different things, I realize that.

What this legislation basically does is reinforce that half the ambulances of the City of Winnipeg will not be operating. You will end up with partial services, and as was pointed out in Questions earlier, what is ironic in a lot of cases is that there are questions even with a level of ambulance service as it is. I am just wondering if you have heard any concerns from your counterparts in Thompson and Brandon about this system, because I know my own

community, I think everybody is happy with it. It shows the kind of creative approach we need here, not this kind of jumping in as the government did yesterday, without proper consultation. Have you heard any concerns from people in Thompson or Brandon about the system that is in place there?

\* (1100)

**Mr. Fotti:** As a matter of fact, there is a new recruit class in class right now. I am currently off on compensation for a broken wrist, I am shortly to go back to work, so I have had quite a bit of contact with the recruit class.

One of our recruits is from Brandon. He worked eight and a half years in Brandon. He lived in Winnipeg, and he wanted to work for Winnipeg. Now, when he came here, he was of the impression that we were under the same sort of situation as he was in Brandon. He was not aware that coming here there was a strike potential or anything like that. He felt that he was coming to the same situation as he had in Brandon.

I have not had any contact with anybody from Thompson. That is about all I can say to that.

**Mr. Ashton:** Just finally, because I think there seems to be some confusion, I think, here in terms of the term "essential services." This is called The Essential Services Act, but firefighters, for example, were not included under the provisions of this act. No one is suggesting they are not an essential service in the truest sense. To a large extent in areas such as policing, with teachers, there have been decisions made that maintain collective bargaining but have substituted mechanisms that do not move towards a strike situation, and it has worked reasonably well. I know, we have not had, for example, a teachers' strike, although I find it interesting there that even in that area the government seems to be wanting to mess with a balance that has worked fairly well.

I am wondering if that is not the position you are putting forward: that in the truest sense an essential service such as ambulance service should be treated like firefighters, not under this particular act, which is a bit of a misnomer; and

that what you are really asking for is what appears to be quite reasonable, given the important nature of the service.

I mean, you are not a utility. Believe you me, if someone has a heart attack, they need an ambulance. That is not a utility. It is not like getting your meter read or your phone hooked up. I mean, that is not even an essential service; that is an emergency service.

I am wondering if that is not the message that the government maybe needs to get, that the key thing here is to perhaps not go in with a knee-jerk reaction to the request that was made yesterday and perhaps come up with a solution that will make sure that, regardless of what happens with contract negotiations, the ambulances that the city of Winnipeg needs will be on the road in the same way that when there are negotiations in Thompson or Brandon no one even questions whether the ambulance service is running. We know in my community that we have 365-day-a-year coverage, contract or no contract.

**Mr. Fotti:** We saw, rather than being grouped under an Essential Services Act that covers a whole gamut of other areas and does not, shall we say, deal with us specifically the way we would like to be dealt with, that if we were to have been put under the firefighters' act, seeing as we feel that we are amalgamated with the firefighters, that would have been more than acceptable to us as well.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** I believe the context of the conversation right at the present time is leading us all to believe that essentially the situation in Brandon and Thompson, Mr. Chairman, is similar to and like what we have here in Winnipeg, but my understanding and my belief—and this is a question that I would like answered—is effectively in both Brandon and Thompson, the paramedics were, in fact, first firefighters. So they were effectively firefighters first, and they were cross-trained to provide the emergency services, effectively ambulance and paramedical services, after that. So we are moving from one skill set to the ambulance, rather than what you are describing here from ambulance to firefighter cross-training. Could you please clarify that?

**Mr. Fotti:** It is quite the—I should not say quite the opposite. I am not familiar with what all goes on in Thompson, but I know in Brandon, basically they are cross-trained to start, but it is not a matter of going from fire to ambulance. They work ambulance while their minds are eager and their backs are strong, and then they move to fire in the latter part of their career.

Now, that is the way it is done in many services throughout North America, where there have been effective amalgamations. In Garry Richardson's report that the city spent \$92,000 on, the recommendation was that there be cross-training and that our people wind up riding the pumps and having the ambulance actually show up with just one person on it, if it was required, so that the number of paramedics that there are now could be spread out over a bigger area, and we would have quicker response times. So that was Richardson's plan.

I cannot speak to what Mr. Shoemaker plans to put into place, but in private conversations with him he has said to me that he felt a fully integrated system is the way to go.

**Mr. Faurshou:** Having clarified that position then, you are describing a want or a need to move into legislation that fully covers your association in a like way as to the firefighters. Where are you in your membership as far as the cross-training is concerned right now? How many of your members are fully cross-trained to take on a pumper position or a first responder position at this point in time?

**Mr. Fotti:** The city has not initiated cross-training at this time. However, we have several of our members who are functioning firefighters outside of the city. As a matter of fact, one of our members is the chief of fire for East St. Paul. The city has gone to hiring people from the Brandon Fire College, and they come in with a Level I Emergency Medical Attendant licence. Last year, they hired 30 such people, and they hired another 30 also last year, but it was done by the old system simply because there was a public outcry about it. They had planned on hiring a full 60 out of the Brandon Fire College, and it is my understanding that the direction the department is going in is that all future employees will be hired as cross-trained.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Fotti, for your presentation and for your lengthy answering to the questions. Thank you again.

**Mr. Fotti:** Thanks for the opportunity.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Next I call Mr. Wes Shoemaker and Mr. David Shepherdson, the City of Winnipeg. Mr. Shoemaker, you may proceed. By the way, have you a presentation for distribution, or are you going to be dealing with this presentation that was distributed before?

**Mr. Wes Shoemaker (City of Winnipeg):** Mr. Chairperson, yes, it is my intent to speak to the letter that was submitted by the City of Winnipeg this morning. I will be available and prepared to speak to some technical questions. On matters of policy, though, however, it is not my position and my intent this morning to speak to what I would describe as some of the more political aspects of the city's position. Joining me this morning as part of the delegation is Mr. David Shepherdson, who is a co-ordinator of labour relations for the city.

\*(1110)

Again, what I would like to do is start off by reading the letter submitted this morning by the acting mayor and then perhaps just provide some brief context of really the objective and the intent of the city in seeking these amendments.

So, on that note, the letter is regarding Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act: "The above-captioned bill is being considered at 10 a.m. today by the Law Amendments Committee of the Legislative Assembly. Due to the fact that the city's Executive Policy Committee is also meeting at the same time and will be hearing a number of public delegations on issues relating to the Executive Policy Committee's agenda for today, it will not be possible for myself or other members of the Executive Policy Committee to be present for the Law Amendments Committee's deliberations on Bill 27. Therefore, I would appreciate if this letter could be read into the record of the Law Amendments Committee or distributed to all members of that Committee for their information during their consideration of this bill.

"Bill 27 has been introduced to the Legislative Assembly at the request of the City of Winnipeg and it is my understanding that a copy of Mayor Glen Murray's letter of May 18 to the Honourable Eric Stefanson, Minister of Health, which letter asks the government to bring forward this bill at the earliest opportunity, was distributed to all Members of the Legislative Assembly at the time Bill 27 was introduced for first reading."

Mayor Murray's request to the province is very clear and unambiguous. Bill 27 responds to the city's request exactly as outlined in Mayor Murray's letter: "Although the Emergency Response Services Employees Association of Winnipeg membership has rejected the city's latest offer in contract negotiations, the City of Winnipeg is prepared to continue discussions with the Association in good faith, in order to come to a mutually agreeable resolution to the contract issues. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that the safety and security of our citizens not be put at risk during this process. Therefore, the City of Winnipeg is requesting the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to adopt Bill 27 at the earliest opportunity and without amendment."

In that regard, I would like to make just a couple of statements. This issue of utility has been raised during the course of our discussions this morning. I guess I just want to clarify that from our perspective the terminology and the issue of utility is used loosely. Simply from our perspective it was a matter of treating, I guess, that part of our organization from a perspective of where revenues are generated as contrasted to other parts of the city's services that are totally tax levy supported.

Now, the amendments further that we are seeking, that is, the city is seeking for amendments to The Essential Services Act are, from our perspective, to ensure due diligence and that public safety is not compromised but at the same time not denying the right of the association and the union to take strike action and also to have access to arbitration.

With those brief statements then, I would be prepared to address any questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Shoemaker, for your presentation. Mr. Doer?

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, you mentioned access to arbitration. Can you show me, is there any section in The Essential Services Act that provides for arbitration?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Mr. Chairperson, if I may, I will defer the labour relations questions to Mr. Shepherdson.

**Mr. David Shepherdson (City of Winnipeg):** Sir, it is a question of, no, there is no reference in The Essential Services Act. The issue I think is, the city's position is, we believe, premature, to go towards binding arbitration, but that does not preclude at some point in the future, by agreement of the parties, moving to an agreement on binding arbitration. It is simply premature. We are in conciliation at this point in time. Bargaining is ongoing.

**Mr. Doer:** My question was that Mr. Shoemaker's presentation indicated that providing Bill 27 with The Essential Services Act would provide, could lead to arbitration. My question was very specific. There is nothing in The Essential Services Act that would lead to arbitration. So I think it is important for the committee members to know that and for the public to know that there is nothing in the act that leads to arbitration. Is that correct?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Shepherdson or Mr. Shoemaker, who is going to answer?

**Mr. Shepherdson:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr. Doer:** The ambulance people here today—I mean, an ambulance is an ambulance is an ambulance. You know, you talk about merger, you talk about this administration, you talk about that administration. As a member of the public, I can tell you that the administrative structure is not as important as the service. The ambulance is the issue to the public. The Essential Services Act provides, and the terms have been used for management in the city, to be a fraction of or up to half of the ambulance services would be provided. Binding arbitration for firefighters provides all; every ambulance would be available to the public. So I would like to ask the

members here: Would binding arbitration, with 10 ambulances available on a Friday night, not be superior for the public interest than a fraction of the ambulances, or half of the ambulances, to quote the quotes that have been used? Would that not be a superior guarantee of public services for a citizen like myself who may need that service at some point in time?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Again, it is my understanding that The Essential Services Act provides for determination of what is an essential service, or what level the service currently being provided is essential service. It is further my understanding that there is nothing suggested at this point that the city would declare that only 50 percent of the ambulances would be part of our suggestion for amendments to the act. However, in looking at the demand that we as an ambulance service currently provide, many of the service requests that we do provide go all the way from what I would call minor emergencies to the most critical of life-threatening emergencies. I guess it is our intent to ensure that we do, in the event of a disruption that we are presently facing, maintain sufficient resources to respond to critical life-threatening emergencies.

**Mr. Doer:** We have 10 ambulances now. We would have 10 ambulances on binding arbitration. Having studied this matter, I am sure, before you came to the Legislature asking for this legislative change, how many ambulances on a Friday night would be critical for life-saving, life-and-limb kinds of services that you would have?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Again, I am not going to turn my mind solely to the number of ambulances on a Friday night; rather, I guess it would be our intent to ensure that sufficient number of ambulances do remain to respond to those critical life-threatening emergencies. Although this is still something that we would hope to sit down and reach agreement with the association on, it is my belief, and I represent only my position, that we would not endeavour to declare 100 percent of the current resources as meeting the definition of essential services.

**Mr. Doer:** So, for the public interest, the best guarantee of maintaining—and we have heard from the presenters earlier that we are already

below the standards—the best guarantee of the public service is 100 percent of the services being maintained in a dispute, and that could be achieved only through binding arbitration, like the firefighters. Is that not correct?

**Mr. Shepherdson:** I believe it is an issue of, as we all know, Essential Services legislation in all jurisdictions. It is intended to try and balance the needs of all the concerned parties—the employer, the employees, and, obviously, the interests of the public—and it is a balancing of interests. It is the city's view that this service, the ambulance service, like the health care sector generally, is appropriately under The Essential Services legislation of the province. To that extent, the issue of binding arbitration is really not at issue. The Essential Services Act, as it stands, allows the parties to work out a voluntary agreement as to the level of essential services, has a mechanism to resolve disputes in that regard, and still allows the employees an effective right to strike.

The city would acknowledge as an employer that, whenever there is some reduction in the effectiveness of the strike, it has some impact. To the extent that essential services are maintained, that is true, but it is not an elimination of the right to strike.

**Mr. Doer:** I was not asking that question. This Legislature must deal primarily with the public interest, and the public interest was the question I was asking. I understand there is a dispute at the city. I understand the dispute is between the employees and the management, as articulated by the letters from the acting mayor, but the public interest is what we have to concern ourselves about, and legislation that we pass must deal with the public interest. With any kind of health service, you have to deal with the public interest of the medical services and the public interest of the collective bargaining.

A further question, did you consult with the communities and administration in Brandon and Thompson to see how well that system was working where it is arbitration?

\* (1120)

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Mr. Chairperson, I am familiar with the services provided in those two municipalities, and I guess the heads of those

organizations are part of the chief's organization, the mess director's organizations, to which I both belong.

Where I think we need to clarify the right to arbitration in both of those instances, they are provided and afforded under different legislation because of the fact that the individuals are different care providers; i.e., they meet the definition of a firefighter. They are simply not just providing what is considered typically all paramedical duties, but they do provide something in addition to the pre-hospital care duties. So they are firefighters and are considered as such under the legislation that they are subjected to and that is there the key difference lies.

**Mr. Doer:** Yes, but the administrative bodies of those two communities in terms of meeting the public interest, do they feel that the amalgamated services in Thompson and Brandon, which includes ambulances and which includes fire services, that the provision of those services under that act, the firefighters arbitration act has had good experience and it is good for the public. I am really interested in the public interest here.

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Mr. Chairperson, it is not necessarily the fire department's arbitration act that allows or facilitates for the service delivery model. It is the service delivery model that provides, in my opinion, the most effective delivery of that service. So to suggest that it is the fire department's arbitration act that they are subjected to that prescribes and allows for certain service delivery model and in that case one that is working effectively, I think it is kind of a separate and different issue. But I can speak to the issue though of their service delivery models in those communities. They are very satisfied with the manner and the level of service that is delivered and again it is that integrated approach that we as an organization, you know, will still consider for the citizens of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Doer:** Did the City of Winnipeg administration discuss the pros and cons of both options with the EPC of the City of Winnipeg? You have The Labour Relations Act now which is a status quo which you are asking us to change with The Essential Services Act. Did you discuss with the EPC both possible options or

was only one option put forward from the administrative branch of the city?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** I will speak briefly to that and then I will defer to Mr. Shepherdson. But at our discussions and briefings with the Executive Policy Committee, all aspects of the service delivery models in legislative options were considered. That is my understanding; however, Mr. Shepherdson, if you have—

**Mr. Shepherdson:** Again, we will confirm that all options as a matter of due diligence were explored, and in the final analysis, it was decided that the most appropriate mechanism for addressing all of our concerns, including the employees, was amendments to Essential Services Act.

**Mr. Doer:** So, in lieu of that analysis, considering the public interest, perhaps Mr. Shepherdson could indicate based on that briefing to the city how many people would you, the city and management, be proposing be essential and how many people be nonessential at any given time in terms of the public impact of that analysis. You know, there are quotes today in the media of up to 50 percent. Based on your thorough briefings to the administration, what would be the recommendation from management to the city in terms of how many as a percentage of services would be designated?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Perhaps I may respond to that question, clearly as it results in, I guess, a service determination. I go back to the fact that it is not our intent and in our discussions with the elected officials to contemplate and consider 100 percent of the employees as essential but something I guess less than that because, in doing so, in declaring all 100 percent of them as essential, then again I do not think we have provided the right to strike, because all of them would be expected to come to work.

So we go back to our position that we want to ensure that essential services are maintained and that we are able to respond to emergency medical conditions.

**Mr. Doer:** In terms of the public, I think it is important to know if there are 10 ambulances on an evening. I go back to what my neighbours

will be thinking, what your constituents are thinking, what our public is thinking. It is basically, if you have 10 ambulances out—you do not want me to use Friday night, but I will use Thursday night then, or I will use tonight. I know there are higher numbers of accidents and responses necessary on the weekend, Friday and Saturday, but if on a peak evening, you pick whatever evening it is, there is normally, the standard is 12 to 13, the amount is 10, what can we as the Legislature tell the public will be provided to them by passing this act? Is it four? Is it eight? There must be some idea, because that is really all the public cares about. All these amendments and these technicalities, et cetera, do not mean anything. An ambulance is an ambulance. That is what they want if their families are in trouble.

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Again, what the public will be reassured is that there will be the system in place to ensure that essential services are maintained, and that is not just by the services offered by my department. We have been working very closely with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and some of the other agencies that have interest and have, I guess, some involvement in the delivery of out-of-hospital care in the city of Winnipeg and that we will ensure with the passage of these amendments to this act that we will be able to respond to the emergency medical situations.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, again, I know on the one hand, on the other hand is a good answer here and I know you are not the policy bodies, but I think the public would want to know from the experts that are here before the committee, and this Legislature should know, if we have 10 guaranteed in binding arbitration, which the employees are putting forward, and management is putting forward essential services, which is less than 10 ambulances, how many ambulances are we talking about, in your estimation, would be essential? Is it four? Is it five? Is it six? Because now I know their proposal, the workers' proposal, the ambulance attendants' proposal is 10. That is what I know. I would like to know what you think the proposal would be on a peak period, instead of on the one hand, on the other hand. That does not help me talk to my neighbours tonight about what that means for them and their families.

Can you please explain if it is four or five or eight or nine? I just do not know what it would be if we are working on a shift of 10 ambulances.

**Mr. Shoemaker:** May I first start off by saying that there are no guarantees today, that I am able to guarantee 10 ambulances on the street. That is not as the result of any particular piece of legislation. However, again, this is still something we will continue to work through with our partners in the delivery of this service and with the association in making the determination of what is that essential level of service. In our descriptions, at a minimum at least we would want to be able to be positioned to respond to what we classify as the Code 3, Code 4 emergencies with some advanced life support available. From there I guess we will look to alternative means of delivering less critical service.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I think that we have to look in terms of applying some natural justice or common sense. If I were a paramedic, which I am not, and I have the fire department and I have the police department having binding arbitration, I would find it difficult to understand why it is that I would not be entitled to binding arbitration, given that you are telling the fire department and the police service that they are an essential service and today you are telling the paramedics that they are an essential service. So why would they not be entitled to the same equal treatment? I think that is something which many Winnipeggers would be asking today.

**Mr. Shepherdson:** The issue is, from the city's perspective, the services provided by the ambulance attendants is much more related to and similar to the health care sector rather than the services provided by fire and police. The issue from the employer's perspective is to the effect that we, as a matter of principle, are concerned that we do not ignore our responsibility to all the constituents of the city in terms of the citizens, taxpayers. A reference to binding arbitration at this point in time does not meet the city's interests in all respects, whereas continuing to bargain does.

\* (1130)

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Whether it is saving lives or providing that sense of security, all three have been deemed as essential services, two of which are being given binding arbitration, one of which is being denied. I do not necessarily understand why that can be the case. Therefore I would think that there is a lot of merit for the city to have had some sort of debate. I guess that would be the question. Can either presenter indicate before the committee that a majority of the city councillors in fact do not want to see binding arbitration given to this profession?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Mr. Chairperson, again, it is the city's position that it is premature at this point to consider arbitration. We are still in conciliation. We still have a lot of issues that we believe we can reach agreement on. Further, it is our position that it is better for the parties to agree or to have agreement on arbitration as opposed to having a third party, I guess, impose it upon us.

So, at this point, it certainly is premature for us to refer the matter to arbitration, but certainly we are not ruling out the possibility.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I would ask the presenter then: does he not recognize, if binding arbitration were being looked at and if a majority of city councillors supported binding arbitration, that we would not have this bill before us? So it indeed is not premature to be having a discussion on binding arbitration, because if that discussion was there and City Council, a majority of the councillors, supported binding arbitration—that is why I posed the question. If we have City Council approaching the provincial Legislature saying: we, as a council, want essential services, and we do not want the binding arbitration, then I think there is possibly a moral obligation for us as a more senior level of government to at least respect in part what it is that they are requesting of us.

I am not getting the impression that the city itself has resolved the issue of binding arbitration. If they would be in favour of binding arbitration, then we would not need this legislation today. So I would pose the question specifically: does a majority of City Council support binding arbitration? Any idea on that?

**Mr. Shepherdson:** The various letters before the Legislature from the mayor, and this letter dated May 19 from the deputy mayor—the mayor and the deputy mayor are acting under their duly constituted authority. I think the letters speak for themselves with respect to the issue at hand.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ashton:** Thank you, Mr.—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order. Mr. Lamoureux was not finished his questioning.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Oh, I am sorry. I did not see his hand again.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, I just have a couple more brief questions. Obviously this is not something that came out of the blue, the legislation. It came out of the blue for members of the opposition yesterday; it came out of the blue for the union. Can you give us any indication when management had first looked into essential services and maybe why that would not have been brought to the table as a courtesy for the union membership?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** First of all, I guess the situation vis-a-vis negotiations has changed very quickly and dramatically, I guess therefore motivating the city to respond in a due diligence fashion and to consider the appropriate legislative amendments at that time. I mean, the time frame between the impasse and the need for us to take appropriate action was very swift. However, we did have, prior to a request on Tuesday morning, informal discussions with the association about our intent to pursue these amendments and, again, it has all happened very quickly.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Just a final question, Mr. Chairperson. I want to go back, because it is a deciding factor for me personally, the issue of binding arbitration and to what degree that was discussed. Can management indicate to committee members as to what sort of discussions took place with City Council in regard to binding arbitration?

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Mr. Chairperson, again, I am here to speak on technical matters only.

However, I guess the fact remains, the mandate that we were given was to pursue the amendments as requested by the city and the amendments as they are and do not contemplate that other issue.

**Mr. Ashton:** I realize the difficulty you are in, not being able to speak for the council in a political sense, but you have to put ourselves in the dilemma here. We were requested as of yesterday to give urgent consideration to this matter. Basically it is because of an impending strike situation. I am just wondering, what I do not understand here is how you can make the argument that we need to deal with The Essential Services Act on an urgent basis because there is an impending strike but that somehow the issue of binding arbitration is not urgent.

I mean, if we have a situation where there is an impending strike, we obviously have two, well, there are actually really three choices. One is to have no amendment to the act, the second is to bring this amendment, which would ensure a strike takes place with some level undefined of service, and the third alternative is binding arbitration. I am just wondering how you can suggest that we have to urgently pass this bill but we do not have to urgently deal with the issue of binding arbitration, which is another, I would suggest, better way of avoiding a strike.

**Mr. Shoemaker:** I guess there are two issues at hand. On the one hand there is a need to maintain essential service and there is the other issue of resolving collective bargaining disputes. Now, it is simply in the interest of due diligence and ensuring that public safety is maintained that we have sought and we are pursuing amendments to ensure that essential services are in place. There are other avenues and other forms to pursue collective bargaining disputes. We do believe we have the means to do that right now, independent of the urgent need to take action to maintain public safety.

**Mr. Shepherdson:** I would just like to add to that, if I might. Again it goes to the urgency question. Given the legislation as it currently stands, the association was in a legal strike position, effective the time it took its strike vote and received a strike mandate. It is solely for

that reason that the city is of the view that we had to act with the haste that has been demonstrated.

**Mr. Ashton:** I would suggest that we should be considering the other alternative of binding arbitration just as urgently. I mean, if the concern is an impending strike and you have two different possible ways of dealing with it, I am quite surprised that we are dealing here. I do not just look to the city, because the provincial government, which, I might add, often rejects requests from the city when it is convenient, chose to accept this version and rush it into the Legislature. I put on the record, by the way, this is the only bill that has been treated in this fashion. So, you know, as MLAs we have been asked to deal with this on an urgent basis, and I still am puzzled by why this is urgent but binding arbitration is not, which is another way of dealing with it.

But what I really want to focus on is another thing you are asking us to do today, and I say "you" in terms of the city, because essentially what this will do is bring this service under The Essential Services Amendment Act, and we have already established, I think, that there will not be a hundred percent service. I think that has been fairly clear from the questions up until now. I was sort of struck by some of the reference earlier to minor emergencies versus, I guess, major emergencies.

I am trying to get some idea how you are going to take the situation and assume 10 ambulances, you know, that seems to be the figure that is an assumption. I am trying to figure out how you structure a situation in which you say up-front there will not be a hundred percent service. If you take ambulances off the street, I ask the question, does that not threaten response times in terms of, if you have five ambulances instead of 10? They have got to cover twice as much area for each ambulance. So I raise that question.

\* (1140)

Now, if you maintain the 10 ambulances, I mean, I assume you cannot cut the number of staff in the ambulances. I mean you cannot take

out the driver, you cannot take out the required staff, so that is not an option. I am trying to think here, if you do go down to five and accept the longer response time, who are you going to get to perform the minor emergencies? Are you going to hire private services? Are you going to ask firefighters to do it? Are you going to ask managers to do it? I mean, are you going to get taxis to do it? I am just trying to get some idea of how you take 10 ambulances, which I think most people in the city of Winnipeg would accept as probably not even the minimum level, it is the current level, how you then structure a system under this legislation. By the way, you are asking us to approve this, so I think it is incumbent on the city to give us some idea. If this legislation is passed urgently and there is a strike, how are you going to structure, under the Essential Services, the ambulance service in a strike situation?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I am going to allow that question; however, I think we are getting into operational type questions and I am not sure whether we want to, as a committee, consider the operations of the ambulance services. I ask the indulgence of the committee and members of the committee to direct their questions more specifically towards the legislation that this committee is dealing with.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Kowalski:** I would challenge that because, as a representative of the people from The 'Maples, I have to understand operationally on how it is going to affect the child who breaks a leg on the soccer field, how it is going to affect the senior who falls down, what is going to affect the response times. So the operational requirements of the ambulance service and how this is actually going to do, I am going to be responsible by my vote, as 56 other people in this Legislature, to understand how this is going to work. Here we have a choice, arbitration where we keep a hundred percent of the ambulance service so that when a child breaks a leg, when a senior falls down, there will be someone there for them. I am trying to understand what this presenter is saying how they are going to triage over the phone which ones get it and how that kid is going to the hospital, which injuries are going to be serious

enough for them to respond. So I challenge that position you are putting forward.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Kowalski, all I am suggesting, if you would have allowed me to finish my response—I would have asked for the indulgence of the committee when they ask their questions that they stay focused on the legislation, that is all I was going to ask.

**Mr. Faursehou:** Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your comments and that is effectively what I was going to say on that point of order. We are borderline here on policy content in our questions and effectively the gentlemen, in presentation at the present time, are not acting in that capacity, as has been stated on the record that they are here for technical responses only, and I do believe that that is the case at the present time.

**Mr. Ashton:** I accept, by the way, that it was not a ruling. I would point out however that the bill is very simple in that it deals with the City of Winnipeg as it pertains to ambulance services. I think as an MLA I want to know, if this is passed at the request of the city on an urgent basis, what is going to happen? In fact, the two presenters—well, in fact, the one presenter is in a better position than even the political people on this question of telling me, if we pass this, what will happen in a strike situation. I think, not only is it in order, it is fundamental for us and the citizens of Winnipeg to know, if this legislation passes, as compared, as the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) pointed out, to the other alternative of binding arbitration, what is going to happen if you do have an urgent situation.

I would appreciate an answer because I, personally, as an MLA, and I know our caucus, the NDP caucus, take this matter very seriously. This is obviously one of the main concerns we have, that if this is passed, you are going to end up with people in the city of Winnipeg not being able to get the kind of ambulance service they get today. That is, I think, a very legitimate question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I accept Mr. Kowalski's recognition of the point of order, and I stand at

the will of the committee. I only ask that we give consideration and make our questions as direct as we can to the issue at hand, and that is the legislation.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Who is next here? Mr. Ashton.

**Mr. Ashton:** I placed the question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Shoemaker, to respond, if you still remember the question.

**Mr. Shoemaker:** Yes, I believe I do, Mr. Chairperson. Again, absent this amendment that is before the committee this morning, there is no guarantee that I can maintain any essential services, so I want to be very clear on that point.

Secondly, there are a number of requests that our ambulance service currently provides for. In my opinion, it is not appropriate that we use highly trained paramedics in ambulances to facilitate those sorts of conveyances. I guess in all of this that we will have ongoing discussions with the medical community, with our partners, the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, and, hopefully, with the association in focusing on what those critical emergency medical situations are that the public needs to have treatment and care, and we will put in place those assurances that essential services are maintained.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr. Laurendeau, did you have a question?

**Mr. Laurendeau:** I did, Mr. Chairperson. It is interesting. We seem to be entering into the bargaining here at the table at the same time. I do not think this would be an issue for—it might be for you, Mr. Shoemaker, but it might be for the other gentleman whose name I do not have. The firefighters and the police both fall under their own legislation under essential services for arbitration. Was that negotiated between the two when that act came into play, those two acts?

**Mr. Shepherdson:** It is my understanding The Fire Departments Arbitration Act was basically initiated not by the employer or any employer in the province. I could be wrong on that point. The police one was, in effect, and as I believe it,

an amendment of The City of Winnipeg Act, as agreed by the parties at that point in time in that context. This is a different time and a different context.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** So, then, by our putting in place arbitration without consultation with the City of Winnipeg and the union, would we not be then taking away the right of the strike of the union without consultation?

**Mr. Shepherdson:** It is an issue under The Essential Services Act in the amendment we are proposing. I will reiterate: Essential services is an attempt to balance the interests of the public, the employer, and the employees without eliminating the right to strike. We do acknowledge that, of necessity, there is some diminishment in the union's effective ability to run a strike, but that is the nature of essential services.

**Mr. Doer:** My historical recollection is The Fire Departments Arbitration Act came in when The Labour Relations Act was dealt with in the early '70s, and it was brought in to deal with that specific issue, under consultation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, I want to thank the two gentlemen for their presentations and their indulgence in answering questions. Thank you very much.

I call next Janice Johnson, private citizen. Janice Johnson. Ms. Johnson, have you a presentation for distribution?

**Ms. Janice Johnson (Private Citizen):** Yes, I have got a brief presentation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Have you a presentation for distribution to the committee?

**Ms. Johnson:** Not at this time. I can provide one afterwards.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you. You may proceed.

**Ms. Johnson:** The whole issue basically circles around quality of care. Ultimately everybody is concerned with the citizens of Winnipeg and the care that they are provided. We are 136 dedicated paramedics. We do save lives—that has been stated numerous times—but we also

have varying impacts on the lives of Winnipeggers on a day-to-day basis. The majority of our members are working above the current job classification.

We voluntarily increased our education so that we can increase the number and complexity of drugs and procedures we perform. Ultimately our concern is to provide the citizens of Winnipeg with the best quality care. We have done this without compensation, and we are basically looking to be treated as equals.

I would like to put a scenario forward to maybe help put a different perspective on this whole issue. Let us assume someone in this room collapses right here and now. Let me lead you through what would happen; 911 would be called. You would get four firefighters coming into the room first. They would initiate the basic care. They can provide oxygen, they can do CPR, and they now have automatic defibrillation. They would do their best to initiate treatment for you. That would be followed by an intermediate life support paramedic who would come in, take charge and continue the treatment by starting intravenous lines, further airway management, administering drugs, so ultimately we can get your heart started again.

\* (1150)

Let us assume that we have got your heart started again, now you have got an advanced life support paramedic entering the room who brings his further education and training. He supports a pulse that now we have gotten started. He can administer further drugs. He can pace you. We can basically stabilize you until we get to the hospital. What I am presenting to you is that we work as a team, and we are all important links in the emergency chain of survival. We are only as strong as the weakest link.

Now that is a brief overview of how the system works. Let me take you back a little bit. Those firefighters that first entered the room have 80 hours of first responder training, and then we have just given them an additional eight hours in automatic defibrillation training. That was provided on a voluntary basis by our paramedics to go in and train the fire department.

Taking you back, we have provided the training to the fire department in order to use these automatic defibrillators because it ultimately enhances the quality of care to the citizens, and it strengthens one of the links in that chain. Our people volunteered to train these individuals, and how many situations do you get where the instructor is being paid considerably less than the student? Furthermore, when we go to these calls, we are ultimately in charge. We are responsible. We direct the firemen. We are responsible for the outcome of that patient's life.

Our point basically being is that we are all professionals working side by side. We provide different services, but we are all of equal importance. The ILS members that come to that call bring with them about 850 hours of training which does not include our home study. The ALS paramedics bring over 2,000 hours of training plus their home study. The point that was made earlier is: how do we determine the criticality of some calls? Sometimes we respond to a call for a fractured ankle, which most people would say, you know what, that is not critical. Are we going to let a stretcher car service handle that type of call? What we bring with us is our experience and our assessment skills. You can go to that call and find out, yes, it is a broken ankle, or you can go to that call and find out that this individual or, let us say, this senior has collapsed due to dizziness and that is why she broke her ankle, but the underlying problem is a cardiac problem, which is much more significant. So now something that seems to be a very stable, easy-to-handle call has turned into something much more. What this boils down to is quality of care and a matter of fairness. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you very much for the presentation. In terms of the issue of quality of care, do you feel this legislature is best serving our citizens to provide quality of care by passing this law or by passing a law dealing with binding arbitration for all the 136 that you mentioned?

**Ms. Johnson:** Ultimately I feel that the only people who are trained to provide the quality of care that the citizens of Winnipeg have become expected to arrive at their doorstep when 911 is called is us, is 136 paramedics here. Anything

that jeopardizes the number of units that are on the road is not in the best interest of the public. If binding arbitration can prevent that, this is what we need. We do not mind being an essential service, we believe that we are, we just want to be able to have recourse through binding arbitration.

**Mr. Doer:** So in response to the question posed by Mr. Laurendeau just a minute ago, you are voluntarily proposing binding arbitration as an option to the right to strike, as a legal option, a legal requirement to the right to strike.

**Ms. Johnson:** That is correct.

**Mr. Doer:** I think that as a citizen I admire that, because I would want all 136 of you there in our community. You mentioned the chain, and I thought that was interesting. So the first responder on the chain is fire, the second responder on that chain is paramedics, and the third responder, obviously at a hospital, would be an emergency doctor. The fire now has binding arbitration, the paramedics are proposing binding arbitration as part of this chain, and doctors now, after the government reluctantly agreed for a while, are in arbitration as agreed to—well, it took a couple of days, weeks of dispute—have binding arbitration. So it seems to me that in this chain you are the only profession for the public that is now without binding arbitration in the current situation. Is that not correct?

**Ms. Johnson:** That is correct. As I said before, ultimately we do not want the paramedics as the middle part of that chain to be the weakest link.

**Mr. Doer:** Again, your ideas are very, very solid in terms of binding arbitration. Have you been given any reason why, given that it is obviously in the public interest. I mean, there can be no doubt about that. Have you been given any reason from the management or other people with the city why binding arbitration has not been considered as the other option to the existing Labour Relations Act?

**Ms. Johnson:** I can only speak in generalities, because I am not on the negotiating committee, but to my knowledge we have not been given any reasons other than just an outright refusal to consider the proposal.

**Mr. Doer:** There is a quote in the paper today that a fraction of the people would be required to be essential, and then there is up to a half of, is the other quote. If one goes even over half, one would know that arbitration is the only fair way to resolve it. So if you are at the halfway point—I keep asking Friday night questions. What would be the impact on the Friday night situation here in Winnipeg, in your view, if they were down 50 percent of the staff because of this sort of half-baked solution, which is half on and half off with the proposed amendment?

**Ms. Johnson:** Well, there is no question in my mind that the quality of care would be jeopardized. I look at the situation now where even with 10 ambulances on the road, one of them is temporarily being funded by the province. It is being staffed with overtime now, and there are times when we cannot even get enough personnel to staff that unit because of being overworked and our sick time being up. If we were to lower the number of units for any other reason, the quality of care could not be continued to the citizens of Winnipeg. We do not have enough ambulances on the road now. We run out of units periodically, even with 10 ambulances on the road, which produces a great concern. We have had fire departments having to transport in the back of their rescues, due to the fact that an ambulance has not been available to respond to that call.

**Mr. Doer:** I understand the resources are so stretched that there is presently some discussions going on among the province, the WHA, the airport and the city, and it is basically too few resources for too many demands. At present—I just heard this informally—is there a dispute going on between the city—or not a dispute, but are there stretched resources—and I will let you answer the question—already that are in dispute in terms of providing services to the airport?

\* (1200)

**Ms. Johnson:** Well, it is my understanding that the city has contracted out the airport services because of the chronic understaffing of our department and our workload that we cannot handle. Instead of addressing the real problem of chronic underfunding and chronic understaffing, they are trying to offload some of our

work. Much as we do, we try to turn calls back to the police department, et cetera, because we just do not have the resources to respond to them. Ultimately, there would be a concern, again with the quality of care, if you are getting unregulated, unlicensed stretcher car services to handle the work because there are not enough units. My question would be: do the residents of Manitoba deserve any less quality of care than the citizens of Winnipeg?

**Mr. Doer:** So, as I understand it, when we are talking about reducing, this legislation will reduce the number of ambulances available to the public from the other alternative which we would propose in amendments later on, of the binding arbitration. The resources are already so stretched that there is a dispute on the airport services with the existing 10 ambulances. How can we possibly go below that and still provide vital services to the public in your view?

**Mr. Chairperson:** I am going to interrupt here. The hour, having been reached, is twelve o'clock, and I am not sure what the will of the committee is. Do you want to continue the hearings past 12? What is your wish?

**Mr. Laurendeau:** Mr. Chairperson, I think we should at least finish hearing this public hearing and then we can make a decision after the hearings.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** I just had occasion to speak with the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton), and what we would like to suggest if you could complete your discussions with this witness and then adjourn the committee, we have agreed to sit this committee during the Estimates process in here following the completion of presenters this afternoon to consider the bill. The committee on Industry, Trade and Tourism will then sit in the Chamber, with leave, during the Estimates process. So we will run two committees on Estimates, plus this committee will continue to sit this afternoon if there is agreement in the House. So that is what I would like to suggest to the committee at this time.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** I do believe, Mr. Chairperson, if you canvass the room, there might be other presenters, though, from what I understand.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I was just going to make note of that, as soon as I heard the response to the question.

**Mr. Praznik:** Then, if I might suggest following this presenter—because the hour being twelve o'clock, there is not the rush necessarily to proceed. It gives, I think, everyone some time on this matter, but when this is finished we could adjourn. I think we have agreed that this committee, with leave of the House, if there will be leave of the House—and I have not had an opportunity to speak to my Liberal colleagues about this—but if there is leave of the House, this committee then will be recalled then following routine business and members' statements to sit during the Estimates process, and the committee in here will then move to the Chamber. So we will, in essence, run two Estimates committees and this committee to complete its work this afternoon.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I am going to leave the question until I hear the response, and we will deal with the matter right after we finish the questioning of Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson to respond to the question. I am sorry for the interruption.

**Ms. Johnson:** Basically, the short answer to the question is, no, I do not believe that we can continue to provide the quality of care to citizens in Winnipeg with any less ambulances than we have on the road right now.

**Mr. Doer:** How much time is being taken up already for stretcher resources for ambulances that are diverted from one hospital to another based on the situation in the hospitals?

**Ms. Johnson:** Our turnaround time at hospitals has been greatly increased due to the backlog. We have had numerous episodes where we have had patients waiting on our stretchers half an hour, an hour, an hour and twenty minutes, where they do not have a bed for us to place them in. This ultimately impacts on the number of units that are available to the city.

**Mr. Doer:** So the backlog in the emergency wards and the observation rooms in the hospitals that we are hearing from all the time from the public is impacting on your already stretched

services, arguing again against The Essential Service Act and arguing for the arbitration act, would you not agree?

**Ms. Johnson:** Yes, I would be in agreement with that statement. Ultimately, we cannot unload these patients on the floor. We need a bed to be able to put them in.

**Mr. Doer:** I would concur with that assessment. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The first hand I saw was Mr. Lamoureux's. Are we now giving up that—  
[interjection]

**Mr. Kowalski:** First question, I do not know if you can answer it. Do you have any idea what is so important at Executive Policy Committee, what the subject matter is that needed the mayor, or any city councillor to come here to committee hearing this morning?

**Ms. Johnson:** Yes. Again, yes. I have no knowledge of what has gone on at the EPC meetings.

**Mr. Kowalski:** The next question is: do you know if the firefighters union, the police association or the Teachers' Society support your call for arbitration?

**Ms. Johnson:** I can only speak with reference to the firefighters union. I believe Alex Forrest was quoted as saying, you know, how can they take away our right to strike without giving us recourse through binding arbitration. So I believe they are very supportive.

**Mr. Kowalski:** Have your members who I am sure many live in the city and have city councillors, have they approached their city councillors to know how many of them support binding arbitration?

**Ms. Johnson:** I know city councillors have been contacted. I do not know the results. I know just specifically from Transcona that Shirley Timm-Rudolph is definitely concerned with the fact that the Transcona ambulance is almost never in the station and has in fact been relocated downtown on occasion to cover for the workload.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Mr. Lamoureux, did you still have a question?

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Yes, I did, Mr. Chairperson. Ms. Johnson, I wonder if you can give an indication, because in your presentation you made reference to the fact that you train firefighters and you could sense something in your feelings or the way in which you were expressing it, and I do not want to read into that but rather to pose a question in terms of something that I am quite often posed from one of my family members whenever I feel a little bit slighted, and how does that make you feel is often the comment. I would pose the same sort of a question to you: how does it make you feel that you are classified as an essential service? The police service is an essential service and the firefighter is an essential service, but you are the only one that does not get to have final arbitration or binding arbitration.

**Ms. Johnson:** Ultimately, the whole situation has been extremely frustrating, not only for myself, but for our entire membership. When word of this got out yesterday, the morale was going downhill increasingly. Ultimately, when you feel that you are not being treated fairly, it is difficult to continue providing the good quality of care to the citizens of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** If an employer said to me that I am going to seek essential services for you or for your profession, I would maybe be somewhat upset to hear that. If other essential services were given binding arbitration, I would resent my employer not providing me the same opportunity if I am classified as an essential service. Is it a fair assessment that there would be a lot of resentment from within your colleagues that you are not being provided the same sort of labour dispute mechanism as the firefighters or the police service?

**Ms. Johnson:** Well, I think it is a good point to mention that. I mean, currently, we get along fairly well with the fire department. They are very supportive of us. Ultimately we are for whatever service delivery model provides the citizens of Winnipeg with the best quality of care. The firefighters are going to be an integral part of that service delivery model in whatever form the city decides to provide that service.

Ultimately, if there is dissension among the ranks, feelings of frustration, the city is going to have a much more difficult time coming up with a model if we are not getting along with the firefighters because there is a feeling of inequity between the two groups.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I guess the final question, and you started to refer to it at the end, is that, again, if I was a paramedic and I was working in a fire hall and that labour pool has binding arbitration and I do not, you know, the perceived and real inequity is there. If it was to prevail, you know, if the Essential Services legislation does pass through and the city then evokes it so you have 50 percent on strike and it is off and on and this sort of thing, what sort of impact do you believe it will have on the morale between those two professions, if you do not mind speculating on that.

\* (1210)

**Ms. Johnson:** Well, it is obvious that the morale is going to go down on both sides ultimately, because we feel we are not being treated fairly. Then you have also thrown the firefighters into a position that they do not feel prepared for. They are quite happy to let us continue on with our job. Quite frankly they are terrified of the thought of having to go in there and try and provide a lesser service to the citizens of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Ms. Johnson, for your presentation and your indulgence in answering questions. Thank you very much.

I will now deal with the matter that was raised by the House leader. I understand that there have been some discussions about procedure this afternoon. I just want to inform the committee that we have two persons that are still wanting to make presentations. One is Mr. Ian McIntyre, Manitoba Teachers' Society, who is a walk-in; and Mr. Ray Orr, private citizen, also a walk-in, who were late.

What is the wish of the committee? Do you want to hear them before we adjourn or do you want to ask them to come back later to present to the committee?

**Mr. Ashton:** I think, in discussion with the government House leader (Mr. Praznik), we are coming back at 2:30 p.m. approximately. So rather than have the presenters compressed in terms of time, I would suggest we come back at two-thirty and deal the with presentations before we deal with clause by clause.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the committee agreed to that? [agreed] It is agreed then that we will reconvene this committee right after Question Period if we receive leave of the House. [agreed]

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 6:23 p.m.**