



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

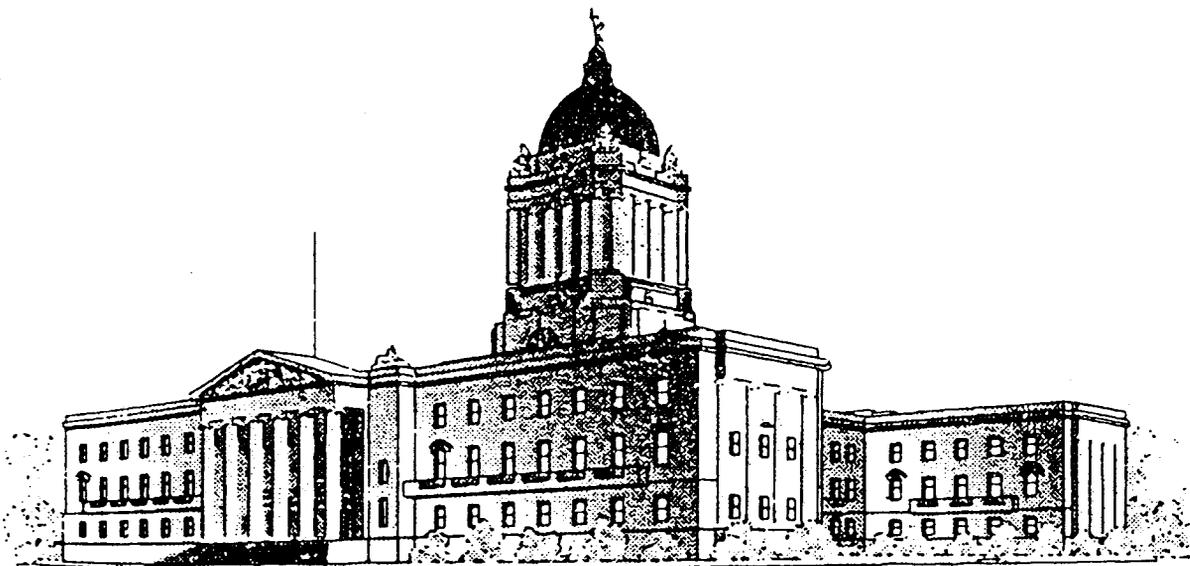
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
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MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 4, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Twyla Allen, Elizabeth Poupiglia, Heather Carlson Reid and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and the National Trust Company, praying that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba pass an act to transfer the personal trusteeship and personal agency business of the National Trust Company to the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company.

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Trevor Kraynyk, Edmund Stiem, Kathy Davies and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Amanda Street, Anne Huckerby, Joyce Goossen and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support

construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ross Enokson, Mavis Enokson, Frank Willis and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest un-separated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not

support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

* (13:35)

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul has the highest concentration of high voltage power lines in a residential area in Manitoba; and

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul is the only jurisdiction in Manitoba that has both a 500kV and a 230kV line directly behind residences; and

THAT numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia, to the proximity of power lines.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBL Y PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest un-separated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBL Y PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest un-separated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBL Y PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would like to table copies of the communiqués from the Western Premiers' Conference held in Moose Jaw last week.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 22—The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that leave be given to introduce Bill 22, The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation de traitement du cancer et de recherche en cancérologie et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: The CancerCare amendment act formalizes the role of CancerCare, the name, and puts in place a regime for CancerCare Manitoba similar to that of regional health authorities.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 42—The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that leave be given to introduce Bill 42, The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act; Loi modifiant diverses lois sur les professions de la santé réglementées, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this is an administrative change that fulfils our obligations regarding interprovincial mobility in health professionals under the Agreement on Internal Trade and Social Union Framework Agreement.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today, from the St. François Xavier Community School, 22 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Betty Tiltman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my first question, on behalf of all the colleagues on this side of the House, I would like to welcome back the Member for Rupertsland, Mr. Robinson. I am delighted to see you back.

I think that I do speak for all of us on this side of the House when I say this House is a stronger place, a much better place having the minister in his seat, and we welcome you back.

Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program Payment Delay

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the federal Agriculture Minister announced that the final measures have been carried out to transfer \$500 million in federal assistance for the farm sector to provincial governments. Several times in recent weeks the Premier, his Government, the Doer government, indicated that farmers would be receiving their cheques by the end of May. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

Can the Premier tell Manitoba farmers how long it will be, and why did they break their promise? After saying they were going to deliver

the cheques by the end of May, why did they break their promise? Why did he not show the kind of leadership that the government of Ontario did and pay out the provincial portion? Why is he making farmers wait, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the Leader of the Opposition to tell us whether he is for or against the agricultural support package to begin with. When he was asked to comment whether he would have joined the program or not, he just stood in the wind and did not take a position.

Having said that, the cheques were in the mail Friday.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I understand that the Premier is embarrassed that he obviously has been letting farmers down, that there is clearly no indication, so rather than answer the question he prefers to attack me. If that is the way the Premier likes to run his Government so be it, but the problem is while he likes to poke fun at me, farmers in Manitoba are suffering because there is no leadership.

* (13:45)

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I rise on a new question, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba Hydro has not been before the Public Utilities Board for a rate review since 1996. To quote from a letter that the Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question?

Mr. Murray: Yes, on a new question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, Manitoba Hydro has not been before the Public Utilities Board for a rate review since 1996. To quote from a letter the Manitoba Society of Seniors and the Consumers' Association of Canada sent to the minister in April, and I quote: Consumers have both the right to information and the right to voice their concerns regarding monopoly service providers in this province, as well as the

responsibility to participate in the process of making decisions that will affect them as rate-payers.

Can the Premier explain why he is ignoring his responsibility to ensure Manitobans have a voice in the future of Hydro by refusing to ask the Public Utilities Board for a general rate review?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The rates are frozen, Mr. Speaker, and they are the lowest rates according to U.S. Edison now in North America. They are the lowest rates in North America because we built Limestone after the Tories mothballed Limestone in the '70s. That is why the rates are the lowest in North America.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Section 26(1) of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act states and I quote: No change in rates shall be made and no new rates for services shall be introduced without the approval of the Public Utilities Board.

The Premier is breaking this law by changing hydro rates without putting this before the PUB, and he is getting around the law by sneaking in a legislative loophole called Bill 27. Is the Premier so afraid of public scrutiny that he has created a loophole in Bill 27 to avoid having to appear before the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, two questions ago, the Leader of the Opposition was feigning interest on the agricultural plight. Here we are lowering the rates for farmers, farm families, with rate equalization and now he wants to oppose that policy. We have a tale of two utilities now in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

The Tories' vision is in one utility. We have rate rebalancing going on in rural Manitoba, as quoted by the Portage la Prairie newspaper, that is totally shafting rural residents with the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System to private interests. That is rate rebalancing going up for farm families in rural Manitoba.

The other vision is treating Manitoba as one community, using the surplus revenues from hydro-electric export sales, export sales that

were made by this Government or this party with the building of Limestone, using the surplus from some of the export sales in United States to lower the rates in rural and northern Manitoba. We are going to put that forward in legislation. We are going to take a stand. What stand is he going to take when the legislation is before the House?

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, once again the Premier insists on misleading Manitobans. The circumstances surrounding hydro have changed considerably since the last rate review. Rates are changing and there are billions of dollars in proposed hydro projects on the Doer government's agenda.

During Estimates, when discussing Hydro and the role of the PUB, the Premier stated unequivocally, quote: Obviously, we will follow the law.

The law as outlined in 26(1) is clear, and I quote: No change in rates for services shall be made and no new rates for services shall be introduced without the approval of the Public Utilities Board. Will the Premier stand by his word and will he follow the law by putting his proposed legislation projects before the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the only capital alternatives members opposite had is one underpass in one area of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, we are following the law. We did not bring in rate equalization, well, first of all, without promising it in an election campaign. The people were consulted. There were no surprises, like the sale of the telephone system. It was before the people in the campaign. A mandate was obtained by the people democratically electing a government in the campaign with certain promises to implement. We then came in with a Speech from the Throne outlining our policy direction. We now have a law before the Legislature that will in fact, if supported, and I would ask the members opposite to support it, equalize the rates in Manitoba. It will equalize the rates in Manitoba utilizing the surplus hydro-electric energy to take some pressure off a farm family or take some pressure off northern Manitoba.

Only after that happens, Mr. Speaker, only after the law is passed. We will not have it applied before the law is before this Legislature. Only after that law is dealt with by this Legislature will in fact the rate be able to be reduced or not reduced depending on what this Legislature does. Democracy, a promise made, a process, a Speech from the Throne, a bill before the Legislature. If they want to vote against it, let them have the courage of their convictions to say so right now in this Legislature.

* (13:50)

Split Lake First Nation Hydro Development Agreement

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, last fall the Doer government signed an agreement in principle with Manitoba Hydro and the Split Lake Cree. Can the Minister responsible for Hydro advise the status of this agreement? Has it lapsed? Has it been extended? Is it going forward, and can he table any documents on that agreement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The agreement in principle with the Split Lake First Nation was signed and a copy was made available to the Opposition upon their request. Now they are working on the next phase of that which they call a PDI, a project development initiative.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Can the minister confirm that, according to the agreement in principle, the project will be owned by a separate entity comprised of the Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro and not exclusively by Manitoba Hydro? Can he indicate why that is possible?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, under the legislation that was changed by the members opposite in '97, there is provision for separate corporate entities to be created that will allow for participation of other partners, in this case First Nations communities, in the provision of a new generating facility. In the case if that new partner no longer wishes to be an equity partner in that facility, they have the option to sell it to Manitoba Hydro only.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain the apparent conflict between Bill 7, in which Hydro cannot sell any part of its interest in a major facility, with the agreement in principle which states the Gull project is to be co-owned?

Mr. Selinger: It is very clear that existing facilities cannot be privatized. Under the '97 legislation, new facilities can have an equity partner and that equity partner can only sell its stake in that new facility to Manitoba Hydro. This is what we have put in our legislation, and we will have full and ample opportunity to debate it in the House.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I thank the minister for those words. The Crown Corporations Public Review Act states that where a Public Utilities Board is satisfied that the circumstances of a corporation have changed substantially, the PUB may review an order and modify the order in any manner.

I am asking the Minister responsible for Hydro: Does he now recognize that the circumstances of this corporation, Hydro, have changed, and will he call for a review by the Public Utilities Board?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The Public Utilities Board reports to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Smith). What has not changed is the rates have been frozen for five years in the residential sector and up to ten years in the industrial sector.

Mr. Tweed: Well, will the minister agree then that by adding a private partner he has actually changed the corporation levels, and will he put it before the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: The agreement in principle binds neither party to the agreement, to the final outcome. It is an agreement to continue working together and negotiating a final outcome. When that outcome eventuates, it will be placed before the Legislature.

Mr. Tweed: The minister has admitted that they changed the corporation. They have added a partnership, Mr. Speaker, a private partnership to the agreement.

Again I will ask the minister to include all Manitobans in this decision as required by law. Will he put it before the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, the member opposite is incorrect. There is no final agreement. There is an agreement to continue negotiating to find an arrangement where there is an equity partner.

The second thing the member opposite misunderstands is the role of the Public Utilities Board. It is strictly empowered to set rates for Manitoba Hydro, not to review these types of arrangements. These types of arrangements are reviewed by the Public Utilities Standing Committee of the Legislature and, of course, the Legislature itself.

* (13:55)

Manitoba Hydro Generating Plant—Brandon

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, an editorial, entitled *Trust Me No Longer Cuts It*, in the *Winnipeg Free Press* earlier this year stated: Expert opinion now indicates that Hydro is spending twice what it should be to build a gas-fired generating plant at Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Hydro, according to McCullough [phonetic] Research, "overspending" or wasting over \$100 million of taxpayers' money on this venture?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I have reviewed that item with the president of Manitoba Hydro. He assures me, and he will be happy to assure the members of the Legislature when the Public Utilities Committee of the Legislature meets—I believe, the meeting is set for the 18th of June. I will have the details of that, but he assures me that the purchase of those turbines for Brandon are well within market rates. As a matter of fact, at the time we purchased them, we got a better deal

than we would have if we would have delayed it any longer.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, market rates or not, can the minister explain why Manitoba Hydro is paying \$54 million Canadian per turbine more than the same turbines purchased by the Town of Defiance, Ohio?

Mr. Selinger: I would suggest to the member opposite his information is accurate. The turbines were purchased at a market rate. It is likely that the differences in the two situations are with respect to the infrastructure requirements and the other related costs with respect to the turbines. I would be happy to review the specifics of that with the member opposite or any other member of the House when the Public Utilities Standing Committee of the Legislature meets very shortly.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the minister can talk it over with me all he likes, but will the Minister of Hydro stop trying to hide from Manitobans and allow for a full review of the Manitoba Hydro activities by the Public Utilities Board?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Once again, the proper forum for the review of those activities is the standing committee of the Legislature and, of course, the Legislature itself. The Public Utilities Board is a rate-setting body. It is not a body that reviews the capital expenditures of the Public Utilities Board. The capital expenditures are reviewed by the Crown Corporations Council and the Crown Corporations Council has the full authority to do that if they wish.

Court System Delays

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). Justice delayed is justice denied, as we all know, and as the tragedy of what happened with Thomas Sophonow continues to unfold in the inquiry currently going

on, last week it was revealed that the problems with the delays in the Manitoba court system continue unmitigated under the present Justice Minister.

I ask the minister to admit that the three-and-a-half-year delay experienced in the case involving counterfeit money was far too long and unconscionable. Why are the delays in the court system continuing? Is the minister's leadership in Justice as weak as his leadership in the House last Thursday?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

Domestic Violence Court Delays

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh): Why is it presently taking a year or more to hear cases in the Domestic Violence Court, or will the minister not admit that his policy of delay and delay is hardly conducive to enhancing domestic harmony?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): I will take the question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

* (14:00)

Court System Delays

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My second supplementary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh): I ask the minister to explain why impaired driving charges are taking a year or more to go to court when just last week the minister announced he would be doing more prosecutions. Is this not rather ineffective when these efforts are stuck in the morass and mire of a clogged court system?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice): The Minister of Justice undertook a review of the Crown prosecutors. They have expanded the number of Crown prosecutors that are available, Mr. Speaker, something that had

not been done in the past, in order to provide Crown prosecutors and give them the opportunity to do their duty, and that is to be involved in the Court system, to be involved in the trial system, to prosecute and do for the public what they expect Crown prosecutors to do. I think the expanded role and the expanded number of Crown prosecutors has had a significant and will have a significant effect on the administration of justice in Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro Debt Repayment Schedule

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): In this year's Budget, the Doer government doubled the water rental rate paid by Manitoba Hydro, increasing it by \$48 million. The Doer government also stripped \$17 million from Hydro annually by increasing the debt repayment guarantee.

Does the Minister of Finance have a debt repayment schedule that he can table with this House which outlines how Manitoba Hydro will repay its long-term debt of more than \$5 billion?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Manitoba Hydro operates under certain sets of financial tests that it has to meet, one of which is the debt to equity ratio. It is on target to meet a 75:25 debt to equity ratio as recommended and suggested in terms of policy.

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the minister if he can identify for Manitobans how it is possible that Manitoba Hydro can meet this debt repayment schedule when at the same time this Government is contemplating massive increases in capital expenditures. They are stripping more than \$65 million more a year annually out of the corporation. How does that allow it to meet its brief?

Mr. Selinger: The financial targets of Manitoba Hydro are obviously enhanced by the sales of energy into the export market, and they have achieved record levels in the last couple of years. Manitoba Hydro is fully expected to pay a market rate for the guarantee fee and a reasonable rate for water power rentals. That is what is being done, and they are still expected to meet their debt to equity ratio.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I would ask the minister then if he would be willing to convene the Public Utilities Board so that Manitoba Hydro can explain to Manitobans what effect the Doer government's plans for increased capital expenditure and their plan for rating profits will have on the ratepayers of Manitoba. Will he call the PUB?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): We will call the Public Utilities Committee of the Legislature to review these matters. That is scheduled for June 18, and I am sure the member will be in attendance.

Manitoba Hydro Selkirk Generating Station

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): This Doer government announced plans to spend about \$60 million on the Selkirk Generating Station using natural gas as a fuel and creating considerable uncertainty given the rate of increase in natural gas recently. Will the minister commit to taking this plan to the Public Utilities Board for review and answering expert questions?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The previous government was operating on the very edge of the licence they had for Selkirk. The plant was possibly going to be brought out of service in the year 2005. We asked Manitoba Hydro to look at alternatives, to stop using coal. They thought natural gas was a reasonable alternative, and the natural gas costs that go into that plant will be more than made up for by healthy foreign sales at higher rates. Of course, all of these matters are reviewable by the Public Utilities Standing Committee of the Legislature. The rate-setting mechanism for Manitoba Hydro rests with the Public Utilities Board, but they do not concern themselves with major capital investments.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, this Doer government, this minister is on the

edge of credibility in terms of being responsive to public interest about what is happening in hydro. Will this minister commit to taking this project to the Public Utilities Board for the questioning by experts?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The conversion of the Selkirk Generating Station to gas will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will allow the retention of an important number of jobs in the Selkirk community. It was very responsive to the public interest. Residents in the area were concerned about the environmental impact of a coal generating station. We have addressed that issue; we have addressed the local employment issues. We will be happy to review all the details of that at the standing committee of the Legislature.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, one of the underlying principles of managing a monopoly in this province is that it is required to go in front of the Public Utilities Board to defend its rates. Will this minister take the Manitoba Hydro—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that the public has trust in the rates and in the management that is proceeding of our public utilities, will the minister commit to going before the Manitoba Public Utilities Board with Manitoba Hydro, the same as MPI is required to?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the members, after 11 years of being in charge of Manitoba Hydro, do not understand the distinction between the role of the Public Utilities Board, which is responsible for rates, rates which have been frozen for five years, and the role of the Crown Corps Council which reviews the business plan for Manitoba Hydro, and, of course, the role of the Public Utilities Committee of the Legislature to review the governance of it by the Government. We will proceed to be accountable in all of those forums for the specifics that are required by the legislation in those areas.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, prior to 1988 the Pawley government and the current Premier (Mr. Doer) would sit around the Cabinet table and set rates for MPIC, for telephones, for hydro. We made a substantive change in legislation, which mandated that all of these rates go before the Public Utilities Board. The minister is dead wrong when he says that they have a narrow mandate to only review rates. The Public Utilities Board has the right to review the activities of the corporation.

I would ask the Minister of Finance why he is afraid to submit before the Public Utilities Board all of the activities that are going on within Manitoba Hydro.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to submit any rate increases that may be on the horizon, and there are none planned at the moment, to the Public Utilities Board. Manitoba Hydro makes itself fully accountable to the Crown Corps Council. Of course, Manitoba Hydro will be ready to answer any questions that the members may have when we convene the standing committee of the Legislature.

Mr. Gilleshammer: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. This Premier wants to return to the Howard Pawley days, where rates are set around the Cabinet table. It is not only this side of the House—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Minnedosa, on a new question.

Mr. Gilleshammer: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. This Premier wants to return to the days of Howard Pawley where they would sit around the Cabinet table and set the rates for MPIC, Hydro and Manitoba Telephones. We are not the only ones who are asking for a review by the Public Utilities Board. The Consumers' Association and the seniors association of Manitoba are also concerned about the agenda of this Government. Why will they not submit all

of their plans on Hydro to the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, the Public Utilities Board is fully available and responsible for rate setting. The rates have been frozen. The Crown Corps Council is responsible for reviewing the business plan, which they have done. The standing committee of the Legislature can review any matters that it wishes to and, of course, the Legislature is ultimately responsible for the Crowns, and we are fully accountable here as well.

Mr. Gilleshammer: On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Minnedosa, on a new question.

* (14:10)

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro if he is not aware that the chair of the Crown Corporations Council has indicated that the Public Utilities Board has a broader mandate, a mandate to review all of the activities of Crown corporations, and will he not agree with the chair of the Crown Corporations Council and submit all of the activities of Manitoba Hydro to the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we will be fully accountable for the business plans and activities of Manitoba Hydro to the Crown Corps Council. We will be fully responsible for any rate increases, which are currently not on the horizon, to the Public Utilities Board. The Public Utilities Board has reviewed rate increases for Centra Gas, which is also owned by Manitoba Hydro, and they will continue to provide their due diligence there.

We will convene very shortly, as promised, the standing committee of the Legislature for Crown corporations, including Manitoba Hydro. I might add that we have had more meetings in our short term of office than the government did in their entire term of office during the last government.

East St. Paul High Voltage Hydro Lines

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has two 230kV lines and one

500kV line currently running through East St. Paul and construction of a new line is currently on hold.

Would the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider instructing the corporation to lower the voltage through the existing lines, while they study as to how the existing lines affect the health of the people of East St. Paul?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. There is one tower in the East St. Paul area that has two 230kV lines on it. I am informed by Manitoba Hydro that the electromagnetic field is directional and the two lines, being on the same line, actually reduce the size of the electromagnetic field because they cancel each other out; therefore, the people in that area are safe. The readings at the highest level would be in the order of eight milligals. The international standard is 880 milligals. The readings at the highest level are 1 percent of the international standards.

Manitoba Hydro Public Consultations

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister responsible for Hydro commit to full and open public hearings under the Public Utilities Board to discuss the hydro issues of concern to Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The member opposite should know that it is the Department of Conservation, the environmental licensing branch, which reviews applications for any new hydro line transmission. That application was initiated by the former government. It was completed and approved by the Department of Conservation. The appeal was heard and dismissed, so all of the proper procedures have been followed with respect to that application.

In addition, we have asked the Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba to review the literature and the state of the art with respect to EMF fields. We have had the best possible

review we could have of that. The Clean Environment Commission has had a recent meeting with the residents from the East St. Paul area, and they will continue further dialogue to educate each other as to their concerns and the actual state of the science with respect to these lines.

Video Lottery Terminals Reallocation

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries. Recently, a number of the site holders throughout Manitoba and Winnipeg have been notified of a re-evaluation of the amount of dollars that go through the machines in regard to the reallocation of machines that are under-utilized.

Is the minister aware of the letter—I imagine she is aware—that went out when it says, just as a quote: Based on sales revenue of your VLTs for a period from January 2 to December 31, 2000, it is determined—and then it says—the removal of the VLTs from your site. In my calculation, that is a one-year period; that is a 52-week period. However, when the calculation is done on the allocation of volume per machine, the dividing number is not 52 weeks per year, it is 53 weeks per year.

I want to ask the minister why there is that type of discrepancy when in the letter it says a one-year period, which is 52 weeks; with the calculation of the dollar amount it is 53 weeks. Why would there be this distinction?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, I want to assure the member opposite that the initiative to redistribute VLTs in Manitoba is a business decision that was made by the administration of Lotteries and also approved by the board of Lotteries. I would also like to point out that this initiative has the support of the Manitoba Hotel Association and the Manitoba Restaurant Association. Both are certainly looking forward to MLC beginning this process, and, in fact, the process has begun.

I might also point out that there was a previous redistribution of lotteries in June 1996, under the previous administration.

Mr. Reimer: The minister is outlining the support that has been garnered through the various organizations, but I just want to ask her for clarification. Is she aware that the dividing number, when you talk about one year which is 52 weeks, is not used when the calculation as per volume per machine is used? Fifty-three is used.

I want to know why there is that difference between 52 and 53, because that does amount to a fair amount of dollars when you are looking at a machine that is on the borderline of either staying in the establishment or being pulled from the establishment.

Ms. McGifford: Just to finish what I was discussing, and then I will get to the member's specific point. In 1996, 650 VLTs were removed from the system. I do want to say that with this redistribution, we are continuing with the removal of that 650 VLTs. So it is a business decision made by the administration, supported by the board, an initiative that has been taken before and is being done now.

Now, the member asked me about 53 weeks. I do not have that particular letter before me, but I will certainly contact people at Lotteries, and if I might phone him in his office, I can provide him with the information that he is looking for.

* (14:20)

Mr. Reimer: That is exactly what I was asking the minister to do because I know that her staff right now are running around like cats on linoleum trying to find the answer for this.

If she is willing to look into that type of discrepancy, Mr. Speaker, that is all I am asking because some particular rural outlyings have asked me to ask that question. The question has been asked; the answer has been given. Thank you.

Ms. McGifford: I did assure the member that I would solicit that information and get back to him, but I do not think it is very kind for him to refer to the hardworking staff at Lotteries as cats sliding around on linoleum. I think that is slightly insulting to those people.

Point of Order

Mr. Reimer: As a matter of clarification, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the spinners that

run up and down these halls here, not the Lotteries staff and the people who work for this Government or for our previous government. Good employees, they work very hard at what they are doing. It is not a reflection on the employees of Lotteries. It is the minister's staff and the Premier's (Mr. Doer) spinners.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Southdale, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Indian Act Amendments

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I personally would like to welcome back the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson). It is good to have him back in the House. I did welcome him back before the session started, and I said I do not have a question for him, but now I have changed my mind and I am going to have a question for him this afternoon.

So, Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the provincial and federal ministers and Aboriginal leaders from across the country met here in Winnipeg to discuss a wide range of issues as they relate to Aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker, given that this Government and this minister have publicly expressed concerns about the Indian Act, I wonder if the minister would outline for this House what changes the provincial government would like to see made in this federal piece of legislation.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with the answering of the question, allow me to thank the members of the Opposition and all colleagues in the House for their get-well wishes. It means a lot to a person that is suffering in their health. I want to thank everybody for those kind words and also the well wishes that I received from everybody.

With respect to the question, I have asked our staff at Aboriginal and Northern Affairs to do a summary or an analysis on what the Indian Act amendments that are being proposed by the federal government will mean to our jurisdiction. Certainly other provinces and other territories are of the same opinion, have some concerns on

what this will mean to the province of Manitoba with respect to the potential offloading by the federal government to the provincial governments. We want to be on top of the issue. We naturally believe that many issues belong to the federal government with respect to First Nations people. We want to be equipped and ready so that we are in a position to respond to the federal government to express any concerns our Government has.

I will certainly keep my colleague updated on any developments, if there are any, that may have a direct impact on the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Millennium Scholarship Awards

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, May 30, I had the honour of attending the Rotary Club of Winnipeg luncheon held at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

After sharing lunch with over a hundred Rotarians and guests, it was my pleasure to speak about the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Excellence Awards and to recognize the accomplishment of seven exceptional young Manitobans.

The Millennium Scholarship Foundation has two distinct programs. The first is the Bursary Program, which is a needs-based initiative providing some \$275 million in funding annually to more than 90 000 students enrolled in universities, community colleges, and vocational schools across Canada. The Bursary Program represents 95 percent of the foundation's funding to students on an annual basis.

The foundation's second program is the Excellence Awards and was the reason for my participation. This year, 900 Excellence Awards will be granted at the national, provincial and local levels.

These awards recognize, support and encourage talented Canadians who make a positive

and significant contribution to the betterment of communities across the country, who demonstrate the capacity for leadership and are committed to the pursuit of academic excellence and innovation. This year, 41 Manitoba youths won the merit-based excellence awards.

National award winners receive a \$4,800 cash award renewable for up to four years. Provincial and territorial winners receive a \$4,000 cash award, also renewable for four years, while local recipients receive a one-time cash award of \$4,000.

Winners of the Local Excellence Awards were Rory French, Janee Leberge and Lauren Lange. The Provincial Excellence Award winners were Feraz Shere, Kyle Ushock, while the National Excellence Award winners were Katherine Cibinel and Tara Maltman. These exceptional young Manitobans will be pursuing further studies in areas such as law, education, animation, commerce, drama, pharmacy and engineering. The future is bright for these youth and for our province as they complete their studies and become the leaders of tomorrow. Our future will be in good hands.

I am sure that all members of the Legislature share in congratulating all Manitoba youth that are recipients of the 2001 Canada Millennium Scholarship Awards.

Quorum Count

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday morning as the sky turned to gray/The boss was on business and the mice had to play/Our members had noticed just prior to eleven/the Government was missing, they had only seven.

What was it that morning that scared them away?/ Did they not want to hear what we had to say?/ Was it the day's Question Period that made them afraid?/ Were they going to get caught with mistakes they had made?/ Were they tired of giving the wrong information/Or hiding from parents to avoid confrontation?/Had they promised too much as they stood there and shouted/And hoped that by Monday we would forget all about it?/Was the business that morning not worthy of their time?/Had the Member

for The Maples been hung out to dry/As he stood and supported a resolution he had raised?/On an issue, I might add, our side would have praised/His own caucus colleagues abandoned him there/Did they not support him? Did they just not care?

We will never know, Mr. Speaker, how that would have ended/Or to just how much business this House could have tended/A full day was lost/No House business was done/There was no excuse/Well, they thought they'd try one/ They did it too when the roles were reversed/From their caucus room table they cried, "Well rehearsed"/ While this did occur, we will openly say, "It is rare, it is unheard of to lose a full day"/So Mr. Speaker, as they excuse and defend/In this Chamber is one place they cannot pretend/They know they got sloppy/We have known all along/And that's why this Government won't stay Government for long.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Fine Art in Action Exhibit

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dakota Collegiate organized the St. Vital School Division's Fine Art in Action display in May at St. Vital Shopping Centre. The exhibit in the mall featured more than a hundred pieces by students from six different area schools, including Glenlawn Collegiate, Dakota Collegiate, Victor Wyatt, George McDowell, H. S. Paul and Samuel Burland schools.

The mall exhibit featured large and small paintings, charcoal sketches, photography, clay work and plaster casting. Not only did the display provide an opportunity for students to share their artistic talents but also the public saw what young people can do and gave positive feedback to the artists.

Dakota art teachers, Heidi Murray and Karen Geist, should be very proud of their work with the students. Their enthusiasm and dedication as professionals was reflected in the excellent student work on display. There were also some of their students at the mall working on new pieces. This allowed the community to

see what is done first-hand and to interact with the young people. Art programs in St. Vital schools is another example of the quality education being offered.

Congratulations to the students for sharing their art with us. Bravo to the teachers in each school for their efforts to help their students develop all their talents. May the art program continue to interest and challenge our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back Forty Folk Festival

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the Back Forty Folk Festival which I had the pleasure of attending yesterday. This year's event was the 12th annual and drew a crowd of about 2000 people. The Back Forty Folk Festival is held on the first Sunday of June in the Morden Park. The festival is composed of nine hours of music and fun for the whole family in a beautiful grassy bowl on the banks of the Dead Horse Creek. This year's event included the kids' workshop, a workshop stage and mainstage area. It turned out to be a gorgeous day that was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

In addition to the annual summer festival, the Back Forty hosts coffee houses and song-writing performing workshops in Morden and in Winkler. Their mandate includes a strong educational component as they nurture young talent in our region. I would like to congratulate all the performers, the organizers and especially David Stobbe for making the 12th annual Back Forty Festival such an enjoyable experience. We all look forward to next year's event. Thank you.

Poplarfield Millennium Album

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to draw attention to a very worthy undertaking recently completed on behalf of the people of Poplarfield. I refer to the publication of the Poplarfield and District Millennium Album, compiled at great effort over a long period of time by Mr. Edward Ledohowski who grew up in the area.

To acknowledge all of the people who contributed time, money, photographs and histories

towards this worthy project would be impossible in the time allotted to me, but I feel the author would like me to draw special attention to his sponsors for federal and provincial financial assistance, The St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Parish and the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Parish of Poplarfield.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ledohowski's undertaking at this point in time was critical in preserving the early history of this region in that it would not have been too much longer before all ties to the past were severed by time. His foresight and initiative have now assured that future generations will have a concrete and informative record of the efforts of their ancestors who opened up this land.

This album is not merely a collection of old family photographs. Rather it explores all aspects of the development of this region, thereby making it not only a cherished keepsake for people with roots in the region but also a useful tool for people in general interested in the history of our province as it was settled by our European ancestors, in particular the Ukrainian people.

On behalf of the people of Poplarfield in the province of Manitoba, I thank Mr. Edward Ledohowski and the people who assisted him for compiling this worthy document. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): As acting House leader, I would like to advise the House that on Wednesday afternoon, June 6, the condolence motion for Gildas Molgat will be considered under Orders of the Day.

Members may recall that we did have this previously scheduled, but, due to lack of time, we are rescheduling it. It is June 6, Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: For the advisement of the House that on Wednesday afternoon, June 6, the condolence motion for the Honourable Gildas Molgat will be considered under Orders of the Day. That is for Wednesday, June 6.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to, just before moving this motion, indicate that if we do complete the Committee of Supply we will then have second readings and I will discuss with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau) the specific order of business.

In the meantime, I would like to move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale), that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTH

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Health. There was a previous agreement of this committee to have a global discussion of the entire department and after completion of all questioning pass all resolutions. We will continue with the global discussion. We are open for questions.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to pose questions of the Minister of Health this day. I would like to ask the question I posed to the minister last year in regard to speech and language pathologists. As he is aware from previous questioning, there has been a significant disparity between remuneration of those individuals who are in the employ of the Department of Health, and those who are in the employ of the school divisions throughout the province. Of note, the changes that were made significantly provided for a gap in not only remuneration but holidays as well as professional development. Could the minister update me, as he had promised last year to look into the matter?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, the entire issue of perceived disparity or unequalness across the system is pretty well a system-wide difficulty that we face across the system in virtually every area of the

health care field. We find, across the gamut, from community right through to tertiary care facility, there is a range with generally the higher paying being in the tertiary care facility and then, as we move out into the community, a generally perceived lower payment. There has been a fair amount of lobbying across the system for some form of equity to be placed across the system.

With respect to the specifics of the member's question, that is the differentiation between those employed in education and training and those employed with the health care system. I will take that as notice and I will provide the member with information on that.

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the minister for his response. However, it was very specific to speech pathologists at the Health Sciences Centre, in relationship to those who are employed, not by the Department of Education, but those who are employed by the school divisions, which fall under the ratings as established by the Manitoba Teachers' Society on par with level of education. As you can appreciate, the level of education for these individuals is significant and falls into Class 5 and Class 6, dependent upon numbers of years of training.

I would like now to ask the minister in regard to technicians specific to ultrasound, my understanding is those who are selected for that training come from other disciplines, whether it be radiology or other technical positions, into the ultrasound program training offered by the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface. Annually, eight individuals are selected for this program. Currently there are seven because of one attrition. Is he knowledgeable of the employs of these individuals, subject to their graduation from the program?

Mr. Chomiak: If memory serves me correctly, of the seven that are continuing in the class, I believe one has accepted an offer outside of the province, and I believe that six, in one form or another, will be remaining in Manitoba.

Mr. Faurchou: At present, through their own association, they have determined that now three persons will be leaving of the seven, and it is already an area that is critically short. Portage la

Prairie General Hospital has one individual who is going on maternity leave, and they have advertised extensively for a replacement and have yet to garner any more than a part-time replacement for her position. That is going to be essentially shared with other facilities, and, consequently, there will be a significant backlog of ultrasound referrals because of this.

I would like to ask the minister specifically: Is he contemplating anything similar to that of the nursing field where there are enhancements to encourage individuals graduating to remain in the province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not suppose that there is an area that we could probably name in the health care system—I do not think I could think of, offhand, a single area where we are not receiving some kind of pressure in the form of recruitment outside of the jurisdiction, or shortages for a variety of reasons, and quite clearly in a variety of areas we have to be "competitive."

To be competitive across the wide range of professions in Manitoba is not possible right across the gamut. We cannot be at the top of the scale for every single area. What traditionally has occurred in Manitoba is generally we remained in the middle of the pack and attempted to maintain that standing across the system. In some areas, we have been forced to go to the top of the levels; in some areas we are not at the top of the levels.

The question of sonographers is really an interesting one. It is like so many other professions. There is a relatively small pool, yet the significance of the work is such that any difficulties encountered, be it work-related matters of which there are considerable in that particular profession or be it other matters related to a variety of issues, maternity, paternity, et cetera, have a serious impact across the system.

We had been working with the WRHA to look at a variety of other issues and a variety of other responses as it relates to that particular profession. I had also hoped that by this point we would have some specific recommendations, but those recommendations are still pending with

respect to issues surrounding sonographers and surrounding ultrasound in general. Having said that, even if I was in a position or we as a Province were in a position to offer particular enhancements to a particular profession, I do not think I would publicly state that during the course of Estimates insofar as there is a whole variety of issues surrounding this and surrounding bargaining and surrounding issues as relates to that.

So the member's point is well taken. We are quite aware of the shortages. Like so many other areas, in fact, if we had the personnel we certainly have the resources and are prepared to enhance the number of services available and would but for the human resources. We are cognizant of it. There is some review that is presently being undertaken in that regard, and we hope to be able to improve the system over the next little period of time.

The member indicated that he was under the impression that three—I assume the member's information is more current than my memory, and I will just confirm those numbers and see if I can find out a little bit more.

Mr. Faurschou: I do not believe the numbers are as pertinent as is the trend, and I say specifically that we are training more than enough individuals to provide for our system here in Manitoba if we were not, in fact, exporting our newly trained individuals to other jurisdictions.

The encouragement to stay, I was not asking for specifics; I was mostly just trying to emphasize that discussions must take place in order to provide that encouragement to stay, to put down roots and effectively make Manitoba their place for their career.

I would like to ask the minister as well when we could look forward to his department or his decision on capital projects. I asked the minister last year as well in regard to the redevelopment of the regional hospital in Portage la Prairie, as has been the recommendation of three previous studies conducted by the Department of Health recommending a new facility. The central regional RHA has in fact placed that at the top of their capital project request for support from the department. It remains in that position. I would

like to ask the minister as to when potentially we will hear as to whether or not at least the primary steps will be considered for support toward a new regional facility in Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, the member asked this question last year. In fact, the member asked it previous during the course of Estimates. I believe I did read a response in with respect to that. I did endeavour to get back to the member. The member might have been distracted at that particular moment that I read in the update with respect to the Portage redevelopment situation. I am sure the member is reviewing that in terms of Hansard. I can indicate that with respect to the capital plan, as is generally the practice, the capital plan usually follows the overall operating plan. I am anticipating within weeks the release of the capital plan for this year.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the minister's response. I will endeavour to seek out his response previous to that and will look with anticipation to the placement of Portage la Prairie upon that capital list in the next week or two.

I would like to ask the minister as to the progress toward the Premier's promise that individuals that are engaged in training as a health care aide, subsequently as an LPN and further to that R.N., and ultimately BN, or nurse practitioner, will receive accreditation for their program that they have completed, and their experience to be recognized in the progression to higher levels of involvement in the health care field as to whether or not there has been some progress to this effect. More pertinent to this, we are very short of health care aides in the system. Currently, to my understanding, those that are enrolled in the registered nursing diploma program and the registered nursing baccalaureate program are not able to practise as health care aides when they are in that program, just so they can at least try to earn some money and some experience in our health care facilities. Other than at present, I understand they can only volunteer until they have completed their program. Is this correct or is it not?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not have access to the specific individual who could give us the specifics. I will also endeavour to get back to the

member with respect to that particular item, because I do not want to hazard a guess, hazard a comment. I am somewhat familiar, but on a matter of this kind I would prefer to be accurate. I will get back as soon as possible to the member on that specific question.

With respect to the general question, I attended this morning a small portion of the MLPN annual convention and was advised by the nurse that was very kindly spurring me around not to use the word "laddering," which I always thought was an appropriate word, because she felt we should have specific exit points and ability to bridge from one area to the other. It clearly is our intention to try to move toward that kind of a system.

I am advised that the diploma nursing program has taken on some LPNs with respect to training at Red River. I think that that is a significant step forward. We are trying to design the program to provide and permit a utilization of both previous education experience and previous competencies. "Competencies" is really a significant choice of words in terms of this particular debate insofar as there is generally a trend towards recognizing competencies and determining eligibility in practice based on competencies, and less so based on specific kinds of educational institutions or kinds of educational certificates, if I can put it in those terms.

* (15:00)

However, there is a variety of debates between various organizations and government bodies with respect to how to best deal with those specific issues. We have ongoing discussions in that regard and are hopeful that we can move towards a system that takes advantage of the tremendous potential out there amongst people who have experience and who have education, who want to both utilize that education and that experience, and who want to enhance that education and experience in a variety of settings.

With respect to the specific issue of a prohibition on individuals who are in training in the diploma or the baccalaureate nurse program from actively working as a nurse's aid, I will

take that specific question as notice and get back to the member on that issue.

Mr. Faurshou: Moving on to ask the minister of his announcement back in October 2000, in which the level of support to the tune of \$389,000 of nurses' training in Selkirk, I was wondering if the minister has considered those dollars being made available, when this program is complete, to other areas of the province, where regional health authorities can identify their deficiencies and to take on training programs that will address those shortages within those regional health authorities.

Mr. Chomiak: There is no doubt that there is an absolute and a very clear system of shortages across the system. It is not just a case of rural and northern Manitoba suffering from the shortages of nursing and other professional staff, but even amongst certain areas of nursing in tertiary and acute care facilities, there are some significant shortages.

Some of the measures that have been taken, aside from the Government's five-point nursing plan that was announced in the spring of 2000, was a reintroduction of LPNs within the acute care setting which is happening at the Health Sciences Centre, first time a reversal of the policy of a number of years, and is occurring in other acute care facilities. We hope to enhance across the system.

Other than the overall obvious increase, and I have indicated on more than one occasion, both in the House and Estimates, that there are more nurses in training now than before. In fact, right now there are also 250 nurses in the LPN program set to graduate. We are looking at it on an as-needed basis within specific communities, a specific training of floor nurses along the lines, as I mentioned by the member. We have had the assistance of the federal government with regard to training and training dollars or education dollars. We are pursuing various options and looking at different options in this regard.

I know the member has for some time suggested and had some advice with respect to this area, and I appreciate that. I think it is well founded. The issues concerning the application of nursing and nursing functions are related to a

variety of issues. There are professional issues. There are issues relating to workforce matters. There are issues relating to management. We are vigorously pursuing all of these areas in order to, in the final analysis, get and obtain and have more nurses provide the care that is obviously needed across the system.

There are a variety of concerns, and it is becoming apparent, it seems to me, that the key issue that is now coming before us is one of retention, retention for a variety of reasons, not just based on demographics but retention because of recent developments in other jurisdictions, notably, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia. So there is a fair amount of pressure with respect to retention initiatives.

The member talked earlier about sonographers. It is the same across the field with nurses as well. In many cases, they are highly mobile and have the ability to go to other jurisdictions. We have been kind of fortunate in the last couple of years because we have managed to retain most of our nursing classes. We may not have that luxury in the near future. Targeted training is something that we are looking at. There are various stages of development, but it is something we are looking at.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Chairperson, the reason I asked of the dollars of support for training in various areas within the province, whether it be Portage la Prairie or Dauphin or Russell or Swan River, it gives the opportunity to persons that have already demonstrated their commitment to those communities and provides the opportunity to enhance their skills and support the health care needs of their communities without having to relocate to take the training. As you can appreciate, if persons can relocate to take the training in either Brandon or Winnipeg, they can also relocate into other jurisdictions once they are trained. If we give the opportunity to persons that are already in a community and are wanting to fulfil a need in that community, those dollars are very, very wisely spent.

I will compliment the minister's support in Selkirk, over \$389,000 worth of support for the LPN training program there, but I would like to leave with the minister the thought to continuing that level of support elsewhere into the province

where identified needs are put forward. If the minister is willing to put a mechanism in place where these needs can be clearly identified and prioritized in some formal fashion, I believe that he will make very wise choices and the dollars that are spent in training will be very, very wisely spent, so if the minister has a comment on that before I move through, otherwise I would like to ask more specific questions.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I just want to comment that the member makes a very valid suggestion.

Mr. Faurshou: Just with the health care aid deficiency that we have in this central region, the Red River Community College has, with its satellite campus in Portage la Prairie, attempted to address that identified need. However, the tuition cost, because of it being a satellite campus and required to effectively collect from the students the full cost of the program, placing that tuition at over \$2,000 per individual for a six-month course, makes it almost prohibitive for many that are looking to take this entry step into the health care field.

I am wondering whether or not the minister appreciates this or whether he is knowledgeable of this high tuition when programming is available outside the Perimeter.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I am aware of the issue, Mr. Chairperson. I should add that most recently, over the past weekend, the head of the Manitoba Nurses' Union has also called for similar supports to enhance nursing. I think the suggestion was for free tuition or subsidized tuition. I take it the member's suggestion, as well, is because of the differentiation, the difficulty and the advantage of people maintaining and staying in rural Manitoba, that some thought be given to some kind of subsidized or decreased form of tuition. I will take that information as advice from the member.

Mr. Faurshou: This is my last question to the minister before my honourable colleague from Russell has questions to pose to the minister.

In regard to the ambulance service that is operated out of Portage la Prairie being of a privately owned enterprise, contracted to the central regional RHA, the announcement to support new

ambulances and for personnel to staff those ambulances, as previously announced, how does that fit with the current situation in Portage?

Mr. Chomiak: One of the slight disadvantages of not doing line by line is I do not have the specific individuals here to deal with the specific items in terms of some of the more complex questions posed by the member, but my understanding is that the RHAs have now the legislative authority to provide for ambulance care within their various regions.

I understand that the replenishment and the renewal of the existing fleet that has been advocated will be for those that are operated by particular regional health authorities. I do not think it applies to the contracted relationships between the particular ambulances in a region and a particular regional health authority. I also understand there are far less of those arrangements in place, and there has been a significant transformation into the region. But that is my understanding of the issue.

* (15:10)

Mr. Faurshou: The minister has left me with another question on that basis of saying that regional health authorities have the jurisdiction over ambulance care. Is that also now the minister's position that the RHA has total jurisdiction over other entities such as stretcher services, for instance, that operate out of Winnipeg primarily because, as you can appreciate, there are a great deal more persons coming into the city for treatment than there is backhaul, if I can use that terminology, to their respective communities. That the stretcher service would be much more affordable to individuals once their treatment has been received in the tertiary hospitals in the city.

Mr. Chomiak: There continues to be a fair amount of ambiguity with respect to that particular issue.

Mr. Faurshou: Is the minister supportive of the stretcher services that are certified to operate here in the city as to their ability to take persons back to their respective communities, regardless of the regional health authority in which that person resides?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe that there are some discussions going on in that particular area as we speak.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I have some questions of the minister as they relate to the RHA deficits. Now we have been over this ground, I know, and I acknowledge that, but I do not feel that the minister has really given me any comfort in terms of how some of the deficits in our rural RHAs are going to be handled over the course of the next year. Specifically, I am concerned about the areas that I represent, but I think that applies to most areas that are running a deficit in terms of the challenges that these RHAs are facing. No one is suggesting that the minister should have a magic fix, but I believe that it is an issue that is causing some concern.

The Marquette RHA ran a deficit of well over a million dollars in the past fiscal year, looking at another deficit year in this particular year and probably not knowing or understanding how they are going to be able to manage given the fact that a large portion of the money that was allocated to them in this fiscal year has had to go to offset the deficit from last year. So they are left in a quandary, I think, as to what they need to do in the course of the next year. There are rumours, and I guess we should not place any weight on rumours. But indeed there are rumours that there may be a need to close or to diminish services in some of the small communities that are served by the Marquette Regional Health Authority.

So I would like to ask the minister specifically how he intends to address the deficits of the rural RHAs, and if I can use the example, of the Marquette Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we have canvassed it a bit during the course of the Estimates, and of course we will continue. A couple of things just in terms of setting the parameters, setting the stage for this discussion. One of the things that we have done this year is we have given the RHAs ahead of time their budgets in advance, very clearly in advance. We have tried to be providing as much information as possible. What happened in the past was the budgets were formulated, were basically targets that were

established, not that firm, and during the course of the year Health would flow money to the various regions based on different developments. What we tried to do this year was, as has been successful in some of the other regions, provided money up-front. It has been appreciated. So that is the first point.

The second point is that the vast majority of money that we provide to RHAs this budgetary year, the vast majority of money is in balance and not in deficit. Far more is in balance than in deficit positions. There are problems. The regions generally advise us that the difficulties being encountered the argument from the regions, which I think has validity, are based on a historical underfunding of the base. Our goals, both last year and this year, were to try to determine exactly what that base is and then function from that particular base. We, obviously, in a number of cases, do not have it right.

The third issue is that I do want to differentiate between on the issue of small-hospital closings and the issue of small-hospital closings vis-à-vis deficits. There were rumours about small hospital closings long before we came into office. There will be rumours about small-hospital closings probably long after we leave office. It is an issue out there. I just want to differentiate slightly from the issue of the deficits in the regions.

We have, and we are looking at each of the region's plans and the options that they are looking at with respect to how they are going to deal with their budget. We are looking at it on an individual basis and on a system-wide basis. Obviously, from a central government perspective, we felt very comfortable with the allocation of the funding in this budgetary year, probably more overall than any other time since regionalization.

There has been some concern, but I reiterated during the course of these Estimates that in fact, for example, the Winnipeg Region which does do 30% rural work, got a lesser percentage increase than some of the other jurisdictions. That is not to say that I discount some of the issues of deficits and some of the issues of budget. There is the issue of deficit and

then there is the issue of programming, and if there is a shortfall, where does that go to? It amounts to the same thing, but we are facing both sides of that particular equation.

We are looking at the various options. I am hopeful we can resolve the majority of these issues in the best interests of everyone across the system. I note last year, again during the course of Estimates, there were lots of claims about particular regions and how they are going to be in deficit. I said give us a chance to work on it and at the end of the year, as it turned out, those particular difficulties did not arise. In some cases, I think we will be able to manage and those difficulties will not arise. I am not certain that in all cases that will be the case.

* (15:20)

We have asked the RHAs to submit plans with options to deal with their budgets and how they proceed with the meeting of the expectations in their communities. We are looking at those circumstances as we speak. We are working with the individual regions collectively and also on an individual basis with respect to their particular circumstances.

I do want to indicate that the vast majority of funding that is going to RHAs this year is not in deficit. The vast majority is in a balance situation. There are some significant problems in some areas. We are trying to address them on a one-by-one basis.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the minister's answer. As I indicated in my former question, no one is expecting miracles. There are no quick fixes, I do not believe, in the system. Regionalization is still fairly new and young and certainly needs to develop. I think, regardless of who is in the minister's chair, there needs to be some latitude given to the department to be able to address those issues. What we are finding, which is somewhat disconcerting, is the fact that rural RHAs are facing some fairly significant challenges, not only in their deficits. I mean, the deficit is one thing, but the deficit is as a result of costs escalating and the RHAs not being able to meet the demand that is out there.

There are a lot of morale problems within the hospitals themselves because of that, because

there is significant pressure being put on the individual hospitals themselves in terms of their budgets. If you talk to the nurses, they will tell you that not only are they overworked, but full-time work is almost impossible to get. Everything is done on a casual or part-time basis. So that discourages a lot of our younger professionals from entering the job market, if you like. This of course has to relate to the funding and to the amount of money that is available in the RHAs.

Prior to RHAs I know that in my area most of the hospitals were running at a surplus. Since regionalization we are seeing that the deficit continues to mount. It is not this minister's fault, but I think it is a symptom of a system that needs to be addressed and challenges that need to be wrestled with.

So I am asking the minister, although he says we are working with the RHAs, whether he can outline for us here in government and in opposition what his vision or what his plan is with regard to dealing with the system so that it can be sustainable and so that the growth needs and services to patients can be achieved.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, the member asks a very large question. It is quite clear that sustainability, in fact, is the crucial issue across the health care system, has been for some time, continues to be. It was probably the main issue of contention during the federal-provincial negotiations leading up to the agreement last fall. It is in fact the key issue surrounding the Romanow commission. It is taking place today. It was the key issue in the Fyke commission in Saskatchewan. As well, and I am not trying to be political on this, I just note that Premier Harris of Ontario has made it pretty well the top of his agenda, quote: the sustainability of the health care system and the ability to meet the demands and the needs across the system.

For a long time, there have been various components to this issue of sustainability. During the '90s there was significant closure of beds on the assumption that the closure of beds would see some of the funding transferred to various other areas of the health care system for provision of services. Therefore, the system would continue, but with less funding, providing

essentially more services but not so many more in the acute care sector where it was identified as more expensive. Those efforts have met with varying degrees of success.

The question of sustainability looks at the major cost generators across the system. Quite clearly, we have pointed out that the single biggest cost driver is a percentage basis, and otherwise the system today is pharmaceuticals and drug prices across the system, not just in the Pharmacare program but the pharmaceuticals that are provided to the various programs and institutions. When we look at an analysis of the increases across the RHA sector, for example, one cost generated that jumps out at us very obviously is the question of pharmaceuticals.

The other issue that is clearly coming to fore is the entire question of wages, of salaries, and how we address the demands. We discussed it earlier during the course of these Estimates, the demands to retain professionals in Manitoba and in rural northern communities specifically, without being competitive. That clearly is an issue as well. There is no doubt the system has contracted to the extent that there are less beds in the system, and those less beds are treating more people.

The costs themselves have not demonstratively decreased. It is quite clear that a number of initiatives have to be taken, both on the preventative and the community side, and actually take place. It has not been largely broadcast, or necessarily indicated, but Manitoba has done some significant development in this area in the last two years. The member indicates four years, and I was going to get to that in a second. For example, the palliative care program, which was started by members opposite, which I was very supportive of, we have continued in to the point where we are recognized across the country as having the best palliative care program in the country. We have not rolled it out significantly in rural Manitoba yet, but we have funded palliative care co-ordinators in rural Manitoba in order to roll it out. We are continuing some significant initiatives to both fund and undertake the palliative care program.

A lot of the initiatives we have undertaken in the past 18 months have been geared toward

an attempt to place the services at the community's side, be it the eating disorder program, be it the PACT program, or be it some of our initiatives. We could disagree. We will disagree with respect to how we undertake day surgeries. Having said that, I do not think the member would disagree with the fact that we should be doing more day surgeries, and we should be doing more day surgeries outside of acute care settings in the surgical centres or otherwise. Obviously, we are going to disagree in terms of whether it should be private, public or whatever, but the point is we have and we are undertaking initiatives to do services in the community related to day surgeries.

* (15:30)

Manitoba Health undertook a significant review of primary care provision, primary care provision being the era and the application of primary care, and we are continuing those efforts across the system. We are continuing a move towards a variety of primary care initiatives.

Now, for anyone to suggest that this is where I got into trouble, where when I addressed the MMA recently, I indicated that we did not have a grand scheme for the application of primary care because we wanted to look at different models of primary care application and then take the best practice. Certain members of the Opposition have mischievously suggested that my comments about the grand scheme apply to all of health care. Nonetheless, I am not defensive on that. Although one would suggest that when I said that in my comments, but what I said at the MMA and what I continue to say, is that with respect to primary care we have taken a whole series of options, some which were undertaken by the previous government, some which we are introducing, to look at primary care across the system to see what works best and how we can apply it across the system. There are examples in rural Manitoba; there are examples in northern Manitoba; there are examples in the cities of the application of primary care.

You know, it was lost in a lot of the fanfare in terms of our initiatives. For example, in dealing with the hallway medicine initiative, at least half of the initiatives, 50 percent, were

geared at the community. That was done deliberately. It was deliberately done on the basis that if we could keep more people out of the hospital, that would deal largely or help to deal with the hallway situation. So any success we have had in that area, which I suggest is considerable, can be attributed to our initiatives in the community.

So the overall direction and flow—and it has been very clear in our direction and in our priorities in terms of health plans to the regions and otherwise—is towards community-based care, as well as a directive towards dealing with primary care. So there is prioritization of issues like mental health. There is prioritization of issues of community care. There is prioritization towards primary health care. There is prioritization to the extent that we can implement it towards preventative health care.

I might add we have done more in the preventative health care side in the last year than in a long, long time. The vaccination programs we have undertaken, particularly the pneumococcal which was recommended as a preventative measure that we introduced for the first time in Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: Only here. Just in the city.

Mr. Chomiak: No, the pneumococcal was across the province. The member is referring to the meningitis. No, the pneumococcal was an initiative that was recommended about a year and a half ago as to prevention of pneumonia because we were finding that during the, quote, "flu season," many patients, particularly the elderly, were obviously having secondary illnesses as a result of their flu, and if we could prevent pneumonia from developing, we could save lives and reduce hospitalizations. So we introduced the pneumococcal specifically geared at that. The evidence is still out, but certainly the indications in other jurisdictions are that it is largely successful.

The child injury program that we undertook, the advertising campaign has been eminently successful, a far greater response than even we anticipated, and if we solved a few injuries or saved some difficulty, then we have done it. We

are also going to be doing more extensive preventative initiatives across the system.

So we have been consciously gearing towards the primary health care side and the preventative side in terms of our approach. That is primarily aimed at the issue of sustainability and attempting to utilize our resources across the system to provide a broader range in health care both at the community and at the front end, preventative side that could reduce the need for the more expensive traditional care. To that extent, a disproportionate amount of funding relative to past practice has gone towards the long-term care area as well as the home care area. There has been a significant amount of resources on the basis that if we can keep people healthy and out of those institutions then we have done a service.

The issue of sustainability has been addressed specifically by the Fyke commission in Saskatchewan that has recommended, for example, as a matter of sustainability, that dozens of hospitals be shut down in Saskatchewan and that only regional health centres—and I am just going from memory—in something like, I think, 15 locations be maintained, which would be a dramatic and a significant shift.

The premise on the basis of Fyke is that is all that the system can support. We have not, and we are not adopting that particular initiative. Manitoba has never been overly institutionalized, not certainly to the extent of, for example, Saskatchewan. Frankly, that particular move, the jury is out in terms of whether in fact it enhances any kind of saving to particular communities.

So we are faced with the prospect of evolving the system away from an acute-care system into a more community-based system, which we are trying to do in a variety of means and a variety of methods. Some of the initiatives, for example, in the diabetes strategy are geared towards that. Some of the initiatives in terms of some of the other preventative measures we have outlined are geared towards that.

The issue of increasing costs across the system, we have tried to focus a bit on the pharmaceuticals. As I indicated earlier, we identified

that as the single biggest cost driver in the system. That is across the country. It is not just confined to Manitoba. It is clear it is a significant cost driver. We are attempting to look at a variety of options in terms of how we can best manage these costs. As I have put it publicly and otherwise, what we want to do is to provide the greatest amount of coverage in terms of pharmaceuticals to the greatest number of individuals—that is our goal—while at the same time somehow keeping costs from continuing to rise at literally double-digit levels.

Across the board we are in a difficult situation vis-à-vis other jurisdictions, and the attraction of professionals and the competition between this jurisdiction and other jurisdictions. We clearly cannot compete on all fronts, but where we can we will compete in order to retain professionals here. The overall issue of sustainability is going to be tied up, in my view, in how we develop and manage over the next few years in terms of our resource allocation.

One of the reasons we are going on the Pan Am model is to try to see if we can effect some efficiencies in the system to do more surgeries for effectively less dollars and therefore achieve two goals. Whether we can do that, we are confident we can, but other jurisdictions are trying other models. We are doing some models. We are still doing contracting with private surgical, and we will be able to see, as well as having the ongoing institutional, we will be able to compare and see how we are doing vis-à-vis the comparisons to see how we are doing.

* (15:40)

Some jurisdictions are suggesting that they are going to go exclusively private sector as a means to decrease costs. Studies show that is not going to decrease costs. We also know that going that route generally means proceeding towards a co-payment of some kind that offsets the cost.

I note that very often for example it is suggested that we go the French model as in France. It is often held up by particular individuals as the way to go. The French model, as I understand it, has an 80% coverage and 20 percent is left to the individual to pay for.

That has not generally been the orientation of where we are going, but it has been suggested by some observers that that is what we should do. I think we prefer not to go that route but it certainly has been suggested as an option. It does not seem like a lot if one is talking about, for example, cataract surgery where 20 percent would maybe amount to about \$100, but if one is talking about open-heart surgery or a major chronic illness, 20 percent can amount to a significant sum of money.

Our costs as a percentage, it is quite clear, have increased. We do not intend for it to increase at those kinds of levels. We are challenged on both sides, by not just the members opposite, by the public, to maintain ourselves within significant cost ranges and at the same time fund as many programs as possible and fund almost all of the difficulties. It is a tough balancing act, and it is a balancing act. The member appreciates that and recognizes that.

We are attempting to, as the member indicated earlier, proceed on a regionalization model. We are trying to move towards a model that sees better efficiencies and better accountability between the Department of Health and the regions. We intend to proceed in that area. We also intend to proceed on the community side as an offset to the rather increasing costs in the acute care sector. We are going to attempt to control costs in areas where we can control costs while still providing services. The most notable example is our attempts to deal with the pharmaceuticals costs that have increased so dramatically. This is all compounded by a situation where we are in acute shortages of personnel across the field, and that then makes any kind of cost-containment measures very difficult if we are attempting to compete.

So it is a balancing act. We have prioritized the community side across the spectrum. I think a lot of our initiatives are very clearly aimed towards that. We have not forgotten the acute care side obviously and we have attempted to sustain funding along that line. We are undertaking some additional measures that have not been undertaken before, specifically, enhanced day surgeries across the spectrum in many cases outside of hospitals to try to effect more services. We will continue to work on that basis.

As it relates to the specific RHAs and some of the RHAs, there are significant challenges out there. The member referenced full-time work being difficult to acquire. I agree. It has been something we have been attempting to remedy. We have gotten a tiny bit better, but we have got a long way to go in that regard. The question of overworked nurses, for example, can only be addressed in several ways. Lessen the workload through providing less patients, that is not likely to happen. It then means expanded number of staff which obviously then means increased costs. It also can mean a reallocation of the provision of services, something the Member for Portage la Prairie referenced tangentially in his comments when he talked about training and having more health care aides, et cetera.

We are looking at a whole variety of matters relating to this, and I would be interested in any of the member's suggestions.

Mr. Derkach: Although the minister talks about what he is attempting to do, I guess my bottom line position is that Manitobans do not know what the minister's or the Government's plan is in an overall sense. When you talk to the regional health authorities, they do not give us a very good indication of what direction the minister is taking health in. So I think there is a void here in terms of communicating with Manitobans where we as a Province are going at the present time in terms of our vision and our plan for the future for this province.

The minister, I know, is committed to doing the best job that he can with respect to the delivery of health care, but I believe his whole government plan is somewhat suspect because they do not share with Manitobans what the long-term vision for health care is in this province.

If we look at the regional health authorities and talk to personnel at the regional health authorities, I think it is true to say that most of the regional health authorities find their people overworked. I think there are some challenges there as well, but, on the other hand, we are seeing that the costs are escalating in almost every area.

I will wait till the show is over, Mr. Chair. When the show is over, I will continue.

An Honourable Member: Go ahead. The show is over.

Mr. Derkach: The reason I mention this is that I believe this is a very serious issue, the area of escalating costs, the areas of diminished services. We do not see that yet. If you talk to Manitobans right now, they will tell you, my own family will tell you that, if they go to the hospital, or they go to receive services, whether it is the local hospital or elsewhere, they are looked after. I do not think that has changed from what it was two years ago or three years ago. Generally speaking, Manitobans feel that their serious health care needs are looked after in a respectable way. I believe what we do see, though, is that the ability of regions is somewhat hampered in delivering the kinds of services that the people there require.

So we find Manitobans finding themselves in ambulances on the road to the large centres, and mainly it is Winnipeg. There are services that can be provided in some of our regions, and we should be looking at those things very seriously in terms of how we could provide services closer to home. The minister talks about community-based services and primary care. I think we can go one step further. I know it may be expensive, but all tertiary services do not have to be delivered in the city of Winnipeg. I know that Brandon is somewhat of a regional centre. Dauphin is a lesser centre than Brandon. I think that we have got a population in this province that requires to be served in other regions as well. There are minor surgeries that can take place outside of the city of Winnipeg and should be taking place. I think in an overall sense it would decrease costs to our system. There are physicians who can deliver those services.

* (15:50)

I know, for example, in my community the surgical theatre, or operating room, was taken out because we could not provide the anaesthetists and we could not find enough work for them in a local area of that nature. I think if we were to look at centres where centres could be providing specific kinds of medical services beyond the primary care, that would alleviate some of the pressures here in Winnipeg and

would also alleviate some of the stress that we have in the hospitals in Winnipeg in terms of hallway medicine. It is not the minister's fault that we have hallway medicine, it is the way the system has evolved over time. We have fairly sophisticated hospitals, if you look at Winkler or Dauphin or Minnedosa or Brandon, who, I think, can provide services over and above what they are doing now.

The other issue that I have of concern is the one of emergency services. At the present time whenever we have a patient that needs to come in to Winnipeg from our rural areas, the only means of transportation that is allowed is the ambulance. Yet in many cases those patients do not require an ambulance. But at the end of the day, unless if it is an interfacility transfer authorized by the hospital and there are conditions applied, and I am not going to try to recite what those conditions are, the patient ends up paying for the cost. Many, many patients have come to us and asked us: Why is it that I am forced to take an ambulance? Yet we know that a stretcher service would cost about half of what the ambulance service costs and could provide the service to those people who require it and who do not require the ambulance service.

When I speak to people in the regions, they tell me that through the department of highways and transportation you cannot get a licence to operate a stretcher service outside of the city of Winnipeg. That is bizarre. We have a two-class system. I am not saying this is the minister's problem, because that happened long before this minister was in charge of this department. I think that that is an issue that needs to be addressed and changed.

The other issue has to do with emergency services personnel. There are volunteers in rural Manitoba who would work in the ambulance service. However, when you look at how we restrict them in terms of the hours that they work, in terms of what we demand from them, in terms of upgrading and keeping up their skills, yet we pay nothing for it, it leads us to only one conclusion: That is that we have not allowed for the volunteer system to emerge in our rural communities. We have actually gone the other way, discouraged it.

Now what we are faced with is a system where we have to train professionals in the field

of emergency services, which one more time drives up the costs for the regional health authority. Right now the Marquette Regional Health Authority is training all of their ambulance staff to a particular level. I think it is called a paramedic level. Every ambulance in the Marquette Regional Health Authority will have people at the paramedic qualified level. Maybe that is a nice ideal, but if you look at the cost, I am not sure whether the Minister of Health is prepared to advance those funds, not only to train these people, but indeed to have them work in the system. Because that is a very expensive cost. So I am wondering where the study is at.

We used to operate a system without the need of co-ordinators in every regional health authority. Today we have added another layer of bureaucracy which co-ordinates all of the emergency services, not that that is not a good idea, but it is an additional cost that was not there before. No one has taken a look at the provision of a less-expensive service to people who do not need necessarily the services of an ambulance.

I spoke with the administration, and I spoke with the board members. They simply tell us that Manitoba Health is not prepared to move in that area of providing or at least allowing stretcher services to be used in rural Manitoba. They are only allowed to operate in the city of Winnipeg. I do not know if this is right or not. Maybe the minister can tell me. But these are some areas that I think there can be cost savings. These are areas where I think the minister has an opportunity to show some vision, to show some forward thinking and to show Manitobans that he does have a plan in trying to address these ever escalating costs, not only for the system, but also for individuals.

I can cite a case of a woman who needed to be transported from a hospital in rural Manitoba to Brandon to get a heart pacer put in. At the end of the day, when all was said and done, her ambulance bill was \$2,200. Now, here is a woman who is living on a fixed income. She does not have savings, or a lot of savings, and basically said: I do not know how I am going to pay this bill. I asked her whether or not she thought she needed the ambulance. She said: No, but my doctor insisted on it. I said, well, so,

could you have taken a lesser service? She said: I probably could have gone in a car or a vehicle that I could have reclined in and that would have been fine. But she is just traumatized by the fact that she did not even expect to receive a bill of that kind and she did not have the insurance to cover that.

I think there are cases and cases and cases of these kinds of issues that the minister has probably had a chance to discuss with the critic for Health, but I am raising these with the minister because they are localized. I think they fall into the same kinds of issues that the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) sees in his area, because we kind of overlap in terms of the regional health authorities that we share. I have heard it from the Parkland Regional Health Authority in that way as well.

So I guess I can only ask, and I know the minister took a significant amount of time to tell me what he is doing in the other areas, but just specifically, can the minister give me some indication of whether or not he has put together a serious plan or a plan of action that will address these very elementary needs? They are basic. They are not complicated. They are not issues that should require a commission or a consulting firm to come and spend a year to give the minister some advice.

I think the simple extension of stretcher services to rural Manitoba would be a huge benefit to the individuals, maybe not necessarily the people who run the ambulance system, but indeed to individuals who need that service in the rural part of our province. It is almost incomprehensible that we would not have that service available in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the member for his comments and his suggestions and advice in this regard. The member might be aware that with respect to EMS services, upon becoming the Government, we received promptly a report that had been commissioned by the previous government with respect to dealing with EMS right across the province. The report had something like, if memory serves me correctly, 22 recommendations. What we did was we canvassed the recommendations with the regions. We sent the report out back to the

various municipalities, RHAs and other bodies and asked them for their advice and recommendations on implementation, because we wanted to move.

* (16:00)

We picked the most significant recommendations that were addressed across the system, and we began proceeding to fund it. Those included provisions for a co-ordinated response centre, the upgrading of the communications equipment across the province, the provision of additional rolling stock or new equipment and ambulances and enhanced training across the system. The debate with respect to volunteers and stretcher services has been a long one and is a complicated one and has been something that has been an ongoing discussion across the province for a number of years.

Mr. Derkach: The minister is not giving me any answers, though. I know it has been in discussion for a long time. It was in discussion, I guess, when we were still in government, but I think time is moving on and this is an issue that requires some action. It is not something that needs to be studied and studied and studied. I think what we are seeing is the development of vested interests, and I say that from some personal experience where we have individuals who want to protect their turf, as it were, and certainly are not amenable to looking at alternatives that might be of benefit to the patient and the client of the system, and that is what worries me somewhat.

I want to tell the minister that if he were to move ahead in this area and provide alternatives, and provide options for people, especially in rural Manitoba where there are special challenges, and the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) can relate to this because people in that area have the same challenges in terms of getting those important services at a cost that is affordable to them. Those are issues that are indeed important to people in my part of the world. So I ask the minister to—I mean, he can give me a runaround answer on this if he likes, but I think the time has come for some action rather than simply saying: Well, we know it is a problem and it is out there, and we are going to take a look at it.

This leads me to the next area, and that is that one of the biggest killers of people in my area is cardiac arrest. If you are not going to get that patient to the hospital very quickly you are going to lose him. I can cite numerous occasions where people have lost their life because of the fact that they could not get to the service. The minister has intervened through his department on a number of occasions. As a matter of fact, there was a letter in the paper thanking the minister on an action that was taken by the department and specifically, I think, the thanks went to the minister because, had that patient not got the services, he would have died. That is one of the biggest fears that people have in our area is the fact that if they have a heart attack, the chance of survival is not nearly what it might be in a larger urban centre. So that in itself is an area of concern.

We have had situations where doctors have phoned from our hospitals to try and get patients who are serious cases into a Winnipeg hospital and have been rejected, have been denied, even though a bed has been available. They have been denied on the basis that that bed may be required by somebody in Winnipeg.

That clearly says to me that the system is treating people in different parts of this province differently. I think that is an area where the Department of Health centrally must intervene and must give an indication that, regardless of where a patient is, anyone who requires an emergency service should have that service available to him, regardless of where that person is, whether it is in northern Manitoba or in the rural part of our province that is remote to the city. So these are areas of significant concern to us.

The other service that is of concern in my area again, and I speak I think on behalf of a lot of rural areas, is the therapy provision of services after a cardiac patient comes home. I know people in urban Manitoba, in Winnipeg, cannot seem to relate to the fact that Dauphin is two hours from my community, Brandon is two hours from my community. If you are going to have a service in Dauphin and in Brandon, you need one in between so that a patient does not have to drive for two hours who has just come out of cardiac surgery, for example, to get therapy. That happens so many times.

We did try to address that while we were in government. I think we made some progress in that respect, not nearly enough. I think it is again part of a larger picture, part of an overall plan on how regional health authorities can address major issues within a region and work co-operatively with the Department of Health to be able to address those very significant needs. With an aging population, this becomes even more critical to us.

I would not mind if the minister could give me some indication of whether or not these are issues that are important to him and whether or not they are issues that he has a plan for and whether he has addressed any of them with the regional health authorities.

Mr. Chomiak: The member makes a number of very valid suggestions. I could probably use the balance of the entire Estimates process in attempting to specifically respond to those. I will not, because I know there are other questions and other matters to be dealt with. I will deal with some of the issues specifically that the member has raised.

The cardiac issue is, I just want to separate the two issues. I attended the last conference of the EMS providers. It is very clear that just as there is a higher level of care that is expected in our hospitals and all of our institutions, there is a higher level of care that is now expected within EMS. The member referencing the cardiac is a case in point, that in fact the ability of EMS personnel to provide care to the patient, particularly a cardiac patient, is significant in terms of the period of time between some distances and ability to get to a hospital. So there is a need and a demand to have increased capability on the part of EMS personnel to provide that service.

With respect to the member's reference to cardiac patients outside of Winnipeg accessing facilities in Winnipeg, we have discussed that in the past. On every occasion when the member has raised it, I have gone and inquired as to the fact what the situation is. I have been informed that the policies have not changed and that they continue to be the same as were present before.

One of the things that is being looked at with respect to provision, for example, of the central bed registry long promised, hopefully instituted, is that it will provide for instantaneous—I mean, we do not have centralized

access to patient beds in the city of Winnipeg, and that is a problem. That is a problem when you are phoning from outside of Winnipeg and you have to phone different hospitals. That does not make sense. There are proposals right now to look at that particular issue. To look at that particular issue will require some changes around the system in the city of Winnipeg.

An Honourable Member: Available in the States.

Mr. Chomiak: The member says available in the States. The members opposite had that same difficulty in terms of the ICU changes, critical care changes that were put in place. There are different conflicting agendas with respect to that. But there is no doubt that we are going to have to have one way or another a centralized system that will permit more ready access and more appropriate access to beds in Winnipeg for access.

The member talked about the issue of providing services outside of Winnipeg. I think it is generally accepted that it would make sense to do more services at regional centres. I do know that there was a significant report that was put out in the mid-'70s about repatriating surgeries outside of Winnipeg to rural centres. I keep asking the department about that report, about the ramifications. I understand that it just could not be done at the time, but there is nothing that suggests that the ability to do enhance services, particularly at regional centres, ought not to be undertaken. One of the reasons for the enhanced family residency program is it will permit additional opportunities to provide for those services.

The issue of the utilization of stretcher services, you know, it is a continuing problem, and the member can probably tell from my reaction. For example, there are some communities where the hospitals are in danger of closure because of recent upgrades in terms of the requirements for certain facilities, for example X-ray, et cetera, to be available on a 24-hour, 7-day basis. Other-wise, the acute care facility can no longer be open.

Those are new regulations that have come into effect that make it very difficult sometimes, and we are seeing that across the system in terms of need and demand. The member was saying the woman in question who required the pacemaker was by doctor's orders by ambulance. Far be it for me to countermand that kind of a—the member is suggesting he is not suggesting that and I realize that, but there are provisions. There is no doubt that the provision of stretcher services have been of significance and can be of significance, and we are aware of that.

Mr. Derkach: Just for the minister's information, the doctor had no choice but to recommend the ambulance because a stretcher service was not available. I guess I am asking the minister whether or not he is prepared to, on a pilot basis, on a test-case basis, allow for a stretcher service within a particular region of the province. I do not care which region he chooses whether it is Dauphin-Roblin or the west central or southwestern region. But allow for a stretcher service to be available in that area and allow it to operate for a period of time, and then do a serious analysis of whether or not this is a way in which we can save some money both for the system and for the patient in accessing tertiary care facilities in our province, because it is a significant problem. So I am asking the minister: Is he prepared to set aside a few dollars? I know there are dollars that can be set aside from the Department of Health itself to provide for that kind of service in this province.

* (16:10)

Mr. Chomiak: I will pass on that suggestion to our officials in this area.

Mr. Derkach: I am not asking for him to pass that information on to officials. I am asking him, because this is a policy decision. A policy decision has to be made by the minister and his colleagues in Cabinet. I really do not care whether he wants to make a big fancy announcement about it. That would be fine to his credit. I believe that this is a service that, politics aside, is required for people to get access and get an equality of service to medical services in our province.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I accept the member's comments. He has made some very valid comments.

Mr. Derkach: I am not getting anywhere, right? He is not going to commit to anything I can see.

I want to pursue another issue. Mr. Chair, in my community, while we were still in government, we had made a commitment to build, to replace a 40-bed personal care home. I think there was some discussion about enhancing the number of beds because of the aging population of the area and to have it located in the vicinity of the current hospital. That sort of died on the vine when government changed, and, of course, that seat was retained by the Progressive Conservatives. So I can anticipate that—

An Honourable Member: Maybe next time.

Mr. Derkach: The member from Dauphin, Swan River says maybe next time we will get a facility. I think it was what he was referring to.

Mr. Chair, politics aside, I would just like the minister to indicate to me whether he knows what the current status of that facility and the proposed construction for a personal care home in that community is, seeing that it was an announcement that was made. I think there were dollars set aside for at least the first stages of the development of that project.

Mr. Chomiak: I will get back to the member on the specifics of that. I do not have the capital people at this point here. On the issue, though, of allocation of capital resources vis-à-vis a particular political stripe, I want to make it very clear that the decisions made on capital were made by the Capital Division. We accepted those recommendations. If one were to do analysis of the decisions made, it would be very hard to make a determination that the decisions were made on anything other than a needs basis.

Mr. Derkach: I will accept that at face value, Mr. Chair, from the minister, because I trust that his answer is honourable and that he has full intentions in following up the recommendations. I think the formula has not changed in that respect from the previous administration. I think the process is probably still the same. So I will await the minister's response with regard to that

specific issue and the progress that has been made on that facility to date.

I know that there are some others in that region that have taken sort of a priority position because of problems that have been identified. I guess I can reference the Neepawa facility that was put ahead of the one in Russell specifically because of structural problems that were identified that needed to be addressed. I can accept that. So I will await the minister's response with regard to that particular issue.

Mr. Chomiak: I appreciate the member's comments and I will get back to him on that.

Mr. Derkach: My colleague has a few questions. If we have time after the critic for Health has completed her questions, I still have several that I would like to pursue with the minister, but I will leave those now and allow the critic for Health to ask some of the important questions she has to ask.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I am sure that the minister is very well aware of the fact that the rehab staff at the Deer Lodge Centre have been in the midst of an extremely long and frustrating experience in trying to achieve a first contract. When they finally thought that they had reached the end, they found out that there were not any funds there to pay an increase in their salaries. That was what they had been told by Deer Lodge Centre, that Deer Lodge Centre did not have the funds to pay any increases in their salaries, and the WRHA disagreed with their statement.

The staff there, the physiotherapist and occupational therapist, are feeling extremely frustrated, and they have heard numerous news reports about various groups of health care professionals who are fighting for reasonable salaries in Manitoba. They have also indicated that there are a number of people in their profession who are leaving the province to go east and west. They are feeling quite concerned about that. They are particularly concerned about what is happening in Saskatchewan, with what is being offered to new graduates there and signing bonuses that are being offered there, moving expenses, higher salaries. They have also indicated that a large number of graduates have

chosen to leave Manitoba for improved benefits and wages in other provinces and countries.

They have asked me to ask the minister whether or not he is aware of the situation at the Deer Lodge Centre and what he intends to do to help resolve that situation.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I am aware of that situation and I believe there are continued discussions in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate what his plans are to address the retention and recruitment issue related to occupational therapists and the physiotherapist grads?

Mr. Chomiak: Insofar as there are ongoing discussions, I would prefer not to deal with specifics at this point.

Mrs. Driedger: I do not believe this was specific. I believe that this was probably a general question related to the whole issue of recruitment and retention of OT and PT grads. Really the question, I think, is outside of the discussions happening at Deer Lodge, because I am sure that we are looking at this same problem across the province. I am curious what the minister is planning to do to retain and recruit positions for OT and PT.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated earlier during the course of these Estimates in a number of areas, there is literally not a profession in the health care field that one could suggest that there is not major problems in terms of recruitment, in terms of retention insofar as the changes that took place over the past decade.

In a variety of areas, we are adopting a variety of options. We certainly have addressed the issue with respect to nurses, with respect to doctors—well, Mr. Chairperson, with a whole variety of options and we are addressing these in a variety of areas.

The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) referenced health care aides during the course of his comments, retention and recruitment of same. The Member for Portage la Prairie also referenced LPNs with respect to that particular issue. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) talked about EMS personnel and related personnel in that area. I am cognizant of

the needs and demands with respect to OTs and PTs and we are looking at various options.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Driedger: The physios and OTs have asked me to ask the minister a couple of particular questions. One is related to the recent monies that have been allocated to nursing and medical students for tuition. They want to know what does the minister intend to do for funding of other professionals in health care and where do the OTs and PTs fit into this?

Mr. Chomiak: There are a variety of options that are being looked at and options that are being considered, and, actually, options that have been engaged in across the system for a variety of professionals and a variety of health care providers.

Mrs. Driedger: I think the OTs and PTs were looking for some more specifics. They are certainly going to be following the responses of the minister in regard to these questions. I wonder if he would like to take the opportunity to be a little bit more explicit in what he could say to them or what he could offer them in terms of some degree of comfort that Manitoba does have a plan for keeping and attracting OTs and PTs to this province.

Mr. Chomiak: We continue to look at a variety of options, specifically for those at Deer Lodge and for those across the system. We are aware of the demands, and we are aware of the ramifications of the situation.

Mrs. Driedger: One other question that the physios and occupational therapists asked me to ask the minister, and I will read it to him as it was written to me: When the WRHA was instituted, the public was told that this would eliminate the need for hospital CEOs and boards of directors. According to them, they see two levels of administration now, which is continually increasing in their minds. They would like to ask the minister what his plans are to reduce so much management and bring more staff onto the front line of care.

Mr. Chomiak: As the member is aware, despite their opposition to it, we did amalgamate the two

regional health authorities in the city of Winnipeg almost immediately to coming into office, as a means to reduce particular bureaucratization and administrative staff.

The issue with respect to boards, I am wondering if the member has now changed, and I am wondering if the member might advise me whether or not her party has changed their policy with respect to boards and is suggesting that we no longer maintain boards, particularly institutions, which would be contrary to the former policy.

Mrs. Driedger: It is one thing for the minister maybe to take a little bit of political opportunity here with me and throw out a little bit of shots, but the question was from the physios and OTs. I think it would be respectful of him to at least give them an answer.

This was a question posed to him through me by the physiotherapists and occupational therapists. I would ask the minister, and this is their question: When the RHA was instituted, the public was told that this would eliminate the need for hospital CEOs and boards of directors. We see two levels of administration now, which is continually increasing. What are the minister's plans to reduce so much management and bring more staff onto the front line of care? That is the question specifically from the OTs and PTs and I wonder if the minister would care to respond to that for them.

Mr. Chomiak: We have constantly attempted to deal with the issue of providing for front-line staff. It has been a major preoccupation of ours in an attempt to provide more funding and more resources to front line individuals, and we continue to work at efforts in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: Because there appears to be growing concern out there, and it is not just from the physiotherapists and occupational therapists, that while the minister may have melded to boards in the WHA and WCA, there is some real growing concern that middle management has really expanded within the WRHA. Could the minister indicate what the increase in administrative costs for the WRHA are this year, as compared to last year?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I certainly will take a look at that particular issue and endeavour to get back to the member on that.

Mrs. Driedger: I would appreciate some material back from the minister on that, because it certainly is something that is coming my way in terms of concerns much more frequently. I would appreciate hearing back from the minister in terms of how many, perhaps, middle managers there are in there, as well as what all the administrative costs for running the WRHA are compared now in this budget year, as compared to last budget year. I would look forward to receiving that from the minister.

Could I just confirm with the minister that that is what he intends to give back to me in writing?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I intend to peruse that issue, and I will get back to the member on that.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you. The Manitoba Association of Registered Respiratory Therapists has written a letter to the minister, on May 10, expressing their urgent concerns regarding public safety and compromised patient care, as a result of recruitment and retention of respiratory therapists. They were demanding that this issue be addressed decisively and swiftly as patient care continues to be compromised, in their view. Aside from confirmation that correspondence was received by the minister's office, their letter of May 10 indicated that there was no comment or action from the Government regarding this serious matter.

The association recently learned that the lack of dedicated respiratory therapy staff, coverage of critical areas and/or essential services has the potential to impact the availability of intensive care beds. In their letter they went on to express concern with WRHA officials on April 4 and again with Réal Cloutier, Wayne Byron and Gloria Rourke on May 7. They felt it was clear that recruitment and retention of respiratory therapists did not appear to be a funding priority of the WRHA or Manitoba Health, and went on to say that the erosion of the accepted standard of care and

potential risk to the public is not being addressed. They indicated they were disturbed by this lack of vision regarding an essential service provided to the most vulnerable patient population with the highest acuity in the health care system.

I wonder if the minister could give any indication as to whether or not he has had a chance to respond to them with an action plan following this letter of May 10, and the preceding letters, I guess, and wondered if he could share what that plan would be.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I am aware of that particular issue. I do not primarily think it is good policy for me to necessarily negotiate in public with regard to this specific issue.

Mrs. Driedger: The Manitoba Association of Registered Respiratory Therapists has indicated, and a quote from them: It is a crisis right now. In an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Thursday, May 24, the president of the association indicated that no patients have been harmed, but at least one heart surgery transfer was delayed because of the shortage. He indicated that of the province's 187 respiratory therapists, they have 14 full-time vacancies and also indicated that only one of six students graduating this year plans to stay in Manitoba longer than the summer. He is also aware of a couple of established respiratory therapists who are leaving for higher paying jurisdictions.

I would imagine the minister is quite concerned about this area and wonder if he would care to share with us what he might be doing in terms of responding to the association and their concerns. I mean, they are indicating it is a crisis right now. They are worried about patient safety. I wonder if the minister could tell us what he is doing to stabilize this situation.

* (16:30)

Mr. Chomiak: I am concerned. Obviously patient care is of utmost concern at Health and we are aware of the situation, Mr. Chairperson. We are quite clearly at Health, at the WHA and through the various regions, we continue to deal, as I indicated earlier during the course of these

Estimates—So far the members have raised issues of concerns with respect to doctors, with respect to nurses, with respect to health care aids, with respect to EMS personnel, with respect to PT and OT personnel, and with respect to our respiratory technicians. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) also cited earlier the issue with respect to sonographers. I add that there is a major difficulty with respect to radiation therapists, lab technologists, X-ray technologists, and a variety of situations. We are attempting to deal with all of those issues in order to provide the best and most timely service to the public.

Mrs. Driedger: The diagnostic sonographers have also been in touch with me indicating that they feel that the length of waits for ultrasound tests could be up to a year. In one of the hand-outs they were giving out at a recent demonstration, they have indicated that there are 5000 patients waiting, and they have indicated it is long wait lists for ultrasounds in the province.

They have indicated that there is a lack of modern equipment and we certainly know that there does not have to be, because this Government, besides the \$18.6 million from the federal government from this last budget year, also is sitting on \$18.5 million for this budget year. They are choosing not to spend it despite the fact that the sonographers right now are indicating in pretty big bold letters in this one document they handed out lack of modern equipment. They want the Government to invest in new ultrasound equipment.

So, here we have the people in the province to run the machinery, but here we have a government that is choosing to sit on \$18.5 million waiting for next year, rather than spending that money right now when they have the money.

The sonographers have also indicated that new grads and experienced technologists are leaving the province for better wages. The remaining technologists are burning out, working longer hours trying to keep the waiting list under control. Some positions in part of the province remain vacant due to a lack of technologists. There are currently vacant positions in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Flin

Flon and Portage la Prairie. They want to know what the Government is going to do to address the situation of diagnostic ultrasound in Manitoba either from an equipment point of view or from a sonographer shortage point of view.

They want to keep their members in the province, and they are looking for some support from Government. I wonder if the minister would care to comment what his plan is to address this situation in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: During the course of the Estimates debate earlier on, Mr. Chairperson, I outlined to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) some of the initiatives with respect to sonographers and ultrasound and how it related to those particular matters. There was funding available with respect to replacement of some of the ultrasound equipment across the system.

The member constantly makes reference to the fact that we are sitting on funding with respect to the federal government. I just remind the member opposite that we successfully negotiated an agreement with the federal government whereby funding for capital equipment was provided to Manitoba. Funding was provided to the province, was provided to us by the federal government as a result of an agreement that we initiated. Let me correct that, as a result of an agreement that we helped negotiate. I have suggested and I can suggest to the member opposite that, in fact, Manitoba is one of the lead parties that negotiated this capital requirement that we now obtain.

I do not mean to get political here, but just insofar as the member has suggested, I just want to suggest that that was something that did not happen over the past 11 years with respect to the member opposite. So we negotiated, within our first year in office, a significant capital injection of funds from the federal government with respect to capital equipment. The member has used that money constantly to replace, almost has suggested that somehow we are not spending enough money, but then the member has accused us of spending too much money and seems to go back and forth with respect to this particular equipment.

Some funding did go in with respect to ultrasound renewal, as I understand it, as a result of the initial injection of \$18 million, plus an

additional \$4 million that the Province provided funding from in the capital equipment announcement that had recently taken place by the Government. There will be more announcements to take place in the next little while.

With respect to ultrasound, we are aware that there are significant difficulties with respect to ultrasound. I am going from memory in this regard, Mr. Chairperson, notwithstanding that what we did with respect to ultrasound is provide for a variety more of services, and we are providing more ultrasound than any other time before. In fact, if memory serves me correctly, we have increased by several thousand the amount of ultrasound. Notwithstanding, what I think has developed in the area of ultrasound is a significant change, that is that ultrasound has now become a standard tool of diagnostic equipment, as opposed to a pool or a type of diagnostic equipment that is not the norm. It has in fact now become a normal part of the approach and a normal part of the way that we provide for care. So the demand for ultrasound has risen dramatically in the province, and we have attempted to address this issue by providing additional resources in this area.

As I pointed out to the Member for Portage earlier on, with respect to the sonographer issue and with respect to training of this particular issue, Mr. Chairperson, there are work-related issues that relate to ultrasound with respect to repetitive injuries and respect to injuries, and there is burnout, functions of burnout and workload that we have addressed in this particular matter. We have been looking at those particular issues as it relates to ultrasound, and we have continued to address these issues.

As I indicated to the member previously with respect to this issue, we are looking at different options and alternatives with respect to providing for additional resources as it relates to ultrasound in the province. I am hopeful that we will be in a position to suggest some significant improvements in the allocation of ultrasound resources in the next little while. It is something that has been studied and has been reviewed. We are looking at providing for those additional ultrasound resources.

* (16:40)

One of the interesting tangential issues that applies to this particular area as it relates to ultrasound is an interesting question that I have asked for feedback on insofar as I am not obviously a health care practitioner and I do not hold myself out to be. I do rely on the expertise of officials who are far more conversant and aware of the circumstances, but I have asked for the issue of something that is a perennial issue in health care, and that is insofar as the number of ultrasounds we are doing has expanded dramatically—if memory serves me correctly, Mr. Chairperson, it is in the range of 30 percent—insofar as that has happened, has there been a corresponding decrease in relation to other, perhaps, X-rays, for example, in relation to that?

The initial discussions that I have had as a layperson with experts is that no, that is not in fact the case. It does point to an interesting development in health care. Generally as one expands a particular type of service one does not generally see a decrease in the corresponding service. I have asked for further work in this regard. *[interjection]* The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) has suggested that perhaps I am so fascinated by this particular question and issue that was raised by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) that I want to continue to discuss some of the various aspects of this. *[Ukrainian spoken]*

As I was saying, Mr. Chairperson, we have a number of initiatives that we are looking at as it relates to the provision of ultrasound, as it relates to the dealing with the issue of increase. It is not just an issue of equipment. *[interjection]* The Member for Charleswood is questioning my allocation. When the Member for Charleswood stops speaking, I will continue. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

As I was saying, we have been following this issue quite closely, and we will be providing additional resources and additional efforts. We are looking at different measures as it relates to the provision of ultrasound to patients across the system. It is not just a question, I might add, of simply training of individuals. In fact, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) suggested that in terms of the seven stenographers, for example, that we are training on a regular basis that is sufficient to meet our needs.

An Honourable Member: He said that?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, the Member for Portage la Prairie actually indicated that in the course of his discussion and comments. The other issue that the Member for Charleswood has suggested is that in fact it is simply an issue related to the actual equipment concerning ultrasound. There are other issues that relate to that. One of them, for example, is the issue of physical space in the provision of services and the physical space that is necessary and the physical space that is provided for ultrasound and for an expansion of ultrasound. I am advised that while there is a significant wait list the amount of ultrasound services and resources have expanded. If memory serves me correctly I believe it is 30 percent.

Obviously, as in all cases of dealing with the system of individuals who have an emergent problem are seen as soon as possible. Mr. Chairperson, that is in fact the case. The elective, and there is a discourse with respect to how one characterizes elective. There are some demands and pressures on the system, but I am hopeful that we will be in a position in the not-too-distant future where we will be able to talk about an expanded range of service and expanded resources that will be able to be provided in this particular area and will be able to improve the situation vis-à-vis ultrasound and the provision of ultrasound services which are now of significance.

For example, I recently had the occasion to be in Brandon to have the pleasure of announcing the expansion of some capital equipment with respect to, and I believe, if memory serves me correctly, that there was an enhanced ultrasound capacity in our recent Brandon announcement of capital equipment expansion. I had occasion to tour that, and I am hopeful that certainly, at the regional centre in Brandon, we will be in a position to offer a first-class service in that region for people outside of Winnipeg. We are also hopeful they will be in a position to offer resources, offer assistance and expanded capacity and expanded volume and expanded treatment to individuals in the city of Winnipeg and outside of the city of Winnipeg as well.

Ultrasound, in fact, does become, in a certain respect, what amounts to a representative

case of some of the issues that face us across the board relating to health care and the provision of health care services. We have personnel who provide the service, who are in great demand across the country and whose needs and whose requirements we obviously, in order to keep operating the system, keep operating the machines, keep providing the service to our patients, must be met by our system, Mr. Chairperson.

So, in the first instance, there is a very clear human resource issue related to the provision of ultrasound, and we are aware of the needs. We are aware of the educational requirements. We are aware that there are workplace-related issues that relate to the provision of ultrasound. I might add that the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurchou), during his discourse, outlined to us in this committee that there are not just shortages in the city of Winnipeg, but there are shortages and difficulties right across the region and right across all regions. That point is not lost upon us.

So the issue of human resources as it relates to ultrasound and the issue of human resources as it relates to provision of those services is something that we are seriously looking at. We think that, across the system, with respect to health care personnel, no matter where they are located, no matter what their profession—the member earlier from Charleswood cited the other health care professionals; we are aware of that—we are cognizant of the needs and the requirements of those particular individuals throughout the system. We are aware of the significant needs. There are a variety of means by which we can deal with and come to terms with respect to how we deal with these particular professional groups.

Earlier on in my comments, I cited to the members opposite that there are a variety of means, and the member took issue with the fact that I was not being more specific. One of the difficulties in terms of the course of the Estimates debate is that I do not want my comments to be taken out of context, nor do I necessarily want my comments to be interpreted by the member, because I have had occasion when the comments have been, shall I say, misinterpreted by the member, so I want to be very careful what I put on the record that is then translated or interpreted by the member.

* (16:50)

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, there are a variety of issues related to this. There is the issue related to enhanced positions and enhanced training, enhanced seats, with respect to education. There is the issue of work-related conditions. Particularly in this area we know that there are work-related occupational conditions that can and should be addressed. In fact, in terms of that issue, it is very significant. There are issues with relation to the particular collective agreements in place and how one deals with the collective agreements.

There are a variety of options that we could pursue. There are options where it has been suggested to us in some areas to reopen contracts by some individuals. The member talked about providing bonuses. Signing bonuses, and bonuses of various kinds, the member suggested.

I know, for example, that in one region where signing bonuses were provided, the particular region was taken to the Labour Relations Board and challenged with respect to the signing bonuses.

There are also various options with respect to recruitment and retention funds that have been employed and are looked at with respect to particular occupations, how we maintain those occupations and how we are able to remunerate and maintain those individuals in this particular location. In addition, Mr. Chairperson, there are issues of recruitment endeavours, how we endeavour to recruit and retain individuals.

It is very clear across the board—and I know that it will be reflected back to me in terms of my comments—that we do recognize that retention is probably the key. While I would hope that we would have the resources to go across the board with relation to retention and ensure right across the board, irrespective of the particular group, provide similar resources and similar benefits to groups all across the board, we do not have the resources to do that. So the resources that can be provided, Mr. Chairperson, are limited, but we are looking at a variety of options available and a variety of processes that can be attached and can be provided to people

who are in both these professions and their related professions.

I want to indicate that we are conscious of this. We are conscious across the board of the serious impact and effect that these particular occupations and these particular situations can have on individuals, can have on the resources that we provide. We are looking, as I indicated earlier, at a variety of options that we are providing and a variety—[interjection] I have barely started, Mr. Chairperson.

So having dealt with those particular issues, the human resource issues, I now turn to the technological issues as it relates to the provision of services. I have already reviewed the whole issue of technology and indicated that on the equipment side, you cannot make up in one or two years for a deficit of equipment renewal and deteriorating infrastructure that occurred over the period of a decade, and we have not been able to but we are trying, Mr. Chairperson. In fact, the \$22 million that we provided this year is probably the most significant increase in providing technology. But we are going to do more. There are going to be more benefits and there are going to be more resources that are provided.

I would also like to indicate that aside from the technological issue and aside from the human resource issue that we have canvassed in response to the member's question, there is the question of the physical space. There is some need for physical space issues that have to be dealt with.

It is not just as simple as it might be suggested from the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). It just is not as simple as going out and just spending the money. There are a variety of considerations. If we had followed that tack with respect to the capital as suggested by the member opposite, we would have long ago spent the money and gotten nowhere near the needs.

What we wanted to do was we wanted to balance out the resources within the overall budgetary process. We wanted to balance out the needs across the province together with what the Province could do. So we think, certainly in the

first allocation of capital funding that we are able to provide, we are able to provide a significant balance between the various areas of deterioration. There is problem with diagnostic, there are problems in basic equipment, there are problems not just in urban centres but there are problems in centres outside of the urban centres. What we try to do in regard to this is we try to achieve a balance in terms of the equipment that has got to be provided, in terms of the range of equipment that could be provided. We think that we were able to achieve that.

I am hopeful though with respect specifically to the issue of ultrasound and the provision of ultrasound services that we will be able to outline fairly shortly a—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allotted for Estimates consideration has now expired.

Our rule 74.(1) provides in part that not more than 140 hours should be allowed for the consideration in Committee of the Whole of Ways and Means on Supply resolutions respecting all types of Estimates in relevant Supply bills.

Our rule 74.(3) provides that where the time limit has expired the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions necessary to dispose of the matter and such questions shall not be subject to debate, amendment or adjournment.

I am therefore going to call in sequence the questions on the following matters: Department of Health. We will start with resolution 21.1. in Health.

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,244,800 for Health, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

* (17:00)

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): A recorded vote, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Do you have the support of two members?

Mr. Laurendeau: Yes. I have the support of 24 of them.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested, and we will recess. We will go to the Chamber.

The committee recessed at 5 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:39 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Would the committee please come back to order. Resolution 21.2 in Health.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$29,534,300 for Health, Program Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$66,821,100 for Health, External Programs and Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,394,606,200 for Health, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,511,600 for Health, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$75,657,900 for Health, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,420,100 for Health, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply. I would like to thank the ministers and the critics for their co-operation.

Committee rise.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education, Training and Youth. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will follow in a global manner, with all line items to be passed once the questioning has been completed. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Madam Chair, today we are pretty well completed with our Estimates process. I think we have three or four questions, one from me and a couple from the member beside me, so I will start out.

There is just one clarification I would like to ask the minister, because he very kindly gave me a rundown of his teaching experience, but I think maybe he was a little bit too modest. When I read over the Estimates, basically what I heard the minister say is that he was a substitute teacher, but I think also, correct me if I am wrong, the minister was a part-time teacher as well, not on contract. The minister has had more teaching experience than I think he actually gave us the other day, or am I missing something?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Madam Chair, no, I have had some longer-term positions when there has been leaves taken for pregnancies or so forth, but that is just in the normal course of my activities as a teacher over the last number of years.

Mrs. Smith: So just to clarify then, Madam Chair, the minister has substituted. The minister has had part-time teaching contracts or was it just—I know usually on maternity leave, if I remember correctly, teachers do get a part-time contract for that maternity leave time. Is that correct?

* (14:50)

Mr. Caldwell: You know, Madam Chair, I cannot really recall if I did or not, but I have taught for pregnancies and for teachers who have taken leaves for a variety of personal reasons and so forth, for longer terms and so forth. But I really cannot recall what procedure was undertaken.

Mrs. Smith: Now I will give it over to my member.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Minister, when the parents from Mountbatten School met with you, you indicated that you would entertain the board's appeal of their application for funding under the Aging Buildings Program, which no longer exists, and that the deadline for such applications was June 15.

I have several questions regarding the appeal and the appeal process. My first question is if the board is to pursue an appeal—and they have verbally indicated their intention to do so—how would this then, if it were favourably approved, be funded given the fact that the Aging Buildings funding program no longer exists?

Mr. Caldwell: The Aging Buildings Program, the member is quite correct, no longer exists. The infrastructure of the public school system was in such appalling condition when we assumed office in October 1999 that pretty much all of our capital dollars are going towards infrastructure renewal. All of the dollars available to the Department of Education and Training for capital are going to infrastructure renewal, capital renewal in the public school system.

This year the announcement was \$76 million approximately. I do not have it before me, but it was in that range. All but \$6 million-and-change was designated for purposes such as the Aging Buildings Program. That is, repairs on roofs, mechanical systems, electrical systems, plumbing systems, heating systems, boilers, windows, mold removal, the whole litany of neglect that indeed was the legacy of members opposite in terms of public school capital.

So, in terms of dollars spent on infrastructure renewal this year, the vast bulk of the provincial dollars, as I said, is about \$70 million of the \$76 million, which, incidentally, was \$76 million representing the largest single capital announcement on record for public school infrastructure renewal and capital projects.

So the vast majority of that sum, some \$70 million, was dedicated to infrastructure renewal, as I said, for things like roofs, boilers, windows, mould removal, mechanical systems, electrical systems and so forth.

Across the province, we have to be very careful that capital dollars go to projects of the highest priority, obviously. I respect the process that has been in place long before I got here and, I daresay, for decades, that school divisions themselves prioritize the projects that they wish

to take forth to the Public Schools Finance Board. The 54 school divisions and districts in the province prioritize their capital needs. They then submit their request to the Public Schools Finance Board. The Public Schools Finance Board considers the requests of all the school divisions in light of available funds and in light of the needs of the 730 schools across the province.

Oftentimes, it takes a school or a division many years before a project rises to the level that it can be funded by the Public Schools Finance Board. To illustrate, the St. James Collegiate gymnasium project, which is underway right now, I was advised that project first was put forth to the Public Schools Finance Board a decade ago. So it did take a decade for that project to see the light of day. In fact we made the public schools funding announcement this year at St. James Collegiate in front of the equipment and concrete work and so forth that was taking place at the collegiate for the construction of that particular gym project.

There are a number of places in the province where there are still small schools with high capital needs. Of course, the Public Schools Finance Board is cognizant of that. As well, though, they do not want to spend money if that means that communities with larger schools with even greater needs need suffer. So the Public Schools Finance Board has to look at current and projected enrolments, alternative places where students can go. Of course, that same procedure is undertaken by the school divisions when they are making their priority list and their requests of the Public Schools Finance Board.

I know in the Mountbatten case, as the member pointed out, I did meet with a delegation of parents, I guess it was a couple of weeks ago. I did meet with parents a couple of weeks ago, and advised them of the same. I advised them that I had respect for the process that has been put in place historically for schools to access capital funding. I respected the process whereby local school divisions ascertain their needs based upon their best information at the local level. Their information is based upon enrolment patterns, accessibility to neighbouring schools, capacity rates in their schools overall and a variety of other things, including the degree of importance they place upon projects

within their global mandate, which would be the boundaries of their school division. So I do respect the process whereby school divisions make those judgments and then pass along their best information and their request for priorities to the Public Schools Finance Board, and therein the Public Schools Finance Board, as I said, looks at the issue from a global perspective, i.e., the 730-odd schools in the public school system.

I assured the parents the process was a good one, was one that served successive governments very well, that did remove political interference from the process of providing for capital dollars for infrastructure renewal. I also advised the parents when a school is being proposed to close the school division passes a motion and there is a 20-month period that is in place before the school can be closed, except in extraordinary circumstances where you may have only three, four, five or six students in a school in a subsequent year, in which case that process can be expedited.

That is not the case in Mountbatten. There are, I do not know how many students, maybe 50 students or some such figure—64 students. So they did have a period subsequent to a board motion being passed. As far as I am aware right now, there has not been a board motion passed to date. They had 20 months after the division determined it wanted to close a school, in this case, Mountbatten, that 20 months would pass between the motion and the closure date. That 20 months are used to have full community consultation and dialogue around the closure and arrangements to made for students in the affected school.

* (15:00)

Oftentimes a motion is passed, and during the 20-month period of review and consultation, the decision is made not to close the school. In fact, I would daresay, that as often as not, the 20-month period leads to a result that the school is kept open because of community interest and so forth. So I did advise them of that and advised them, as I mentioned, about the St. James case that oftentimes it takes a number of years—in St. James a decade before a school reaches the Public Schools Finance Board that money or dollars can flow.

Certainly, with the historic levels of funding support provided by this Government for capital renewal and infrastructure renewal, I will expect that that 10-year waiting time would be somewhat less. I did advise them to work with their school division, to have discussions with the school division about their prioritization of the Mountbatten School, to take those concerns again to the Public Schools Finance Board, to appeal again to the school division and to the Finance Board about the community's wishes vis-à-vis Mountbatten School and make that case known both to the school division and the Public Schools Finance Board, that no motion had to date been passed by the school division, the St. Vital School Division, calling for the closure of the school, so that there was nothing on my desk indicating it was going to be closed or a motion had been passed to close the school. So I did assure them of that. I also assured them that I did respect the process and tried to direct them as best as I could through the proper processes for the proposed closure of schools.

I should review a little bit. The St. Vital School Division No. 6 requested a capital project for Mountbatten School as part of its 2000-2001 five-year capital plan submission to the Public Schools Finance Board. The Mountbatten School was constructed in 1948, and it was at that time 5120 square feet. Two portables provided an additional 2094 square feet of space to the school, meaning that Mountbatten today is 7215 square feet. Because of the age and the condition of the school building and the portables, the Public Schools Finance Board determined that this project qualified for possible support under the Aging Buildings Program. Following its assessment of the facility, the Public Schools Finance Board recommended to government that the Mountbatten project be considered for funding under the Aging Buildings Program, and that would be last year, 2000-2001.

The \$30-million Aging Buildings Program, as the member pointed out, was approved for a three-year period from 1998 to 2001. It was not renewed this year because most of our capital dollars in the province that are available for capital projects in the public school area have been directed, as I said, directly to infrastructure

renewal and replacing the capital deficits that were left from the last administration.

When the Public Schools Finance Board submitted its 2000-2001 capital budget document, it requested \$350,000 for the Mountbatten School project, \$150,000 in 2000-2001 and \$200,000 for 2001-2002; \$150,000 was made available to the project for the 2000-2001 budget. Funds, which were earmarked for the balance of the Mountbatten School project, were not authorized in 2000-2001 because the cost estimates were far in excess of what was available.

In November 2000, sketch plans for the Mountbatten School project were submitted to the Public Schools Finance Board for review, and it was determined at that time that the cost to repair the school and replace the two portables was estimated in the range of \$475,000. Replacing the exact square footage, that is 7214 feet, was estimated to cost in the range of \$900,000.

The school's current enrolment is 64 students. According to the school division, enrolment is expected to decline to 59 students by 2005-2006. That is the St. Vital School Division's estimates. At Mountbatten School, 48 out of the 64 students are presently bussed to Mountbatten. The Public Schools Finance Board was not in a position to support the project request, in that sufficient funding was not available for a project that was considerably more than was initially estimated. It is a difficult issue, I appreciate that, and I appreciate the member's concern. This is in her constituency.

As I mentioned to my colleague from Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fourschou) in an earlier session of Estimates, I do have a great deal of empathy and a great deal of understanding of what it is to be a constituency politician, because I am in that same game myself, as is the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who is a very strong constituency man. He has also had a concern in his own constituency surrounding Florence Nightingale School. So I do have a great deal of concern, in fact, similar modus operandi as a provincial elected official that we do look after our constituencies very diligently, and I respect that.

This is a difficult issue in an environment where there are limited resources. I empathize with the parents at Mountbatten School. The analysis and view of the Public Schools Finance Board, the body charged with evaluating all such projects, is one I support, however, as is the analysis and the view of the St. Vital School Division. I believe that the process has integrity, and I believe that being politically engaged in the process undermines that integrity. Having said that, I think it is also important to make oneself available to parent groups, as I did with the Mountbatten group, and to advise them of all their options in terms of dialoguing with the school division and dialoguing and trying to put on the agenda their views of the worth of Mountbatten School both as a learning institution and as a community institution.

I was advised by the parent group when they left, that they would indeed be raising this matter again with the St. Vital School Division. There still, to this date, is not a request on my table or a motion from the St. Vital School Division to close Mountbatten School. I understand in the same way that the Member for Seine River understands that the parents are meeting with the St. Vital School Division to discuss this particular matter again.

Public resources are precious; there is no doubt about it. It is this Government's mandate to be educationally and fiscally responsible in this and in all items. As I said, I do have a lot of empathy with the parents. I do have an understanding of where the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) comes from in this matter as a constituency-focussed MLA myself.

All of the options have been presented to the parents. I understand that the parents are making their case better known to the St. Vital School Division. I wish them good luck in that endeavour. They do have a number of opportunities to undertake their case with the school division. I did urge them to do so, and my understanding is that they are doing so. So I am hopeful on that particular matter.

Mrs. Dacquay: Well, I am not going to take the time now to refute numerous statements made by the minister. Obviously the Public Schools Finance Board and the department have some

very inaccurate information in a lot of the comments made by the minister, having met with the school board and with the parents and having a full volume of documentation that indicates exactly what the problem is. In the interest of limited time I would appreciate just very short, succinct answers if at all possible.

One statement prior to my next question is that the school board has indicated to me, and I am not sure if the minister is aware, that the real reason that they are proposing the closure of the school is because of the funding that was promised that they did not get, the \$150,000. I was also informed at the meeting last week, nor were they ever notified that the \$150,000 was approved. That was news to them, but they have read all of the Hansard transcripts and all of the documentation that has been provided. They really do not want to close the school. The enrolment is not declining; it is growing. In fact, they have had to refuse students this year because the school is at capacity.

* (15:10)

My next question is: How long does the appeal process take? When the board presents its appeal by June 15, can the minister estimate whether it will take two months, three months, six months, eight months, before there is a response back from PSFB?

Mr. Caldwell: It should not take too long to make an appeal. Of course, it is the prerogative of the Public Schools Finance Board and, in fact, the prerogative of the St. Vital School Division how they wish to pursue this particular matter.

The Public Schools Finance Board will need to review any new facts put forward by the St. Vital School Division if there are new facts to be put forward by the St. Vital School Division. That may take some time because of the summer break, staff holidays and so forth. In the normal course of events, if there are new facts put forward and, depending on the number of new facts that will have bearing on the time it will take to review the decision, I would expect it should be over by the end of summer.

The numbers the Public Schools Finance Board uses in its analysis of all projects are

provided by school divisions. I do not know if the member was—I know she was quarrelling with the numbers that were put forth by myself, but those numbers are the numbers that have been put forward by the school division before the Public Schools Finance Board. There may be some tweaking of those numbers that need to take place if there is new information, but on the basis of the information that the Public Schools Finance Board had before it and on the basis of the information that the St. Vital School Division had before it, my understanding is that the conclusion that was reached was one that was based upon the evidence.

As I said, when I met with the parent group from Mountbatten School I did review with them. In fact I met with them for a little over an hour and I did review with them the processes that were in place to ensure integrity of the system of allocating capital resources to the schools of the province of Manitoba. That is a process that begins with the local authority, the local school division, and carries on to the Public Schools Finance Board; the local division, as I mentioned, ascertaining the needs of the division, the Public Schools Finance Board ascertaining the realities of the entire school system in the province of Manitoba. I did apprise the parents of the opportunity to further engage the St. Vital School Division before a motion was forthcoming from the St. Vital School Division.

There is still no motion on Mountbatten School on this matter, so it still is in play. I also advised the parents that oftentimes, when a motion is indeed passed, that 20-month period is used by the local community to either make provision for the movement of students or the placement of students in other locations, or used to review the decision to close the school and indeed reverse the decision to close schools in some cases.

We had a very good meeting with the parents. I was very happy to meet with the parents. It was enlightening for both myself and for the parents, I think. I certainly do enjoy meeting with parent groups. I do not particularly enjoy meetings that are difficult, because I do not think any of us enjoy difficult matters placed before us, particularly ones where parents are so engaged and so concerned about the future of

their children. These are difficult, difficult meetings. They are difficult circumstances.

I do very much empathize with the parents in this case and in other cases where school closures are being contemplated, but as I said, I do have respect for the integrity of the process. It is one that fundamentally is based upon local decision making, and then is fundamentally based upon the very real needs of the infrastructure of public schools throughout the province of Manitoba.

So I am hopeful that as this matter proceeds, there will be a resolution that is satisfactory to all parties. I am hopeful that the parents will continue to engage the St. Vital School Division. If there is new information put forward, I know that the Public Schools Finance Board will assess that information in a very serious and responsible manner. I expect that the St. Vital School Division would reflect upon any new information in a serious and thoughtful manner and that there can be some resolution that is satisfactory to the parents of Mountbatten and to the St. Vital School Division.

But I do have confidence in and respect for the assessments made by the St. Vital School Division as to what their needs are in their school division. As elected officials, I think school trustees do an extraordinarily good job in often very difficult circumstances. Certainly school closures are amongst the most difficult circumstances that trustees face, not very often, but when they do face them, I know they are very difficult.

My colleague the MLA for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) was a school trustee in St. Boniface-Norwood when that division was amalgamated. In fact, she and Caroline Duhamel, the CEO of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, were both trustees in St. Boniface and the former Norwood School Division when that amalgamation took place. I know my colleague from St. Vital had a young daughter in a school in the Norwood School Division and, in fact, was instrumental in closing that particular school. So there are a great many issues around school closure that lead to a great deal of consternation and a great deal of challenges for trustees.

I do empathize with them in the very, very difficult decisions that they oftentimes have to make in their deliberations around school closures, in fact in their deliberations around any issue of educational importance, which is the task that trustees take on when they seek elected office. It is often a very thankless task, but certainly, I, as Minister of Education, Training and Youth, have a great deal of respect for school trustees. In fact, around Manitoba, school trustees do an exemplary job of promoting educational excellence in our public school system.

Madam Chair, if I could, the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) asked if I would table the Grade 3 Assessment in Reading and Numeracy, Preliminary Survey Results on the Consultation, for the First Year of Implementation. I would like to table them now for the member who requested them a couple of sessions ago and just review briefly for the record some of the reading and numeracy results of the survey.

This survey was undertaken subsequent to the first year of the implementation of the Grade 3 assessment. There were some 15 000 surveys distributed, and the Parent Survey, there were 14 343 sent out, 2660 surveys received, for a response rate of 19 percent. For the Teacher Survey for Grade 3 teachers, there were 1280 surveys sent out, 393 surveys received, for a response rate of 31 percent.

In the Parent Survey, which is very, very important to myself in terms of reviewing how successful we were in terms of the initial roll-out of the Grade 3 assessment, the question was asked: Was your child assessed at the beginning of the school year in reading, lecture or numeracy/notions de calcul? In the Grade 3 programs, 86 percent of the parents responded yes; 4 percent of the parents responded no; and 10 percent did not know if their children were assessed.

So there is a very, very high rate of parents who did have an understanding that their children were assessed, 86 percent. I am very, very pleased at that. It tells me that teachers and schools were doing a very, very good job of advising and informing parents of the Grade 3 assessment. In the Grade 4 French Immersion, the results were a little different, but still 69

percent of parents were aware that their child was being assessed at the beginning of the school year.

* (15:20)

In terms of the Parent Survey, we asked: In general, was the information from the reports on the reading, lecture and numeracy/notions de calcul assessment helpful? Madam Chair, 60 percent of parents reported, yes, definitely, which, again, tells me that parents are very, very, interested in the information that they received from the reports regarding their children's literacy and numeracy skills. A further 15 percent suggested that they were not sure. So 75 percent of parents responded in those categories for the information that they received regarding their children's performance levels.

In the Parent Survey again, the parents were asked: Did the report help you understand how your child is doing in reading or lecture skills? Madam Chair, 77 percent of parents said, yes, definitely, the report helped them understand how well their child was doing in reading or lecture skills.

In numeracy/notions de calcul, 77 percent of parents also reported that the report was very helpful; yes, definitely, very helpful in understanding how their child was doing, which is very, very gratifying for the first year of a very different protocol for assessing Grade 3 students that is moving away from the year-end standards test and moving to an early-year assessment about how children are doing in terms of numeracy and literacy skills.

In the Parent Survey, on the report, parents were asked: Were the critical competencies easy to understand? Madam Chair, 65 percent of parents reported back that, yes, the reading or lecture critical competencies reporting was easy to understand. In numeracy/notions de calcul, 77 percent of parents said that the critical competencies were easy to understand; again, very extraordinary results and very, very, positive for the first year of a two- or three-year roll-out in terms of the Grade 3 assessment.

In the Teacher Survey, which had a response rate, as I mentioned, of 31 percent in terms of

reporting back to the department, we asked teachers what was the average time required to complete assessment on an individual student, and this is very important because we had a number of challenges with regard to teacher time expenditure. Five percent of the teachers reported that less than 30 minutes was required for the reading competency. A further 29 percent of teachers reported that 30 to 60 minutes was required for their work in terms of reading—

Point of Order

Mrs. Smith: On a point of order, yes, I just want to emphasize that we do not need these lengthy—I thank the minister for these lengthy answers, but everything is in the Grade 3 assessment, and I do not want the minister to feel he has to go through page by page. There is one more question that needs to be asked before the time runs out.

Madam Chairperson: I am afraid this is not a point of order. It is a matter of dispute. I was trying to find a nicer word.

The Member for Seine River, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Dacquay: No, you have ruled on the point of order. I cannot speak to the point of order.

Madam Chairperson: And you would know.

Mrs. Dacquay: And I would know. You are right; I would know.

* * *

Mrs. Dacquay: I have one quick question. Is there anything in The Public Schools Act that would—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

I am afraid the point of order was concluded, and, therefore, the floor goes back to the minister.

Mr. Caldwell: If I might, I would like to finish this. I will be more quick, but—

Point of Order

Mrs. Dacquay: On a point of order, I do not know if the minister has been made aware, but there are exactly three minutes left. We wanted

to complete the Estimates today within the next three minutes. My colleagues, I understand, in the other sections want time. That is why, I had thought, I politely asked earlier if we could have very succinct answers.

I have one real quick question that I would like to ask. Then my colleague, the critic responsible for Education, is going to go quickly through and pass everything.

Mr. Caldwell: On the same point of order, it has been indicated that we have three minutes left in Estimates. Is that accurate?

Madam Chairperson: I am afraid that is not a point of order.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: On the minister's question, apparently there is an hour left.

Mr. Caldwell: We do have an hour. That gives me some heartening of this particular issue. So I can move on with this and then we will have time for the question that the Member for Seine River did want to ask. So I will move through this relatively quickly.

I think it is important. I know I provided the hard copy for the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), but, as this was asked in the Estimates process, I do want to put it into the record. I think that it is important to put it into the record. We do have time to address the question from the Member for Seine River. If we had had only three minutes I would have deferred, but we do have somewhat longer than that. I am a bit heartened by that.

I think it is very important again to put onto the record that when teachers were asked to rate the Grade 3 assessment in terms of its ability to provide useful information to students, in the reading section 17 percent of teachers said that the assessment was very useful in terms of its ability to provide useful information. A further 36 percent of teachers said it was useful in terms of providing information. A further 32 percent said it was somewhat useful in the ability to provide information about students, which is 85 percent rating of utility.

In terms of the lecture skills it was somewhat higher in terms of somewhat useful to very useful. A full 91 percent of teachers felt that the Grade 3 assessment, Madam Chair, had some utility in providing useful information. Interestingly enough, in terms of the lecture portion, 27 percent said that the assessment was very useful.

The Teacher Survey rated the summary sections of the reporting forms in terms of their ability to provide an appropriate evaluation of the students' overall performance. Again, on every score level in terms of reading, 50 percent of teachers said it was appropriate or very appropriate in terms of the lecture component; 52 percent said it was appropriate or very appropriate. Somewhat less in terms of numeracy, 46 percent said it was appropriate or very appropriate, with a further 35 percent deeming that it had some degree of appropriateness.

In terms of rating the assessment in terms of the ability to provide useful information to guide teaching, 36 percent of teachers said it was useful or very useful. A further 37 percent said it had some utility in terms of guiding teaching methods.

Teachers were asked to rate the ease of assigning a level of performance to each of the competencies. In terms of reading, 29 percent said the self-assessment and reflection was very easy. Sixty-five percent reported on skills and strategy as being easy, and 68 percent said comprehension interpretation, in terms of assigning the level of performance to each of the competencies, was easy.

* (15:30)

In numeracy, we had similarly high rates of assigning levels of performance. In numeracy sorting, 56 percent reported easy, and recall, 82 percent of teachers; in number sense, 75 percent of teachers reporting said it was easy.

In measure, 47 percent said it was easy. We had some further work to do there. In estimating and comparing, 50 percent of teachers reported it as being easy, and managing data, a further 54 percent reflected on that particular part of the reporting form as being easy.

I want to give a bit of a breakdown in terms of surveys to divisions and districts in terms of response. Forty-six divisional survey forms were sent out. Thirty-eight were received, for a response rate of 82 percent from divisions. There is a great deal of interest in this particular assessment in the public school system.

In terms of districts, eight districts were sent survey forms. Six were received back, for a response rate of 75 percent. Independent schools were somewhat less. Only 16 percent of independent schools responded.

Madam Chair, 79 percent of school divisions and districts reported that they organized training sessions for teachers within their jurisdiction. The composition of the divisional teams reflected the full gamut of teaching professionals in the field: 70 percent of administration participated in divisional teams, 16 percent of principals; 3 percent were comprised of consultants; 5 percent comprised of co-ordinators, assessment co-ordinators; 53 percent were teachers; and other groups, resource teachers, clinicians and so forth represented 4 percent.

I think, perhaps, I can leave this now. There are a few more pages left, but they are graphs, and graphs are pretty hard to represent on the written record, which Hansard is, but, in general, the professional learning opportunity is provided by teachers during this particular round of the first year of the Grade 3 assessment. Teachers were asked in which areas would they suggest that the department provide professional learning opportunities in the future: 42 percent requested some professional development opportunities in terms of general theory of assessment; 13 percent requested further opportunities for interpreting results of the assessment; and 11 percent requested information on how to best use assessment results to plan instruction.

So I did skip over some of the pages in the interest of time, but, with due respect to the members opposite, I did want to put on to the record some of this information that was requested because I think it is important to have reflected in Hansard the results of this particular survey in year one of the Grade 3 assessment

that we will continue to work on in the years ahead.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I would like to pass the Estimates right now.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,003,400 for Education, Training and Youth, School Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Mr. Caldwell: I wonder, Madam Chair, if there is an opportunity to review just in the main. We have had a very long Estimates process. It has been about three weeks, I think, we have been before the Committee of Supply here. I do have some areas, because we had a global discussion on a wide variety of issues and a number of things were taken under advisement. I made a commitment to provide the member opposite with some additional material vis-à-vis staffing, and so forth. I am seeking some advice on the opportunity to make some remarks in that regard. Is this an appropriate time? *[interjection]* Okay.

We had a global discussion here in committee around a wide variety of issues. I felt it was important, because we have been sitting for three weeks, to review in a brief way some of the global issues that we have discussed and put a summary together on achievements in the department since October 1999, which is when I was appointed by the Premier (Mr. Doer) as Minister of Education and Training and, subsequently, in January, appointed Minister of Education, Training and Youth. I want to give some of the key areas of importance for activities and achievements of the department since the election of the Doer government.

In terms of schools, there are a number of key contextual elements affecting the department strategy and its work. The public school system in Manitoba is very large and very complex in its operation as well as in its governance. It is complex and large in terms of its operation as well as governance with enormous inertia in terms of keeping things going as they have been

in the past. There is this tremendous inertia in the public education system. The school system is also quite diverse across the province in matters such as size, socio-economic strata, infrastructure and ethnic composition. It is a very, very complex system. It is complex as a province itself.

The system was subject to a great deal of buffeting during the 1990s in the form of public attacks in its value and successive reductions in funding. There are growing needs in many areas such as special needs, a backlog of unmet demand and significant deficits in both capital and operating caused by the restraint of the last decade. All of this has created very high expectations for the new government. The gap between expectations and resources shows no sign of diminishing, indeed even with the largest operating increases in 20 years in the last 18 months. As well, it is the largest capital injections into the public school system in the history of the province in the last 18 months. There are significant deficits and a tremendous gap between expectations and resources.

As I said, the gap between expectations and resources shows no sign of diminishing in the field. The department has very substantial ongoing operating responsibilities in such areas as curriculum development, support to teachers, handling of special needs, school funding, French language and many, many other areas.

The department reduced its staffing for School Programs by 15 percent or 60 full-time equivalents and its internal operating expenditures by 20 percent or some \$9 million in the 2000-2001 year and has remained at this reduced level for much of 2001-2002.

As well, there were significant reductions in senior management in the fall/winter of 1999. Doctor Levin is sitting at my left. There were three deputies where Doctor Levin occupies one chair today. There have been many major changes in leadership within the department. Approximately half of the senior management at levels director and above have changed since the fall of 1999.

In the election campaign of August-September 1999, there were a number of

election commitments related to schools. The main election commitments related to public schools were: To provide stable funding at the rate of economic growth, something that has been achieved in each of the last two school fiscal years; replacing the Grade 3 standards test with the fall assessment of skills in key areas which we just finished a discussion on; improving school safety, and I am pleased that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) has made some advances and some remarks in terms of school safety recently; improving community use of schools which we are undertaking with the Lighthouse school program in having more of our schools open in the evenings and making our schools more accessible to the community at large; reversing the changes in collective bargaining for teachers made in 1996 which was achieved during last year's legislative session; introducing a high school credit for community service which was an announcement that was made earlier today—I made that announcement at Maples Collegiate this morning—that we were moving towards that; and prohibiting the Youth News Network from the public school system in the province of Manitoba.

All of these election commitments have either been achieved or are in process.

* (15:40)

In main actions, the department has accomplished the following in the past 18 months—we are meeting election commitments: We have met the election commitment No. 1, which is stable funding at the rate of economic growth; we have met that election commitment in each of the last two years, adding 47.5 million new dollars in operating funds and also provided two of the four highest capital funding announcements ever.

I will just complete this and then we will move along. We met election commitment No. 2, replacing the Grade 3 standards test with a fall assessment of skills in key areas and are in the process of revising and simplifying the process for next fall. We met election commitment No. 3 through support of the safe schools program. We met election commitment No. 4 through Lighthouse schools program. We met election commitment No. 5 with Bill 42 being passed in

2000. We are meeting election commitment No. 6. The intention has been announced, as I said earlier today. We have met election commitment No. 7. YNN is no longer operating in Manitoba schools.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,351,400 for Education, Training and Youth, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Mrs. Smith: I just want it on the record that we have requested earlier that this pass. The political points that the minister was trying to put on are something we are not interested in. Is he going to be interrupting this next dialogue, or can we really pass?

Mr. Caldwell: No, I am not going to interrupt the passing. I also want to say that this is not a political dialogue; this is that a commitment made is a commitment kept. I think it is important that Manitobans have this on the record, that this Government believes that, when it makes a commitment, we keep them. We have, in fact, in Education and Training gone a long way to meeting the commitments that we made as a party in the election campaign of the fall of 1999.

Mrs. Smith: The point is that during this whole Estimates period members on this side have been very respectful and have asked the kinds of questions that we needed educationally. At the beginning of the minister's dialogue he took shots at the Conservative Party, saying that the infrastructure was in terrible disrepair. I did not at that time point out that during the last decade when members on this side of the House went into government, the Pawley government had put the province close to bankruptcy. I did not want to get into political dialogue.

The minister now has used his power and used his representation around this table to start a political commentary. It has no place here at the table of Estimates. This is why we requested in a very respectful way to have everything passed. I would like this on the record. It is very unfortunate that a minister in his position felt he had to do this.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,351,400 for Education, Training and Youth, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$177,394,000 for Education, Training and Youth, Education and School Tax Credits, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$737,932,500 for Education, Training and Youth, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$95,968,200 for Education, Training and Youth, Training and Continuing Education, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,050,400 for Education, Training and Youth, Capital Grants for School Divisions, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,814,300 for Education, Training and Youth, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is estimate 16.1.(a) Minister's Salary contained in Resolution 16.1. At this point, we request that the minister's staff

leave the table for the consideration of this last item. The floor is open for questions.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,656,100 for Education, Training and Youth, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Education, Training and Youth, thereby concluding our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply. I would like to thank all ministers and critics and all honourable members for their dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the Estimates for Executive Council. Would the First Minister's staff please enter the Chamber now. We are on page 21 of the Estimates book, resolution 2.1.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Premier is quoted in a May 27 article regarding the upcoming Western Premiers' Conference in Moose Jaw, which was just held in the past few days, as someone who will check his "ideology at the door" in regard to that event.

My question to the Premier: Why then will the Premier not do the same with his ideology when it comes to health care in his own province? Instead he is attempting to stifle debate and close options in Manitoba with the introduction of Bill 25.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would like to table the document, the True North

entertainment complex. I believe, in the last hour and a half of our Estimates, there was some criticism of this proposal or alleged proposal or the Crocus Fund having \$50 million and us carrying all the loan guarantee, et cetera, et cetera, on the proposal. I have a copy of the term sheet for the Leader of the Opposition, as I committed to do.

On the ideology, I can assure the member opposite that, at the meeting in Moose Jaw, I did the best I could to represent the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: I would not for a minute quarrel with the fact that, at that particular meeting, the Premier would do his best to represent all Manitobans. I guess my comment then would be along the same lines. Mr. Chairman, if he is doing his best at the meeting to represent the interest of all Manitobans, why would he not then withdraw Bill 25, because I do not believe that it does represent the interests of all Manitobans?

It does not allow for an opportunity, I think, which is the most important part of any premier of any province, ultimately to provide good government. I think that good government ultimately allows to ensure that, when you look at health care, it is basically the patients that should be put first, the safety of the patients, the concern of the patients.

It has nothing to do with politics, Mr. Chairman; it has everything to do with the safety of the patients. But clearly, with the kinds of ideology that the Doer government insists on bringing into this Legislature, with very little, if any, consultation with the public, it goes back to what he just stated that he was hoping to do or what I believe he did when he was in Moose Jaw representing Manitobans. He clearly is not representing the safety of patients, of Manitobans, so I would ask him to reconsider or withdraw Bill 25 because it does not represent the patients' safety, which I believe then is in the interest of all Manitobans.

Mr. Doer: First of all, no individual member of this Chamber has the authority to withdraw a bill. It is now the product of the Legislature and all 57 members. For example, when former Premier Filmon had to withdraw the constitutional amendment on Meech Lake, he required

unanimous consent of the Legislature, he required leave by all members of the Legislature to in fact do so. A few years later, when an issue of rules were in place with the former Member for Rupertsland on the way in which Meech Lake was proposed on the Order Paper, it again required unanimous consent to break the rules, which, of course, was not granted.

So just the first point, once a bill is before the Legislature, it is before the Legislature. Secondly, people since the beginning of time have invoked who is acting in the best interests of patients. We obviously believe that the final judge of acting in the best interests of patients, with the greatest of respect to the Leader of the Opposition, is perhaps more outside of this building than inside of this building, more the public of Manitoba rather than the ideological views of prism of the members opposite.

The bill is a modest one. There is obviously a mix of private and public health care services in Manitoba. It deals with only the hospital issues, and we think it is actually very consistent with what we understood to be the College of Physicians and Surgeons by-laws in the past.

We know that ever since Tommy Douglas brought universal hospital care into the province of Saskatchewan, and then ultimately universal medical care, there is a debate about who is on the patients' side. I think ultimately the public will judge that. I do not pretend to suggest that I am, or he is, better able at judging these things in the public of Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: I concur 100 percent with that last comment made by the Premier. Just to go back to his reference, when he talks about Meech and how the bill had to be withdrawn in the process, I appreciate the process. I hope that the Premier also appreciates that, during the Meech Lake debate, there was a tremendous amount of public debate that took place, and that was required because that was an issue that was going to have a major impact, not only on this province, but on this country. So the public had an opportunity to share their views, in favour, opposed, alternatives, which I think that is what a democracy is all about, and I think that is what makes for ultimately good government.

The Premier talks about sort of mild—I am not sure if his word was ideology or mild

temperament to the bill, but the point that I believe is very important is that the public are the ones that ultimately this is put in place for. The health care system, whether it is Canadian or Manitoban, is put in place to serve the safety of the patients of Manitoba. So why the government of the day would decide that, despite what the Premier's rhetoric is, mentioning the College of Physicians and Surgeons, I agree that they are huge stakeholders in this whole debate, but the ultimate patient is the public of Manitoba, and when you move towards putting in a health care bill like Bill 25, that clearly questions the ability of that bill to ensure the safety of patients. I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) this same question in Estimates: How is it that you, as a minister, would decide, over the advice of doctors? I ask the question on the basis, in order to make these things happen, to ensure the safety of patients who are there, that you ask the medical professionals, the health care professionals, what is the right thing to do if a patient has surgery and needs to be kept in overnight for observation.

* (14:50)

I find it incredible that, when the Minister of Health answered, his attempt was to try to say that, in essence, well, you know, that is kind of what happens when you get a, I think, public-private health care system is the way that he tried to answer it. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with the safety of the patients. I think that I would ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) the same question that I asked the Minister of Health. How is it that you as the Premier of all of the people of Manitoba would have the ability to make judgment that the private clinics should not have beds to allow for the safety of the patient overnight stays.

Mr. Doer: This bill is before the Legislature. It will have public hearings. There is public hearings at committee stage; after second reading, the issue of public safety is paramount in the Minister of Health's mind. Public safety and general health of patients in terms of the health care system will be, obviously, our first priority.

The bill will be before the Legislature. We will not have this necessity, I think, to have

thousands out in the street protesting like we did with the privatization of profit establishment of home care. In the past, this is where the opposition was very high, very, very strong. This bill, changes will not be made administratively; they are going to be made legislatively. I certainly think it is within the right of the public to speak out at the second hearing process, and I look forward to their presentations.

Mr. Murray: I had asked the Minister of Health, who was not able to answer the question, perhaps the Premier can bring some information forward, if he has had any discussions with Mr. Romanow, and, if so, when Mr. Romanow might be coming to Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: I have had some general discussions with Premier Romanow (a) before he took the commission (b) before he accepted it, the night before he was going to announce it, and subsequent to that. We will have people working with the Romanow commission.

However, in every province of Canada, there will be a situation where we have all agreed that we are not going to have health care sit in a state of suspended animation awaiting the deliberations of the commission. There are innovations that must be made. There is policies that must be developed. There is services that must be enhanced. There is recruitment and retaining that must be maintained and delivered on. There are decisions we have to make within our own purview. Quite frankly, all of us, even at the Western Premiers meeting, said there would have to be, all of us have to have considerable agility going into this next period.

It was interesting to note that all western provinces had a higher level of spending in their budgets for increases or for health care spending. We are already aware of the situations here in Manitoba in terms of per capita spending. I think the discussion in Canada on medicare is a useful one. I think one of the biggest issues all of us talked about this weekend or this last few days was the issue of pharmaceuticals, a huge increase in pharmaceutical costs in every province in Canada, and the fact the federal government was supposed to be working with the provinces in dealing with these cost drivers. We have to do some more work with the federal government in

this regard, and other provinces. Of course in different provinces you have different levels of pharmaceutical support, and in different provinces you have a different way of paying for medicare. Some provinces have a medicare fee, and some provinces do not.

There are going to be a lot of items on the agenda. Again, the Canadian public is going to be engaged in this discussion. We think it should be a wide-ranging discussion. Having said that, we have to act. We cannot put all our proverbial eggs in a royal commission basket. We are going to make decisions we feel we have to make. We are going to put those before the public in any legislative change. I think it would be wrong to just make these changes administratively, in the sense of a decision of this magnitude.

I know we were quite concerned there were going to be no public hearings on establishing profit in home care against all the advice the government had back in 1996. Ultimately, there were even signs popping up in Tuxedo. I guess the government of the day decided to withdraw that ideological proposal, but we think we are acting in the public interest. *[interjection]*

To drive to Brandon, I sometimes go that way. I have friends there.

An Honourable Member: Your brother.

Mr. Doer: I said I have friends there, and I also have a brother, my more conservative brother.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, does the Premier have a definitive date from Mr. Romanow when he would come to Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: I am not aware of any. He knows we are in the session, and he knows when a session is being—I am getting a little note here. He has requested a meeting after the session is over, and we have given him an August date, because we never know how long we are going to be here. Last year, even when we had the premiers' meeting, we were in session, so even that might be wrong.

Mr. Murray: Can you just confirm? He would be doing, as far as you know, public presentations, public consultations throughout the province.

Mr. Doer: They will be. I do not believe in August they will be. In fact, I would strongly recommend he not have a meeting in August, because the only ones probably going to be in this building will be us. So it speaks to our common sense, which of course is immense.

Mr. Murray: Could I just ensure if the Premier, through his contact with Mr. Romanow, if he would allow either a presentation or an opportunity for us to sit down and have a discussion with him? Again, I do not know the format he is expressing, but we certainly would like to be involved in any discussions or have a chance to be a part of any of those issues. I will send a letter off on behalf of that, but just wanted your support on that.

Mr. Doer: Again, I am not sure whether this is a public meeting or a private meeting, but I know they are going to have public meetings. It is the only way to go. I mean, in Saskatchewan the Fyke commission, I believe it was called, had a set of public hearings and came out with some pretty tough recommendations. With all the hospitals proposed to be closed in Saskatchewan in rural communities, there are some tough decisions they are looking at in Saskatchewan.

Having said that, I am not sure of the status of the August meeting. I will keep the member informed. We will definitely encourage public hearings and presentations from all parties in the Legislature with our differing views on a non-ideological basis.

* (15:00)

I mean, you do not agree with former Premier Romanow either on the amount of rural hospitals that would have closed in Saskatchewan. In fact, I read it in all your material in the election campaign, and I know that we were often defending what happened in Saskatchewan, from the communications from the central campaign, which I know the member opposite had something to do with.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, on the discussion on Bill 25, this really is nothing more than ideology on the part of the Doer government. They talk about a private-public system, yet when an individual comes in to spend his own

money to set up a clinic that, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, is world class, according to other medical people, is better than other facilities that are currently existing in the province, the ability for the Premier and for that minister to somehow look at that sort of health care venture, I guess, as something less than one that would help all Manitobans, is remarkable because clearly, without costing a penny of taxpayers' money, this guy comes in and sets something up.

Now, he is simply trying to be part of a system that would allow for reduced waiting lists, whether it be dealing with Workers Compensation or MPI, and there has been reluctance to have those organizations negotiate with that particular doctor. There is a sense, I guess, because this fellow is from the private sector, that somehow he might do something that would make health care in Manitoba worse. Continually, during the course of discussion, as this fellow, Doctor Godley, was getting his clinic underway, the Premier and the Minister of Health repeatedly misled Manitobans by calling it a private hospital.

If they are successful in their legislation, it will be deemed as such, but, prior to that, the existing legislation was clearly not a private hospital. I find it again difficult when we talk about the fact that the Premier wants to represent all of Manitobans, which I hope, as premier of the day, he does that, but, when you mislead the debate in terms of referring to it as a private hospital, that does nothing more than perhaps, for those that are less informed in the public, it gets a sense of fear. I would hope that the Premier is not injecting fear into a debate that Manitobans want to have on their health care system.

Mr. Doer: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Murray: Would the Premier then, for the record, clarify that The Maples Surgical Centre is not a private hospital?

Mr. Doer: I am not in the Health Estimates right now. I heard a couple of media reports about it was or was not going to be, and I am not even sure of the status of the clinic right now. There are private clinics allowed in Manitoba right

now. I do not think a lot has changed. I will take as notice how many private hospitals were operating over the last 11 years. I remember former Premier Filmon being pretty clear about health care and a publicly administered system. I will even go back on those words. Having said that, I agree that this clinic is a preoccupation of members opposite.

There are private clinics in Manitoba right now. There might be one more if this clinic is opened. The issue of private hospitals, we were told last year there were none in Manitoba and that the College of Physicians and Surgeons, by by-law, prohibited them or limited their existence. I guess that was a loophole, or a legal loophole, that the Minister of Health is clarifying in this bill and the intent in the bill.

The public can speak out on this issue. I so far do not see the public. This bill has been before the public for the last period of time. We are not getting a lot of people angry at the bill like we did with profit home care. Having said that, that may change with committee hearings and other things. We will see.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Chairman, the Premier mentions that we, on this side, are preoccupied with that. What we are preoccupied, frankly, is trying to improve health care in Manitoba. I mean, I know better than when the Premier states that he read in the newspaper, in the media something about a private hospital. He is on record as saying that, as is the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), making reference to The Maples Surgical Centre as a private hospital. You know, that does absolutely nothing to solve the health care system, which, ultimately, with \$15 million in six months, they were going to do. You know, it comes down to credibility. So you stand up and say, yeah, within six months and \$15 million, you know, we are going to solve all of your problems. That is a promise.

Well, you know, there is credibility on that, or lack of, because Manitobans know that they failed to live up to that promise. Now they are out there, they being the Premier and the Minister of Health, two people that should be standing up and being honest with Manitobans on the basis of where the situation of health care is today and how it can be improved.

So the Minister of Health and the Premier, the two most important people on this issue from a policy and a directive standpoint, are out misleading Manitobans and saying, well, you know, we do not support private hospitals or The Maples Surgical Centre is a private hospital. Now we are led to believe that the Premier says, well, we are not in Health debate, so, you know, he is not sure.

The Premier is the Premier is the Premier. You know, it is up to him to know exactly what is going on. I find that that comment surprises me incredibly, that he is not aware of his own legislation. Clearly, clearly, The Maples Surgical Centre, under the current legislation, unless they get their way and change the law, is not a private hospital. I do not know why they have such a hard time to accept that. If they want to introduce legislation, as they are doing, to change it so that currently with the way the legislation states that a private clinic can have up to four beds—my understanding is that that clinic has three—then afterwards, under their definition, it will not be a private hospital.

So, under that basis, is it the understanding of the Premier that as of today, prior to this bill being put through as law, that The Maples Surgical Centre is a private hospital?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Chairperson, the last time I was briefed on this, there were hypothetical questions because there were no patients. It was a virtual facility. I am not sure whether there are patients now or not. I will ask for a briefing on it.

Mr. Murray: Well, you know, I guess you have to have, according to the Premier, one person walk through the door for it to take on a meaning. The fact is, it is a building. It is sanctioned according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is, according to them, a world-class facility with world-class operating equipment. In the Premier's mind, that may be virtual, but, again, the fact that they are having some difficulty says to me that they are not comfortable with their legislation.

* (15:10)

I mean, if it is a private hospital today, which clearly the legislation says it is not, I do

not know why they would mislead Manitobans and say it is. This Premier and members opposite love to throw out this so-called Americanization. That is their way, again, rather than having a public debate, it is, well, let us scare the public. Let us try to whip them into a frenzy so that we can stay with the status quo, and, oh, by the way, we will make our own ideological decisions around the Cabinet table and we will ram them down Manitobans' throats.

That is not good government. So it comes down to a very simple question. The Maples Surgical Centre, as it exists today, prior to the legislation that they want to put in, Mr. Chairman, is The Maples Surgical Centre a private hospital?

Mr. Doer: Again, I will ask for a briefing on it, because I think the member has asked this question before, and I got a note back that there were not even patients there.

We are not afraid of this discussion, and I dare say this thing will go right into the election campaign. I am sure the member opposite is going to campaign in favour of profit hospitals, and we are going to campaign against profit hospitals. There are some differences of opinion in this room. That is part of democracy. You believe in selling off the phone utility without any public consultations. We believe in bringing a bill in which will have public hearings.

If the member opposite feels that what we are doing is not in patients' best interest, he will campaign in the election campaign. About three years from now when the campaign is on, he will be campaigning for profit health care, and we will be campaigning for non-profit health care. He probably knows full well how those debates went in Saskatchewan years ago.

Mr. Murray: Well, I can certainly tell the Premier this much, when we go into a campaign mode, we will be campaigning on better health care, certainly on better health care than what the status-quo ideology of his Government is. He wants to put words on the record that he thinks that he can then stand up and say, well, this is what the member opposite said he was going to do.

I am not going to do that. That is the kind of campaigning that they like to do, and, boy, does it hurt when they go on record saying if we need more nurses we will get them; if we need more doctors we will do it; and, by golly, we are going to solve hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, and they look at the camera and they go through an election campaign. Well, you know, you did not. You failed miserably at it.

So you can put on the record what you think we might campaign on. Lots of luck. You are right, the public will decide where this debate is going to go. They are going to look at the basis of ideologically driven debate that happens around a Cabinet table that does not involve those people, the safety of patients. I agree, I think that is going to be a very invigorating debate with the people of Manitoba.

But I find it again interesting, Mr. Chairman, that the Premier likes to stir up the rhetoric. That makes for good reading, I guess, for those people who are having trouble sleeping at night. I just find it interesting that when we ask a question, a very, very simple question, and maybe he needs to be briefed—and I hope he is getting briefed on these issues, because they are important.

Health care is a very important issue for Manitobans. The fact that he is unaware whether The Maples Surgical Centre, before his legislation comes in to change it—he is unaware whether this is, as they refer to it, a private hospital, is false. I find it very incredible that he would be so unsure of that when health care is such an important topic for all Manitobans. I would have thought he would have understood it, made it a point to be on top of that legislation because health care is one of the things that the member opposite made a huge issue of in the election campaign. To sit in the Chamber and say that he is not sure what the current status is of The Maples Surgical Centre, and maybe he is not sure what the current status of the legislation is.

I would encourage him absolutely to get briefed on that because I think the people of Manitoba would expect their Premier to (a) understand what the legislation says, and (b) ensure that they were hopefully putting their

faith and trust in somebody, albeit totally misled, on what they said they were going to do in the election campaign and did not. But I would think that the people of Manitoba would expect their Premier to understand the legislation and make sure that it represents ultimately the safety of the patients.

* (15:20)

Mr. Doer: First of all, we have put in place an intake in the medical school this September. There will be more placements in the medical school, including rural residents, for purposes of graduating more doctors. There are more family specialists going to be involved in the intern programs and professional development. There are more nurses now in training in the province. We have gone from salaries comparable to P.E.I., as the lowest in Canada for lab and X-ray techs, to some of the changes we made last summer albeit in a difficult circumstance. We clearly are working on foreign doctor accreditation. In fact, there was a great deal of interest at the Western Premiers' meeting from some individuals on that policy that we brought in place. A lot of people thought it was a very good, comprehensive policy.

So, yes, patient care will be the motivation behind legislation we are putting in. The values behind the legislation I support. I am not a Philadelphia lawyer in terms of giving all these legal interpretations on one facility. I am looking at the long-term future of this province, and we think that the profit health hospital issue is a decision we can make. Again, the public will have a say in it. The term, on the one hand you condemn rhetoric, on the other hand you use the term around the Cabinet table; well, it will not be around the Cabinet table. The legislation will be before the people of Manitoba, and it will be at second reading. I look forward to the presentations that will be made there. If you feel the legislation on profit hospitals is not to your liking, you can vote against it and you can campaign against it, and ultimately the people will decide. I respect that.

Mr. Murray: Again, the Premier puts a number of facts out on the table with respect to some of the things that have happened. What clearly his Government is struggling with, and it shows, is

the fact, and it is difficult for them to admit it, that nursing shortages have doubled since they have come into government. Again, going from an election campaign that says if we need this we will do it, only to then sort of come along and say well, you know, you cannot just add water and stir and create nurses. Where have they been? Why was it so easy to do in front of a camera in an election campaign and then you get in to be the Premier in government and all of a sudden it cannot be done?

This comes back, I believe, to complete lack of credibility. Sure, great to make an election campaign and a video and look good for a TV commercial and make all sorts of promises. I do not know, maybe he was hoping nobody would see it, but the fact is, it is on record. It is there for all Manitobans to see, and it has not happened. It has been quite the opposite. Instead of solving it, in many instances it has become worse. So I listen to the Premier talk about some of the facts that he puts on the table, and his array of some of those discussions is quite impressive. Why then, when we are talking about something that is fundamental to Manitoba in terms of making health care better, i.e., this Bill 25 that they are trying to ram in to ensure that places that The Maples Surgical Centre—why is it that he does not know that legislation? Why is it, when I ask the question, before he puts in his law to change it, under the existing legislation, that he does not know whether The Maples Surgical Centre is a private hospital or not?

Mr. Doer: I think that legislation should be prepared by government and articulated on the basis of its general policy intent, its goals, its objectives for the people of Manitoba. I am not here to be the surrogate representative of interpreting the legislation for one facility or another. That is not my job. Our job is to bring in solid legislation to make sure that it is, quote, dealt with in a timely way in the Legislature, it is allowed proper debate in the Legislature, and it is allowed proper discussion in committee. I think that is crucial.

Mr. Murray: Well, you talk about not being a Philadelphia lawyer, not kind of looking at interpretation of legislation. It is your Government, your minister, your ideology that is

bringing it in, so you can talk about interpretation in that legislation that you are trying to impose on Manitobans is the definition part and so your Minister of Health is out there saying: We are going to stop private hospitals. Well, where is a private hospital? There is no private hospital under the law in Manitoba operating today. You talk about virtual hospitals, it is the virtual conversations that the Premier and the minister must be happening between themselves.

There is nothing that states that The Maples Surgical Centre is a private hospital, so perhaps there is news from the front and that the Premier will be able to not make any sort of reference of interpretation, but literally, as it sits today, The Maples Surgical Centre, which again, clearly under the existing legislation is not deemed a—it is a clinic and yet we hear non-stop from the Premier and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that we will not allow this private hospital to exist, or we will not allow any private hospitals into Manitoba.

Well, again, let us do everything we can do to solve health care on one hand, but on the other hand let us mislead Manitobans and say we will not allow a private hospital. I do not know how much more straightforward, and you know, I would like to move on, as I am sure the Premier would, but it is a very straightforward question about The Maples Surgical Centre. He can go on about, well, it is a virtual hospital; well, I cannot interpret the legislation. The minister opposite is there, the Premier opposite is very, very skilled and very experienced, and so this is a very simple question about The Maples Surgical Centre. Does the Premier believe that The Maples Surgical Centre today is a private hospital?

* (15:30)

Mr. Doer: Again, you know, we live in a society that has a number of, thousands and thousands of proposals, and some of them are partially moving ahead and some of them are partially not moving ahead. There are entities, institutions, programs and people everywhere. Our legislation speaks for itself. The member opposite can choose to vote for it or against it, and I await that decision. I am looking forward to his comments on second reading.

We are against profit hospitals. If you are in favour of profit hospitals, that is your right in your capacity as Her Majesty's Leader of the Official Opposition to take your stand and take your stand on it. We have legislation before the Legislature and I will be voting for it, but I will be listening to the public.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, maybe I was not quite paying attention for a second, but did I hear the Premier recognizing that The Maples Surgical Centre is a private hospital?

Mr. Doer: I would welcome the Leader of the Opposition to read Hansard. I have said that there are entities all the time that have different views on all kinds of things. The legislation will be debated in this Legislature, and it will be publicly debated at committee. I am looking forward to hearing the member opposite's views on profit health care. I mean that is the policy issue here. You have our Government's position on profit health care. We have not heard your views on profit health care, and we will see where you stand. This is part of democracy. I mean it is a good part of democracy. Legislation, at the end of the day, requires votes and it requires public hearings. It requires participation from all sides of the House on how we can make Manitoba a better place for all of us to live, work and raise a family. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: A point of order being raised? Order, please.

Mr. Murray: Again, I know that the legislation, as it sits, will be debated. There is no question that it will be debated. I think it will be a very vigorous debate. I hope that this Government does not stifle it and allows the public to get very much involved, because I think they are very interested in this debate ultimately which is going to set a direction as to how we are going to solve health care.

Again, his interpretation can be looked at in a number of ways, but I believe, and again it is very clear that both the way the Premier and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) avoid answering the questions about The Maples Surgical Centre that they are uncomfortable, because they are waiting to pass legislation that will, you know in their minds, for ideological

reasons, make a right move for Manitobans. They will not just answer the question openly and up front about The Maples Surgical Centre because they want Manitobans to believe that some entrepreneur has come into Manitoba and under his own auspices has set up a world-class facility according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

So, for some reason, I do not know why, but they will not answer a very straightforward question about whether that particular facility is not a private hospital. Mr. Chairman, they insist on turning around and making reference to the legislation. They insist on talking about well, we can debate the legislation; well, I am not familiar with the legislation; well, I am not a Philadelphia lawyer, on and on and on. It is a fundamental, very straightforward question. On one hand, they say, well, it is a private hospital, and I have heard the Minister of Health say the same thing. They talk about being advocates for private hospitals.

Again, you mislead Manitobans as much as you want. On this issue, I think it is clear that the emperor has no clothes. I mean, I think it is very, very indicative of the fact that, over the course of time, what Manitobans are seeing is not a Premier and a Minister of Health that are trying to look at ways to make health care better but to put their ideological stamp on the whole process.

Again, it would not be such a big issue, Mr. Chairman, if the two of them would just come clean on The Maples Surgical Centre, just say as it exists today it is not a hospital. That is all it takes. It is not a matter of going back to all sorts of rhetoric. It is just a very straight question.

Mr. Doer: A few minutes ago the Leader of the Opposition asked us to "withdraw Bill 25," and that is the macro issue here. We are not going to withdraw Bill 25. We want you to debate Bill 25. We are looking forward to your arguments on Bill 25. We are looking forward to your votes on Bill 25. We are looking forward to public views on Bill 25. The member said we are going to ram it through in a Cabinet meeting. We are not ramming it through a Cabinet meeting. That was the old way of doing things called the home care privatization. We are looking forward to the public views at committee.

The ultimate public hearing will be an election campaign. If members opposite want to campaign on a profit health care hospital system, there are components of health care now that are private. There are private clinics, and certainly we are not taking our—and if I was going to act like the Leader of the Opposition, big stamp in putting it on all of those—[interjection] We are not taking that kind of stamp on all those clinics.

So it is not an ideological stamp, but it is the profit hospitals. We have taken our stand. We will take our stand right through to the election campaign and, ultimately, the big public hearing in the sky is the campaign. But we think it is good in the short run for patient care.

The question about every facility in Manitoba, if you were to ask me if it is this or if it is that, I mean, I am just dealing with the broader general policy issues that are contained within our legislation. I remember thousands of people outside of this building when the privatization of home care took place. I remember one of the best speeches I ever heard in this whole Legislature in my life was a person named Evan Burns, who is now deceased, who was a very bright individual who gave a wonderful speech about the policy implications of profit in home care. It was the most moving speech I have ever heard here. Hopefully, it had some impact on some members of the former government. He was an individual, regrettably, that passed away about a year and a half ago or two years ago at a very young age.

These are debates of great passion. They are debates of values. We want innovation in health care. We do not believe the status quo is the way to go. That is why we have announced the prenatal-postnatal program. That is why we are announcing other strategies on health care, baby care and other things, building on some of the programs that were announced by members opposite. A lot of times we are building on some things that were started by members opposite. Sometimes we are clarifying what was there for members opposite. Sometimes we are accelerating the efforts for members opposite and sometimes we are doing something slightly different.

But in this case, I think it is actually quite consistent in the way in which the former

premier—I am going to go back and check. I do not think there was a profit hospital under the former government's administration.

* (15:40)

Mr. Murray: The way the Premier (Mr. Doer) sort of says, well, I am not aware of this, and I am not sure about that, and I am not completely up to speed on this, reminds me of a song of which I am sure he knows. I am just a singer in a rock and roll band, Mr. Chairman.

I would ask the Premier, in light of their ideology to move with Bill 25, which appears to be a direct attack against The Maples Surgical Centre, how the irony and the cynicism would allow Dr. Brian Postl to go on radio and say: We will be looking at this of course—I assume after the deal is done on purchasing the Pan Am Clinic—that absolutely we are looking at putting in some beds into that facility.

I mean, the irony and cynicism of that is incredible and I just would ask the Premier to comment on how possibly you think that Manitobans will look at that and say: Oh, yeah, that makes sense. They do not want this one to proceed because it is world class and built by non-taxpayers' money, but, okay, sure, they will buy the Pan Am Clinic for ultimately \$7.3 million, which does not have any beds. But, we can put beds in that, and that is okay because boy, you know, that really makes sense, and oh, certainly, it is not ideologically driven.

Mr. Doer: I would expect if this law is passed in this Legislature that the law will apply to all programs in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: So then, just again for the record, if they do proceed with this bill that they are proposing, Bill 25, there will be no beds at all allowed in the Pan Am Clinic or, I guess, as they would have to change the name, the Pan Am Hospital.

Mr. Doer: The law is the law and what the law says will be in place. It will apply to any facility in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: I would think that with Doctor Postl's background, presumably he would have

made that comment with respect to putting a few beds into the Pan Am Clinic on the simple basis that it would help the safety of the patients. I do not want to put words in his mouth, but I would think that anybody that would look at that would come to that logical conclusion.

So you have a doctor who, certainly I would defer to 100 times out of 100, Mr. Chairman, for advice and guidance on a particular issue rather than have a politician come in and say: Well, no, sorry, we are changing the law. Safety of patients? Well, you know, we are not worried. We will figure something else out, but, boy, we better not have any beds in there because heaven forbid that, you know, if a patient should require overnight surgery, we will just ship him out, because to have some beds in there, even according to Doctor Postl, that is wrong. And we cannot have that.

You know, I think it gets a bit thick when you start looking at the safety of patients and the Premier talks about: We cannot do the status quo. Well, we agree, but the direction that they are going clearly, clearly is trying to put patient safety at risk.

Mr. Doer: I have already told the member opposite about profit hospitals and that is the legislation before the Legislature. It will apply to all facilities. I have a great deal of respect for Doctor Postl. We obviously followed his advice in the concept of the Pan Am Clinic, but that is back at the health authority board at present.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Chairman, just a question for the Premier: The Leader of the federal NDP, Alexa McDonough, has indicated that in her view, it is her opinion that private clinics are morally corrupt.

Is that the same feeling that this Premier has and that the Manitoba NDP would have? As they are members of the federal NDP, do they hold to her belief that private clinics are morally corrupt?

Mr. Doer: I believe the question is out of order in that you are asking me to speak under the jurisdiction of a federal politician of the same party. I am still waiting to find out who the

Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) voted for. At least I told you who I was voting for.

Alexa McDonough, as the Leader of the federal NDP, there are lots of policies we do not agree with, starting with that people making \$60,000 are high-wage earners.

I am not even going to begin to go through the list. We have private clinics here in Manitoba. We will before Bill 25; we will during the debate on Bill 25; and we will have them after the debate on Bill 25.

We have done a lot of work and the Centre for Policy Alternatives has done work on the existence of profit clinics adjacent to a publicly administered system. They have come out with a number of analyses. So did Harvard two weeks ago. So did *Scientific American*. So did other reports. There was just a recent report from the Consumers' Association in Alberta.

But, no, we will speak for ourselves. Talking about getting more PQ members involved in the federal Conservative Party, I think that is probably not the view of members opposite, to get more separatists involved in Canadian federal politics. Those are views that probably members opposite do not share with their federal counterparts. There is a difference.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, I would like to just put into the record, if I could, some comments. It is a four-paragraph editorial that I will go through. Obviously, if the Premier cares to comment, terrific. If not, we can move on.

It is called "Blocking reform": "Health Minister David Chomiak knows better than anyone else what's best for Manitoba patients. The rest of the country—even fellow New Democrat and former Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow—is at least looking at ways that private health-care providers could play an increased role in the provision of improved service, but not Mr. Chomiak. He already knows that private-health care solutions will destroy health care as we so well know it, which despite runaway costs and waiting lists, is best. Ask Mr. Chomiak.

"Survey after survey finds that most Canadians think they should have access to private health-care services should they want them, but not Mr. Chomiak. He knows better than anyone that providing the same old health care with the same old philosophy is what's best. How Mr. Chomiak knows this is unclear. It likely, however, was a conviction he acquired during those many long years that he sat on Opposition benches and decried every effort to reform health care in Manitoba on the basis that change is dangerous compared with doing everything the same way as it has been done, but with more money. In government he has acted accordingly, opening the coffers but not the debate, the single significant result of which has been a reduction in patients in hallways. They have been moved into some of the 600 new beds that Mr. Chomiak opened but which were launched while he was still stewing in Opposition.

"Now, just to prove that he knows what's best, he is introducing legislation that will outlaw private hospitals in Manitoba. Unable to win the debate on private health care, he has chosen to simply cut it off, to make it illegal for anyone to practise anything other than what Mr. Chomiak best preaches. The immediate result of the legislation he writes will be to block the opening of a private surgical centre that was to offer Manitobans elective plastic, eye and dental surgeries in a facility, that the doctor who inspected it for the College of Physicians and Surgeons found to be better designed and equipped than city hospitals. Denying Manitobans better facilities, according to Mr. Chomiak, is best.

"In so doing, Mr. Chomiak is making Manitoba the Canadian bastion for doing the same old things the same old way, at increasing cost in the absence of competition to the monopoly model that has failed to meet expectations, both in quality of service and value for money spent—and spent and spent. He is blocking off the potential for reform or innovation in any terms other than the terms with which he is familiar.

"It may eventually prove to be that Mr. Chomiak alone among health ministers has all the answers. Right now, however, stifling debate

and outlawing competition are not what's best for Manitobans, only what's best for Mr. Chomiak and his outworn theory."

* (15:50)

That was a comment from the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Friday, May 25. Just for the record, I would be interested in the Premier's comments.

Mr. Doer: I could find editorials that I could read back about foreign doctors and the change in policy and how Minister Chomiak made the right decision and had the courage to proceed with a program that is very relevant and going to be very successful. I think the editorial talks about all private health care. I think this only is a specific profit hospital issue. I would want to read back, for the record:

Health care, Moose Jaw, May 31— "Premiers remain committed to the key goals of preserving, protecting and improving the health of Canadians; ensuring that their residents have access to an appropriate and effective range of health services; and to working with each other to ensure long-term sustainability to the system so that health care services are available when needed by Canadians in future years." We know that the "governments have made progress in health care over the past year, but more remains to be done."

"In this context, Premiers discussed the recently announced Commission of the Future Health Care in Canada, which is being chaired by the former Premier of Saskatchewan Roy Romanow. They shared their ongoing concerns over the future sustainability of publicly-funded health care systems across the country and stressed the need to work together to find innovative solutions to the health system management issues that are resulting in significant cost pressures for provinces/territories. They agreed that they must move quickly to address some of these challenges and not simply wait for the report of the Romanow Commission before they take further action.

"Premiers noted that the Commission must address an important part of the health care debate, the adequacy of federal funding for

health and other social programs," that we need to call "on the federal government to implement an appropriate escalator to support the continued quality and sustainability of publicly-funded health services in this country. Premiers also indicated their interest in coordinating their presentations to the Commissions.

"Premiers also affirmed their willingness to continue to work together on western regional basis to improve the management and delivery of health services. They called on their Ministers of Health to expand their collaborative efforts to creating western approaches to ongoing health renewal and innovation.

"In particular, Western Premiers noted the importance and increasing urgency of developing and implementing effective approaches to pharmaceutical management, . . . address the supply of doctors, nurses and other medical professions, including mechanisms for common accreditation of graduates from foreign medical schools"—an initiative, as I said as an aside, that we had proposed.

"Premiers directed . . . Ministers of Health to identify a concrete strategy for achieving cost-effective pharmaceutical management practices to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to new and appropriate drugs, while promoting the overall sustainability of publicly-funded health care systems. Premiers called for an interim report on this work to be completed in advance of the 2001 Annual Premiers' Conference, so that they could share the results with their colleagues from the rest of Canada.

"Premiers also directed the western Health Ministers to discuss a Human Resources Strategy and to develop, on a priority basis, approaches to help address the supply of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel, including mechanisms for common accreditation and graduates of foreign medical schools.

"Premiers noted that, despite previous commitment by the federal government, there has been no progress toward a federal-provincial-territorial dispute settlement mechanism in relation to the Canada Health Act. Premiers also noted . . . the particular need for the federal government to move quickly to

honour its 2001 federal Speech from the Throne commitments with the respect to developing strategies and programs to improve the health of Aboriginal Canadians."

So I think you will find a little different tone than the editorial. I have still got the editorial saying that we were wrong to propose that taxes would go up for a private company if it was a private utility and telephones, as opposed to a publicly administered one. So I take some of these editorials; some of them, I read them. Some of them are informative. Some of them are correct in their analysis, I think, and some of them might not be correct. I think that it was an oversimplification in the editorial that the member opposite quoted.

Mr. Murray: Just repeating back with respect to the Western Premiers' Conference, the premiers also affirmed their willingness to continue to work together on a western regional basis to improve the management and delivery of health services. Again, the Premier, to be true to his earlier comment about checking his ideology at the door when he went into that meeting—one would hope that he would sit down and listen, and rather than disagree with Premier Klein, be open to his comments and suggestions because, as it says in here, the conference became a Klein-fest. I hope that the Premier of Manitoba was able to learn something from the Premier of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, my next question to the Premier involves the Information Resources Department, better known as IRD, of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and its relationship to Executive Council. Could the Premier tell the people of Manitoba exactly what that relationship is?

Mr. Doer: I do not believe there has been any change in that relationship since former communications director Barb Biggar was in place.

Mr. Murray: In previous questions of these Estimates, the Premier was extremely evasive in answering questions of this agency.

I want to again ask the Premier: Since IRD co-ordinates all advertising and tendering of

communication initiatives on behalf of his Government and works directly with the Premier's director of communications on a daily basis, could the Premier please detail the relationship of Executive Council with IRD?

Mr. Doer: Well, again, Mr. Chairperson, I believe that the advertising question is going to be posed in the Department of Culture. I believe that most major advertising accounts, and I mentioned Tourism, was tendered. Most of the decisions that have been made were done so, I think, with tendering. We work with the IRD. I saw a staff member from IRD, Mr. Fawcett, I believe, was there yesterday at the Pooh festival. The Leader of the Opposition was there. I know there is co-ordination between Ms. Stevens, who was, I think, in charge of that operation. I think she was at a recent announcement I was at. I am trying to recall what it was, but I do not think there has been any change in the way in which Cabinet ministers are working.

In some cases, we have situations where Cabinet departments have communications staff. Some departments do not have communications staff. Some departments therefore rely exclusively on the IRD staff. If we have announcements that, say, the Premier is making across two or three departments, IRD would be involved in some of that communication, I believe.

I think ultimately the test of communication is the product that is of the communication. We have had a lot of challenges in communications because we have had a lot of announcements lately. Last week, we had the announcement on the CanWest Global announcement in downtown Winnipeg which was, again, a very, very positive announcement, up to 1200 jobs starting with a commitment of 400 jobs.

The week before that, IRD was specifically involved in the all-party group that met with the delegations from North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. I believe a person from that office was there. The week before that, there was an announcement on the entertainment centre where I think some of the communication people were involved.

So what happens is there is kind of a co-operative relationship between IRD, the communications people in the Cabinet office and

the communications staff in some departments and not in other departments. I think there is a kind of a sharing of tasks and responsibilities in terms of the public interest to know. We hope that the material that was produced—I just gave you a snapshot of two weeks of announcements that I think have been going well in terms of the public. I heard a lot of positive comments about downtown Winnipeg lately. I think the public is committed to seeing growth in downtown Winnipeg. I am sure members opposite share that optimism. It is just good for the whole community. That has been my recent contact, but I mentioned as late as yesterday—I think Mr. Fawcett works in IRD, does he not? Oh, he works in Information Services. See, I do not even know. I just know that people are involved in these announcements, and they seem to be very good people. Most of them are there from the previous government. *[interjection]* Well, I am waiting for a Crocus question, John.

* (16:00)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, a final question just on this issue. Has the Premier or his staff directly or indirectly requested of IRD to contract with any suppliers not previously on the list of approved companies and/or businesses, and could he supply us with a list of those contractors and the specific projects they were assigned to?

Mr. Doer: I know that the members were going to ask that question in the Culture Estimates, so I will check and see what was obtained there. I am sure the researcher that wrote that very specific question for the Leader of the Opposition wrote exactly the same one for Culture affairs. I believe the big contracts are tendered. I am assuming that sometimes there might be research staff that writes a question or two.

An Honourable Member: One or two.

Mr. Doer: That is right. That looked like one that you were reading very carefully, and you did not want to miss one word in the question. Have you now or have you ever?

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, it is like watching a tennis match. I would conclude my remarks. I think my honourable colleague has a question.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): I have only got a couple of issues that have brought some concern to me. Mr. Chair, through to the Premier, on the floodproofing program that we have in the city of Winnipeg at this time, there is a shortfall of money. The City has just notified the people on Lord Avenue that they fall out of the floodproofing program because there is no money left. The way it was set up in the criteria was they started at the high end and worked their way down. I know the Premier is aware where Lord Avenue is in my constituency. It is one of the areas that gets flooded every year. It is one of the high-need areas for a dike.

We brought up their wishes and their hopes by putting the design work into what was required. We know that the riverbank has to be stabilized. We know what height the dikes have to be built at, but it looks like we are out of money. Is there any hope in the future for these people to looking at the City getting some more infrastructure money for the diking program that is required in the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Doer: I am hoping three things will happen in the next period of time. One, I will take the specific question as notice, and I will get back in a timely basis to the member. So the specifics I will check out. Two, I am hoping that soon we will have a report from the engineers about floodproofing for the city of Winnipeg and its impact on the internal diking system in Winnipeg. Three, I think that process should go to an all-party committee, and I would say that here in the House to the Leader of the Opposition. But, ultimately, when we get the engineering reports, there has to be environmental considerations and all-party considerations, and I will pledge ourselves to have that kind of activity. I think that the question was asked previously about involving other parties in this, and I think that we should do that.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Chairman, the problem we have got here is a bit of a Catch-22. Right now, we have got some claimants who have outstanding money owing to them, which they cannot get freed up from the Government until such time as they have agreed to build a dike. They cannot agree to build a dike because the City says they are going to build a contiguous dike behind their properties. This prevents them from applying to the floodproofing program,

which is still available to all Manitobans, to build a dike so they can get their 20 percent back, which they have had outstanding since 1997.

We were hoping that the government of the day could see by itself to at least releasing these funds. These people have agreed that one way or another they will build a dike, by one program or another. If we could free up that 20 percent, that would be some way of looking back and saying we have put you through the strainer on this thing. I mean, it varies from \$5,000 to \$40,000 that is left out owing. It would just be a help to these people, who are still out of pocket from the '97 flood and other catches.

One thing we have to look at is it does not matter what program we put in place, be it the expansion of the floodway or the Ste. Agathe infrastructure, we still have the same level of water that is going to flow through the city of Winnipeg at that particular flood level. If it is '97, that is the flood level we have to protect to, and the floodway or Ste. Agathe cannot protect us beyond that level.

That is exactly what this dike will do. It will protect just to that level. Some of the dikes that we are building in the city, like along Kilkenny, if that gets approved, are to protect the entire area, which is much better. It protects not only along the river but it protects sort of a valley within the Fort Richmond area. Some of the pumping stations that the City is looking to put in place protect our low-lying areas.

Yes, I understand the necessity for all the programs, but it seems that we are in a Catch-22 with these few people that are being held out and said you have to wait. They just got notified last week. I do not think it is fair for them to be left out in the cold now, not getting their 20 percent back, when we cannot seem to get our act together between us and the feds and the City. It is a provincial restriction. So we can lift it at any time. It was necessary at the time, but I think if we are blocking somebody we should just lift the restriction and let them have their money. It is owing to them, it is due to them. Why are we putting them through the course on it?

Mr. Doer: I am not sure why we are. I agree if they are caught going through one door and not

getting some satisfaction and then going through another door and getting the opposite, that is what we used to call a Catch-22. Let me take that as particular notice. If we are, we should be moving quickly to get some of these engineering reports out, some of which have been in the public on a pretty selective basis, but it is important we get all these facts on the table and make some decisions, long-term decisions. That may have some short-term impact, but the short-term impact should be greater flood protection and not just a way of drifting along and not meeting our obligations.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Chair, we will leave floodproofing for now and go to another infrastructure area. The River Park Drive behind the ball diamond, is that on the list of infrastructure programs to be approved or not approved for this coming session?

Mr. Doer: It is part of the city priorities, but there are projects that you have had some disagreement with that are also part of the city priorities, but it is definitely one of the priorities.

Mr. Laurendeau: I have just had some people inquiring whether or not this would be approved in this construction season or not, seeing that it would be of great assistance to the City down in that area, as far as the renewal of that core area down there, if it will be in this infrastructure year or not.

Mr. Doer: I would have to check on the cash flow in our Budget. This is a multiyear program, as you know, but it is definitely, I am gathering from the member opposite he thinks it is a positive program. I think we think it is. We have evaluated it as consistent with downtown redevelopment as well. I am not sure exactly whether it has totally been agreed upon by all three levels of government or not, but I share the enthusiasm for the project, subject to agreement of the other levels of government, and I will check on the cash flow for it.

* (16:10)

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Chair, the Premier is well aware that I am not one to shy away from saying whether I approve or disapprove of a project. *[interjection]* Yes, he is right. I do approve of

the River Park Drive. I think it is one of those areas where it will improve the area as far as infrastructure goes, but the Premier is also well aware that I do not agree with the little bridge from The Forks overtop. So I hope this roadway takes priority before a little walkway bridge going over from The Forks to the Basilica.

I think it is a much more important one, as I feel the Kenaston overpass is an important one, long, long, long before a little walkway bridge for pedestrians over the Red River at that point, especially when it could be incorporated into the design of the new Provencher Bridge that is already being designed at this time. I do not see any need for us to waste any infrastructure dollars on a separate pedestrian bridge when the infrastructure is already being put in place by the City. For us to spend another \$15 million on a footbridge, no, I do not see the benefits to that. I understand where certain politicians are going with it, but I have to disagree with their aspects of it.

But, when it gets down to the Infrastructure Program supporting the Kenaston Boulevard, I have to say that my constituents have been loud and clear. They are tired of the instances of being blocked at that railway crossing. They are tired of people saying, well, that railway might be moved in the year 2040, so we do not have to build it. It is something that has been on the city books back when I was there. Probably back when you were Minister of Urban Affairs, you might remember some of the discussions around it.

The infrastructure that has been put in place around there, the reconstruction of Wilkes and everything else, is being designed exactly for that purpose. Over the years, any discussions we had when I was at the City and after the City were that anything that was being put in place around there was being designed around the idea of the underpass being put there. The railway accepts their responsibility towards it. I cannot understand why my Premier does not.

What is it against the Kenaston overpass that the Premier is not in favour of, what part of the aspect? He understands the aspect of the ambulances being plugged there, that cannot come in from the rural area, have been told do not use

Kenaston because you can get stuck by a train. I am not sure if you have ever been stuck there, but you can wait 15, 20 minutes going in. It is horrendous. I would like to know exactly why the Premier has put such a definite no to this project.

Mr. Doer: Well, I think it is not just our level of government. I mean, first of all, the Mayor is on record on this proposal. The federal minister is on record on this proposal. Maybe I pulled a Marcel Laurendeau or the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) by saying exactly what was—I think the public had a right to know what was happening outside the meetings, what was happening inside the meetings. I think it is an issue of affordability and some questions about the railway.

I have been stopped there before. I have waited at that crossing. I know the trains are fewer in number than before, but longer than before. I also know driving in that area that Kenaston itself, even to get through there, you are still in a bottleneck going onto the St. James Bridge, if you are going that way. There are some views that say it is going to be a lot, lot more than just the underpass money. There is the whole issue to have an underpass at Waverley and Kenaston, because there are just as many arguments about Waverley.

There is the whole issue of what is happening with the intermodal transport centre. Is it going to be moved? I mean, most of the trucks, I think, drive on to Kenaston from that site, if I am not mistaken. I might be contradicted there.

I have talked about the traffic flows with the mayor. I just went through my own constituency the other day. The CN main line goes right through the middle of my constituency on Monroe. So it is not as if I do not have the same trains going through as the members opposite do. I know that there are long lineups.

There are some questions about the future of the railways. I hope we do keep two major railways in Manitoba, plus the OmniTRAX expansion, plus accessing the Wisconsin rail line and accessing eventually, if the CN proposal becomes a proposal. I am not sure if we continue to see longer trains and less of them, if there is a way of combining what is going on already.

We have a whole series of grade crossings to deal with. There is some infrastructure that is necessary all across the city. The federal minister mentioned a couple in St. Boniface that he would like to see. We were chatting about it the other day. I have personal friends that live there as well. Whyte Ridge was zoned years ago as a way of having more people with housing choices in Winnipeg, not just always outside of Winnipeg. There are some legitimate issues.

The other argument says it should be extended to connect with the capital expansion that was made by members opposite on another bridge. I think there has to be a plan in the city for traffic flow. I think it has to include railways. How does it fit with Waverley, Haney and Kenaston? How does it fit with the St. James Bridge? These are big issues. You know, it was not affordable under the former government at the end of the day, and it is not affordable right now under our amount of infrastructure. When we compare this to the new downtown arena, and I know members opposite may not agree, but we can get a lot more private investment and private risk, which is one of the criteria.

We will get the puck in the net for you, John. It is okay.

I have never, ever said in any communication that there is no problem there. I mean, it is a long wait and there is lots of growth there. I do not have the solution. I am not the City of Winnipeg traffic engineer. I just said outside the meeting what people were saying inside the meeting. In some ways, even though I got a lot more criticism and getting a few phone calls—I do not get them, the staff get them—but by saying what I said when I said it, instead of saying, oh, like the last infrastructure program was on the table all the way along, but it was not going to happen. So at least, hopefully, honestly, it at least will allow for people to discuss other solutions rather than every year saying, oh, it is not on this year's agenda, but it might be on next year's agenda, oh, it might be on the year after. I mean, what service would we be providing anybody by just drifting along for three or four years of federal-provincial-municipal infrastructure with really no realistic hope of that money coming out of it, but just leaving that false hope out there?

At least, I think, by being honest we will force people to be criticized more, i.e., me, and at least force other people to be looking at alternatives and some of the traffic problems. I guess sometimes being a gopher and sticking your head out of the hole on these things means it gets shot off. That is fair enough. At least I think the people were entitled to know. That is the same style that you bring to these debates. At least I said outside the meeting hall what was happening inside the meeting. I think that is better for people than the alternative of just drifting along for three or four years and, you know, love, trust and pixie dust and no realistic opportunity to do anything. But I will take the petitions.

Mr. Laurendeau: It is not just the petitions, Mr. Chair, that we want the Premier to keep. We want him to pay a little attention to what we are saying and the importance of the issue.

You know, it is interesting when you go back, and I guess you can go right back in time, the WATS study in 1952. The WATS study in 1952 was the first study, not the first one, but one of the first studies of the traffic engineers for the city of Winnipeg and where they saw the traffic flows going in the future.

The problem with the reports that have come out all the way back to 1952 has been exactly that, political interference. It has been political interference that stopped a lot of the growth and the infrastructure from happening, even though the politicians of the day were smart enough to acquire a lot of the properties, a lot of the properties that were needed for this infrastructure growth to happen. The Bishop Grandin extension, the Moray Street bridge, those lands were bought. They bought the forest where the golf course is for that roadway that goes through there. They acquired the lands from Grant across into St. Boniface for that bridge that never happened. Grant was supposed to go across to St. Mary's Road at that one point where McDiarmid Lumber is today. They only just built a building on that city property, I think it is eight years ago.

* (16:20)

There are other bridges that were proposed back in '52, and most of them have been built. Other than the Grant bridge, all the bridges, now that the Moray bridge is built, have been concluded. The infrastructure tying all those bridges together has not. The bridge in the Premier's (Mr. Doer) riding is part of that same inner beltway that was to be constructed, and the inner beltway was supposed to be a way of alleviating the need for having freeways, I think, was what they said at the time. They did not want freeways in the city, and that was something the politicians decided. A certain mayor we had back then decided he did not want us to have freeways, so we were going to have an inner and outer beltway, and those two beltways—well, the one beltway is concluded, the second beltway is halfway there, I guess, if we wanted to chart its map around the Bishop Grandin and the other portion from your end coming back through the other way. So there are two portions. At least part of the inner beltway is there or in place.

I just think we have to start putting a little bit more emphasis on what the engineers are saying and what the traffic studies are saying and a little more positive spin, or taking the political aspect out of it and saying let us not play politics with it. Let us do what is best. Let us see what the studies say and let us do what the studies are recommending. The studies have recommended this type of project to move ahead in the past, and it was blocked by politicians, both at City Hall and at this level, or at the federal level, but we always have somebody else to blame.

I think we have to take the cat by the tail on this one and somebody is going to have to step forward and say we have to move ahead with these types of projects, or we are going to stagnate. We are going to end up with problems with the backlog of traffic, not just in my area but in your area or in Transcona, and we have to start looking at these types of projects.

I still do not understand the reason you are opposed to it. I heard you saying that, well, maybe they are going to move the rail yard or the trucking, the terminal, or—

An Honourable Member: The intermodal.

Mr. Laurendeau: The intermodal, that is it, the intermodals piece, but we do not know that. I thought they just constructed that intermodal. I do not see it leaving. If it is going anywhere, I do not know where it is going to. I thought there was talk of it going to the airport at one time. They killed that real quick, because they would have to move the entire infrastructure of the tracks, which was too expensive. So the intermodal is not going anywhere, not from the people who I have spoken to at CN. That is going to be there for a long time to come. If we want to keep planning for, well, CN just might move it. CN was going to move the rail that used to come through St. Norbert 35 years ago. It is still there, and it is still operating.

So I hope you see the light one of these days and see our way a little bit. The engineers are wanting it. City Hall has requested that it be done. The federal government, Reg Alcock was very strong and supportive of this, and he told us that the federal government wanted it. He said the only one in the way on this was the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba. He was very clear on that that the only person who was in the way on this project proceeding was the Premier of Manitoba. He said if the Premier of Manitoba wanted it to happen it would happen, because the City has said it is a go and the feds have said it was a go. He said all you have to do is get the Premier onside.

Is there any way for this Premier to come onside? What do we have to do? What do we have to prove for this Premier, Mr. Chair, through you, to come onside and understand this project is an important one for the city of Winnipeg, not just for the south end?

Mr. Doer: I can show you a newspaper article where the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg also said it was not a priority under infrastructure. Mr. Duhamel, after the announcement of the entertainment centre, said, and I quote: If this entertainment centre is built with the limited amount of money we have in infrastructure, there will not be money available for a so-called Kenaston underpass.

I have a news clip on that. That is why he also established the commission to deal with the military base relocation. I believe Anita Neville

is now chairing that group. The other thing is that Eggleton is proposing that this be a cost-recovery deal for the barracks. In Toronto, when Downsview was vacated by the federal government, all that land was, I believe, given to the community and its economic opportunities, both in transportation or other opportunities.

I have read the '66 WATS report, I have not read the one in '52. I am familiar with some of the fundamental assumptions. I am also aware that a lot of planning decisions were based on a 750 000 population by the year 2000. We might make it. I think we have got 750 000, if you have to count the whole Capital Region to get there.

So, if you have got all of this planning going on the basis of a new tax-supported system, and you have one-third of that growth, if not 50 percent of that growth, taking place outside of the transportation routes, with added cost to the Province on schools—I was in Birds Hill school last week—highways, ambulance, fire, loss of agricultural land, et cetera, you do have decisions, as you have pointed out, that have been made by a provincial government.

There have been variations to the WATS report in terms of an inner-city beltway based on political and public desires to have different types of routes. For example, there was a different view in St. Boniface about six lanes to replace the Provencher Bridge.

I remember being Minister responsible for The Forks debating with City of Winnipeg engineers, where they wanted to put a freeway on the riverbank, right from the new Norwood Bridge over to the Disraeli Bridge so that people could just have the old industrial railway tracks be replaced with a freeway right through The Forks. They did not want to have the walking area. They did not want to have the public access. They did not want to have the retention of those railway sheds to be converted into shops and restaurants and other facilities. They wanted to build a very, very expedient car-moving machine in that historic Red and Assiniboine site.

So sometimes the views of engineers, and I am having a few discussions with a few of them,

might be good engineering is not necessarily the best public policy. On the Chief Peguis Bridge, its original location was supposed to be Springfield drive, or whatever it is called. It was going to be an inner-city beltway all along Springfield. Well, that is not a very good idea now with the size of Springfield. If we would have built the Chief Peguis Bridge at Springfield, we would have had a big bridge going into a small road. A lot of people do not like that.

Then, of course, there were questions on what it would do to the Kildonan golf course. Some people would rather golf than get around three and a half minutes quicker than where the Chief Peguis Bridge is. The member opposite knows that that would be the elimination of the Kildonan golf course, which is used by hundreds of Winnipeggers every day, probably one golf course that most of us could break 100 on. For me, it is probably the only course I could break 100 on. So these are very cherished sites in this community. *[interjection]* I am not the world's best golfer.

The whole Charleswood deal, and the member opposite knows that was originally going to be, Bishop Grandin was going to hook up to Charleswood. The Charleswood Bridge was going to hook up to Haney right through to Bishop Grandin. That was going to be the vehicular point underneath the railway tracks in west Winnipeg and out to the airport. It was going to go right out to the airport. That was going to be the original route.

Now we have got a little bit of a bridge, just like the Peguis Bridge, and then we have got a huge Kenaston route that is coming off of Bishop Grandin with developments going on, and the railway track. So there has been a combination of development and planning that has not always been fitted together.

Most of these decisions have been made at City Hall, not here. They have not been made here. The fundamental decision on all of its infrastructure is made at City Hall. I do regret, and we were starting to negotiate a number of railway crossings and infrastructure when I was Minister of Urban Affairs back in the '80s. Again, using the WATS report, we were negotiating a number of proposals with the then-

Mulroney government and the railways. We had the Logan—I think it is just Logan and Keewatin. We negotiated to get about 80 percent or 90 percent of the money. I will have to go back in my memory. We negotiated on behalf of the City to get that paid for by the railways and not by the City, not by the Province. Maybe the former Minister of Urban Affairs—I do not know what year that thing died because there were other projects. We were looking, at that point, at Waverley. *[interjection]* Yes. I know we were looking at Waverley, and that would take some relief off of the Kenaston situation because some of that traffic can flow from Lindenwoods into Waverley. But, again, I am not the City of Winnipeg engineers. We do have infrastructure. We had an infrastructure from 1994 to 1998. It did not get funded by the previous government. *[interjection]* But the Kenaston underpass did not get funded. So here we are, and it is not being funded in the priorities this time around. It does not mean to say there is not a lot of inconvenience with the waits.

The member opposite juxtapositions that against the pedestrian bridge. We have not made any statements about that either.

* (16:30)

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): I look to the clock. I do not believe we have got a lot of time left at the present time for examination under Estimates. However, I would like to begin by saying that I look to the Premier's office for the vision of the province. It is the strategic planning, the looking into a prosperous future for our province that emanates from his office. I know that various ministers, whether they be Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) or Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), were always in a competitive position for any additional dollars that are available, but it is his office, and it was his responsibility to look to the future and strategically analyze where those dollars should go.

Now, I come back to my constituency of Portage la Prairie, and I am hoping to share a couple of strategic thoughts with him as to the future of this province. Not only would it be for the constituency, but I believe it would play a

part in all of the province, and that being the exorbitant amount of funding that our health care system is absorbing these days, yet we are not looking at present to expanding the dollars available for recreation and healthy living to any great degree. I know that there are some additional dollars in that area, but strategically we have got to look at those areas for additional funding. Small amounts of money expended in recreation and sport do create a very healthy lifestyle that lasts a lifetime. I would hope that area of support would be looked favourably upon when next one analyzes that.

I will say that I asked the Minister responsible for Sport (Mr. Lemieux) regarding the Pan Am residual monies. He said that the decisions had not yet been finalized as to how those dollars would be spent. So I would like to encourage the Premier, in those deliberations, to consider all of Manitoba for small dollar investments, whether it be a tennis court or a basketball court, are very, very cost-effective ways of expending dollars.

I also want to share with the Premier that we have to look at prevention in light of the exceptional position that Manitoba is in, being that we are bucking the trend in the number of persons starting smoking. Virtually every jurisdiction in the nation, the numbers are down. That is not the case in Manitoba. We are actually increasing. It is important that we look to spending dollars in the most cost-effective manner. So I leave that with the Premier at this time.

Specifically to the constituency of Portage la Prairie, I was very pleased to see that the Premier had a moment in his busy schedule to share the very welcomed announcement involving J. R. Simplot. I did ask the question in regard to J. R. Simplot coming to Manitoba, being that they are going to require significant water resources for the production of potatoes. One can appreciate that upwards to 40 000 acres annually will be required, and that on a recommended rotation is four years. So, therefore, you times 40 000 acres times four; we are actually looking at 160 000 acres requiring a water supply for irrigation purposes.

I have asked the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk). I have asked the

Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). I have asked the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). I do know that the Minister of Conservation is where it starts, but to date there has not been a co-ordinated discussion, and this is why I ask the question of the Premier today whether he will undertake that visionary position, that strategic thinking position and put together a committee of ministers or staff to get looking at the water plan that was vitally needed for this province. I know we are looking at water quality and the importance for domestic and commercial production, but the actual water plan for retention, distribution is not underway.

I have talked for five minutes now, and I would like to perhaps maybe afford the Premier an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Doer: The member raised a couple of items before he asked the question about J. R. Simplot. Let me say that he is right. There are recreational needs outside of the city of Winnipeg as there are inside of the city of Winnipeg. We were very careful on the announcement or the "entertainment centre," if you will, to be very clear that it comes out of the Winnipeg Infrastructure. It does not crowd out some of the other rural proposals, and there are a lot of rural proposals in a lot of areas, but recreational proposals, there are at least 10 I am aware of, and I am probably not aware of all of them, just by my contacts with municipalities, whether it is Stonewall or Portage or Dauphin or Altona or Thompson, just to name a few, where there are proposals on small recreation and larger recreation.

So there is a need. I think that there has been a reduction in the Community Places. I am sure he has talked to the Minister of Culture (Mr. Lemieux). There was a higher amount of money available from Community Places for recreation and recreational programs. Those have been reduced from its original budget allocation when Lotteries money was available to its current amount.

So there are challenges there. We are in the process of negotiating a number of different competing priorities for money in the federal-provincial-municipal agreement for rural Manitoba. I would say water is the number one

priority that we are working on, and we have so far announced, with Minister Duhamel, Haywood, Balmoral, Cormorant, and we are working with the minister on some other proposals. Before North Battleford happened, we were working on these proposals. We consider water quality and municipal water, along with the \$12 million we put into the Municipal Water Board per year—we consider that to be a fairly important issue.

Having said that, we consider some of the recreational projects around Manitoba to also be important. Can we use creativity to get some of these projects going? There are some large-scale proposals in some communities. There are smaller-scale proposals. There is recreation in the narrow sense of the word. There are cultural proposals, as well. So we hope, with Minister Duhamel and the rural municipalities, we can get some of them going. Some of them we will not get going, and that means how else can we fund these. That ties to the issue of Community Places and the weakness between the \$75,000 and Community Places, the infrastructure program, and those projects in between communities that are not Winnipeg, but are larger than the \$75,000 projects in terms of its availability to make a project work.

* (16:40)

So I acknowledge that it is one of our infrastructure challenges that is important for the quality of communities and the quality of life and important, one would argue, for fitness, which I believe is important for preventative health. I also think we have to start working on strategies to get more of our schools open later. Schools that close down at four o'clock and not available to the community later, that is a real missed opportunity. There are communities that their schools open. There are schools that do not. We have our Lighthouse program that we have initiated with some attempt to make a difference in some targeted communities.

We have this huge capital investment with major recreational facilities, and not all of them are universally open to communities that have helped. The Province pays 100 percent of the capital, but to me part of a recreation strategy is what have we got already.

On the issue of smoking, and this is not a two-minute conversation, but the member mentioned the statistic. I brought in a private member's bill back in '89 on prohibiting smoking in day care centres and I think hospitals, other facilities, for purposes of second-hand smoke and its impact. We worked with the Lung Association, the Heart Association and a number of other organizations on second-hand smoke. We even had feisty debates in this Legislative Chamber on preventing smoking in the legislative lounge, but some of the discussions in caucus, I suggest, were not as much as a Hallelujah Chorus as we were eventually in the House.

There is the provision of by-laws for municipalities on smoking on the next stage of the hospitality industry. I think that Toronto has just passed a by-law. I think Vancouver has passed a by-law. I believe that Victoria has passed a by-law. I think that Winnipeg is looking at a by-law. I am not sure what they will do.

We tended to believe that the next stage, you know, a provincial standard on child care centres and other places, is good provincial legislation. It did move the line ahead, but I think we have to do a lot more education on smoking.

I got a note here now. I made a mistake, did I? Okay. I am going to correct the record before I go any further on something that I said, but everything I just said could be wrong and I am going to get briefed on it before I say anything further.

So I will come back with a more fulsome answer on the status of municipalities and by-laws, both nationally and in Manitoba shortly. Thirdly, on the issue of J. R. Simplot, we did have a co-ordinated approach with the company, with the municipality, with the rural municipality or with the city of Portage and the rural municipality. In our first initial meetings with Agriculture, Conservation, Intergovernmental Affairs, I, T and M, we recognized that there was a huge data weakness, and that was on the Assiniboine River.

The member opposite will probably remember debates on the Assiniboine River. What are the nutrient levels in the Assiniboine

River on a low level and a high level based on the last number of years? There are other extractions of water and treatment of water in Maple Leaf. What is the impact on the whole Assiniboine River system? We have asked for a basin-wide study of the Assiniboine River to get that data. Quite frankly, it should have been available when we were dealing with things like the Pembina diversion for purposes of diverting water out of the Assiniboine into another valley years ago in the early '90s, when the former Chair of the Clean Environment Commission, one Mr. Stewart, said there was not enough data from the Department of Natural Resources to make a fundamental decision about this issue. You know what? There has not been any advance on that information since that assessment, except we are not to proceed with that project since the early '90s. We have asked for that material and data on the Assiniboine River.

At the same time we have been working with PFRA on the issue of the Simplot proposal. The federal government is very involved with our provincial Department of Agriculture both on diversification of crops, on potato diversification strategies and on water. We are looking for options to store water and stop flooding in the spring. The member opposite will know how much water flowed through the Portage diversion this year, but can we enhance our storage without having any negative impact? Can we enhance our storage in flood season to improve our opportunities for crop diversification during the whole year?

We do have a co-ordinated approach. If we did not, J. R. Simplot would not have made their capital announcement, which they did when the member opposite was there, I believe, November or December in Portage. This will have to go to a public environmental assessment. Water sustainability will be obviously part of the decision making. We also are investing in the infrastructure of Portage to accommodate this. I think it is a great example of where, instead of having the R.M. compete with the city, I think this is a classic example of co-operation where the R.M. and the City came together on the capital investments with the Province and on the tax revenues for themselves to share between the two jurisdictions.

I think it is a wonderful example of municipal leadership that took place with that announcement. We have a co-ordinated approach. But we do have the Assiniboine River study. It is not absolutely project specific. It is actually watershed specific. I think it is a very important bit of information, because whether you are talking about Maple Leaf or you are talking about the Pembina diversion or you are talking about, which we are not proposing at this point—maybe we will have to look at storage of water there as opposed to diversions of water. There is a difference between storages and moving water, piping it from one system to another.

We think the 160 acres—well, I will not quote the acres. We think the requirements for Simplot for potatoes to justify their capital investment is positive for Manitoba. I mean, to be subsidizing as we are year after year grain and oilseeds, which regrettably are not producing the kind of profit levels for producers that allow them to sustain themselves without income subsidies, we think is not the way to go in the sense that we need to continue to get some alternative crops with much higher value with much lower income subsidies, in fact zero income subsidies.

So we think we have a good relationship with the federal government on the PFRA. This diversification must take place (a) with the potato growers; (b) with the federal and provincial governments; (c) with more data on the Assiniboine River; (d) looking at more storage opportunities. I think that Manitoba's soil quality and the amount of water we already have retained in the soil relative to Alberta and Saskatchewan give us a tremendous advantage to expand our potato production, that value-added crop, for purposes of value-added jobs in our own communities. We think it is definitely a very positive announcement. We could be the largest potato producers soon in Canada if we continue to move ahead, but we need to do it under the PFRA. So far discussions with them have been very positive with the federal government, very positive at the officials level, and we have raised it at the highest level.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the Premier's recognition of the commitment that municipal

elected officials in Portage la Prairie, both city and R.M., along with their respective administrations, have worked co-operatively to bring forward a united position on economic development. The success of J. R. Simplot coming to Portage la Prairie is an example of that.

* (16:50)

The Premier has mentioned on occasion, the good working relationship with PFRA. I would suggest to the Premier that perhaps the working relationships with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is not as positive as that of PFRA. I say that on the basis that Fisheries and Oceans have been exercising to a greater extent their authority on waterways within the province. I will speak specifically of Provincial Trunk Highway 26, where the bridge was washed away in the spring's flood [*interjection*] You are not interrupting me, are you?

Mr. Chairperson: I am interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired. Rule 74.1 provides in part that not more than 140 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of ways and means and supply resolutions, respecting all types of Estimates and of supply bills. Rule 74.3 provides that, when time limit has expired, the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions necessary to dispose of the matter. Therefore, I am now going to call in sequence the remaining questions. I should point out that these questions may not be debated or amended. Time is up. We cannot go back.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,556,000 for Executive Council, General Administration, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 2.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,900 for Executive Council, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

Resolution agreed to.

That completes the Estimates in this section and other sections of the Committee of Supply for this section. Committee rise.

* (17:00)

IN SESSION

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Before proceeding with the other Orders of the Day in regard to bills, I believe that we may need to go back into Committee of Supply to deal with a vote. Therefore, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), by leave, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member has to have leave first. Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Ashton: I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Committee of Supply, please come to order.

Report

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Health, the question was put on Resolution 21.1.

Mr. Chairperson, this resolution was carried on a voice vote, and, subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote be taken.

Formal Vote

Mr. Chairperson: The question before this committee is this: Shall resolution 21.1. pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

Mr. Chairperson: In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health, the question was put on Resolution 21.1. The resolution was carried on a voice vote, and, subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote be taken.

The question before the committee is resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,244,800 for Health, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 27, Nays 23.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly carried.

Is there agreement that the Committee of Supply shall finish in Room 254? *[Agreed]*

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (17:40)

IN SESSION

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Could you please call bills 18, 32, 34, 38 and 39 for a second read.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Smith), that Bill 18, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie et modifications corrélatives, be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Caldwell: I am pleased to speak briefly on second reading of Bill 18, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act. This amendment is the latest in a long list of amendments to The Teachers' Pension Act dating back from 1985 through 1998. The Teachers' Pension Act covers approximately 14 500 active teachers, and approximately 7250 pensioners. The purpose of these amendments is to update and modernize certain aspects of the legislation governing teachers' pensions, and bring it into line with other pension legislation in the province of Manitoba and, indeed, throughout Canada.

Apart from amendments to the act governing maternity leave, which were passed by this House last year, there have been few changes made to this legislation for almost a decade. I am pleased to say that the amendments contained within this bill are the result of extensive consultations among representatives of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and the Government through the forum of the teachers' Pension Task Force.

The key changes to The Teachers' Pension Act incorporated in this bill are a provision which will enable teachers to purchase a full actuarial cost, periods of parental leave, periods of past service within the Manitoba Faculty of Education, periods of past service under the Minister responsible for Education or Advanced Education, and periods of past service as a school clinician.

Key provisions also include a provision which would clarify which periods of part-time and full-time employment are combined to determine whether a teacher has sufficient service to qualify to receive a pension; a provision which states that teachers who retire before turning 65 years of age will be treated as not having retired if within 30 days after retiring they become re-employed as teachers; a provision which limits the period during which a retired teacher under the age of 65 can teach while receiving a pension to 120 teaching days in a school year; a provision which gives the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund board authority to invest funds on behalf of the Government; a provision which gives the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund board

authority to administer a pension or other benefit plan for employees of another employer, and a provision which authorises a one-time transfer of \$15,621,010 from Account A, the account to which teachers' contributions are accredited, and from which pensions are paid to the pension adjustment account, the account used to fund cost of living adjustments on retired teacher pensions.

This bill also updates and clarifies certain other provisions of the act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner), hat the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 32—The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), that Bill 32, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: I am pleased to introduce for second reading, Bill 32, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act. This bill proposes several amendments to The City of Winnipeg Act, which, as members know, provides the legislative framework for Winnipeg. One amendment gives new authority to the City to establish an urban tax credit. The amendment modelled after Winnipeg's existing Heritage Tax Credit Authority and successful program, expands Winnipeg's tool kit and enhances Winnipeg's ability to support initiatives to revitalize downtown, or indeed, other areas of the city.

An amendment is also proposed that grants the City of Winnipeg the flexibility it has requested to better meet service priorities. The amendment will enable the City, if they choose, to raise money for residential street and sidewalk

repairs. This may assist the City to better manage and prioritize capital works.

Another amendment gives the Ward Boundaries Commission more flexibility in determining your electoral wards for their municipal election. The proposed amendment addresses concerns expressed by Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Ward Boundaries Commission that the Act was restrictive, resulting in communities and neighbourhoods being split by ward boundaries. This amendment will enable, in the next general municipal election 2002, wards in the city of Winnipeg to best reflect all community interest.

Finally, an administrative amendment is proposed that would bring consistency to the business and real property assessment cycles.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments address both outstanding concerns and emerging needs of the city of Winnipeg. In that respect, I am pleased to continue to work with Winnipeg to provide it with the tools to better meet the needs of its citizens.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 34—The Municipal Amendment Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that The Municipal Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: I am pleased to introduce today Bill 34, The Municipal Amendment Act. Bill 34 proposes several amendments to The Municipal Amendment Act, which, as members know, provides the legislative framework for municipalities outside Winnipeg. Some of these amendments are administrative in nature, for example, to correct a cross-referencing error and

to correct references to the titles of other legislation.

Amendments are also being made to clarify the intent of the legislation, for example, to more clearly articulate their authority to partner with other authorities and to streamline processes, for example, by giving municipalities more authority to settle matters by agreement when discussing local boundary issues.

A further amendment is being proposed to correct an oversight from the time when the new municipal act came into effect in 1997, which would see authority return to municipalities to close undeveloped government road allowances subject to a public hearing process and approval of the minister. This authority and process existed under the previous legislation and worked well. Municipalities have asked that it be returned.

A new authority for municipalities is also being proposed. The bill proposes that municipalities outside Winnipeg be given the ability to offer a tax credit to encourage the renovation and preservation of historic buildings. This enabling power would give municipalities an additional tool, if they so choose, to protect historically significant buildings in their communities. Several municipalities have been discussing this authority.

* (17:50)

We have consulted with stakeholders, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and others, on this bill. I am confident the municipalities will welcome this. Indeed, this bill addresses several specific municipal requests for legislative changes and continues to strengthen the legislative framework for municipalities in this province.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the Member for Southdale (Mr. Jack Reimer), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 38—The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr.

Robinson), that Bill 38, The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élection des autorités locales, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: Bill 38 proposes several amendments to the Local Authorities Election Act, which, as members know, provides the legislative framework for both municipal and school board elections. These amendments specifically address concerns raised by municipalities during and following the last general election. Most of the amendments are administrative in nature, intended to streamline or modernize components of the act. For example, this bill removes the schedule from the act and provides for the forms—and there are several—to be prescribed by regulation. These amendments will assist in modernising the act, in enabling the acts to be written in plain language, and, in some instances, bringing more consistency with provincial practice.

One amendment being proposed is to make it a requirement that non-residents own property for at least six months in order to qualify to vote at a municipal election. This amendment would provide consistency with the existing residency provision which requires residency for six months in order to qualify as an elector.

The bill also proposes amending the requirements for adding names to the list of electors on voting day by requiring official identification in order to have the name of an elector added to the list of electors at the poll. To ensure sufficient flexibility, particularly to address the broad range of local authorities and particularly the needs of smaller authorities, the proposed amendment also enables the deputy returning officer to use discretion in identifying a prospective elector.

Amendments are also being proposed that will enhance the voting by mail process by changing the date for making applications to vote by mail.

These proposed amendments reflect the expressed needs in municipalities, and I am

confident that municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, will also welcome this bill. Indeed, this bill addresses several specific municipal requests for legislative changes, but, more importantly, it continues to strengthen the legislative framework for municipalities in this province.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): I wonder if you might seek leave to not see the clock for five minutes.

Mr. Speaker: The House does not see the clock? *[Agreed]*

Bill 39—The Archives and Recordkeeping Act

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), Bill 39, The Archives and Recordkeeping Act/Loi sur les archives, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: I am very pleased to bring forward today The Archives and Recordkeeping Act, new legislation that establishes a modern framework for the operation of our archives and for records management within the Manitoba government.

This legislation will replace Part 2 of The Legislative Library Act. I know that many of us in this Legislature are familiar with the work and the holdings of our archives, but I want to put on the record that the importance of the archival record for the people of Manitoba is truly important; through the work of many people our current staff and others over the last several decades the archive documents, the lives and the

work of people in Manitoba with holdings that extend back to the early days of European contact. Also, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the records of the Government are handled through time, so that business and operational needs are met today and that the archival record is preserved for the future. This act provides a framework for managing the records through their life cycles.

I would like to highlight a few of the major features very quickly, Mr. Speaker, that are in this bill. First of all, it affirms the enduring value of archival records. It is framed in contemporary language and definitions that reflect today's work environment within government, including the need to address the challenges of electronic records. It builds on the partnership that must exist between government bodies in the archives, and clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities for identifying, scheduling and preserving records. This act enables the archives to enter into agreements with the courts, the Legislative Assembly and other bodies. Recognizing the vital importance of good recordkeeping it allows for the recovery of records unlawfully removed from the Government or the archives, and provides for penalties of up to \$50,000 for the wilful and lawful destruction of records.

In the event of any future sale of an incorporated government agency, there are provisions to safeguard for the public those records of that agency that are deemed to have archival value. Mr. Speaker, with these comments, I am pleased to recommend Bill 39 for consideration. Thank you.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 4, 2001

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