



First Session — Thirty-Fourth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

37 Elizabeth II

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fourth Legislature**

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIBERAL
ANGUS, John	St. Norbert	LIBERAL
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BURRELL, Parker	Swan River	PC
CARR, James	Fort Rouge	LIBERAL
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIBERAL
CHARLES, Gwen	Selkirk	LIBERAL
CHEEMA, Gulzar	Kildonan	LIBERAL
CHORNOPYSKI, William	Burrows	LIBERAL
CONNERY, Edward Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
COWAN, Jay	Churchill	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose du Lac	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James Hon.	Arthur	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Emerson	PC
DRIEDGER, Herold, L.	Niakwa	LIBERAL
DUCHARME, Gerald, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIBERAL
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Laurie	Fort Garry	LIBERAL
EVANS, Leonard	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen Hon.	Virden	PC
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIBERAL
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Ellice	LIBERAL
HAMMOND, Gerrie	Kirkfield Park	PC
HARAPIAK, Harry	The Pas	NDP
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HEMPHILL, Maureen	Logan	NDP
KOZAK, Richard, J.	Transcona	LIBERAL
LAMOUREUX, Kevin, M.	Inkster	LIBERAL
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANDRAKE, Ed	Assiniboia	LIBERAL
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
McCRAE, James Hon.	Brandon West	PC
MINENKO, Mark	Seven Oaks	LIBERAL
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
OLESON, Charlotte Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ORCHARD, Donald Hon.	Pembina	PC
PANKRATZ, Helmut	La Verendrye	PC
PATTERSON, Allan	Radisson	LIBERAL
PENNER, Jack, Hon.	Rhineland	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
ROCH, Gilles	Springfield	LIBERAL
ROSE, Bob	St. Vital	LIBERAL
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
TAYLOR, Harold	Wolseley	LIBERAL
URUSKI, Bill	Interlake	NDP
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
YEO, Iva	Sturgeon Creek	LIBERAL

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 31, 1988.

The House met at 8 p.m.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—EDUCATION

Mr. Chairman, Harold Gilleshammer: I would like to call this meeting to order to consider the Estimates of the Department of Education.

We are on 1. Administration and Finance (g) Administration and Professional Certification: (2) Other Expenditures \$292,600.00. Shall the item pass? The Honourable Member for Sturgeon Creek.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): I am wondering if you could explain or if the Minister could explain to me what, under Supplies and Services, takes up almost \$200,000.00.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education): I believe that is the purchase of the in-house computer. Oh, I will correct that.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to correct that statement. The answer to that is that it is the purchase of computer time in the operating budget for the purchase time of the computer.

Mrs. Yeo: There is a decrease under Other Operating. I am wondering if the Minister could clarify that.

Mr. Derkach: That figure is a result of the savings that have been incurred, as a result of the purchase of an in-house computer.

Mrs. Yeo: I am wondering, in '87-88, under Capital, what was purchased.

Mr. Derkach: That is the budget for the purchase of computer software.

Mrs. Yeo: And an identical amount budgeted in '88-89.

Mr. Derkach: Pardon me?

Mrs. Yeo: The identical amount is budgeted for the same thing.

Mr. Derkach: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass? 1.(g)(2)—pass.

Section 2. Statutory Boards and Commissions: Consists of the Government contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund; other Statutory Boards and Commissions, (a) Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund \$26,514,400.00. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Yeo: Just today, in our mail slot, I received several things. One of them was a statement about the

appointment of a Joanne Newton from Roblin, Manitoba, as an executive assistant. I am wondering wherein her position fits.

In the same pile of information, there was information on different appointments to boards. I wondered whether this was a board appointment, or was it some special assistant to the Minister?

Mr. Derkach: There is no problem in answering that question.

Mrs. Newton has been appointed or selected as an executive assistant to the Minister.

Mrs. Yeo: Would it be possible to have the names of the persons on the boards and commissions for '87-88 listed?

Mr. Derkach: Just a question for clarification, would the Member like a copy of all the boards and commissions and do you want that provided tomorrow, or do you want me to read that into the record?

Mrs. Yeo: No, I would be happy with having a list tomorrow or the next day.

Mr. Derkach: For 1987-88, is that correct?

Mrs. Yeo: For the coming year.

Mr. Derkach: For the current boards, then?

Mrs. Yeo: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, we will provide that for the Member tomorrow on paper, if that is all right.

* (2005)

Mrs. Yeo: Just a follow-up question, Mr. Chairperson, are all the positions filled on the boards at this point in time or do you have some holes that you have to plug?

Mr. Derkach: The Statutory Boards and Commissions are all filled.

Mr. Herold Driedger (Niakwa): I just have a couple of questions with respect to this pensions number. The Government has to supply the part of their obligation on the pensions every year, does it not?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Herold Driedger: This is an appropriation that must be made every year?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Herold Driedger: So essentially we are talking about unfunded pensions here, that the money is not

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actually in trust. Essentially it has to be called for, budgeted for, each year?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Herold Driedger: One of the problems that we are having with respect to Government debt is this large liability of unfunded pensions and it is not just the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund, but it is also all of the other pensions that are unfunded throughout the entire country. Is there any intention in the very near future to begin working at developing a funded status, or a funded situation for this particular pension fund?

Mr. Derkach: No, we have not done anything about that in the department to date.

Mr. Herold Driedger: Have you done any projections as to the numbers of, I guess, retired teachers that will have to be supported by the Government's share of the pension?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, that kind of information has been gathered.

Mr. Herold Driedger: Could we have the committee supplied with a projection as to what we might be looking for in the next 10, 15 years?

Mr. Derkach: We have those projects and those can be provided for the Member if he so chooses.

Mr. Herold Driedger: Yes. I think, looking at teachers and the numbers of teachers that are going to be entering the retirement status in the next 10 or 15 years might actually be indicative of quite a bit of the liability that the Government needs to face. I think it would be very wise for us to have a look at that kind of data. I would also like to ask the Minister if it might not be prudent on the part of Government to start developing some sort of long-term plans to develop some funding for these unfunded liabilities, some actual budgeted item year by year whereby more is put in than is taken out. Could the Minister comment on that please?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Member for that comment and certainly we are aware of the situation and the fact that the numbers of teachers, for example, retiring over the next five years is going to increase and certainly being cognizant of the situation will also move us to perhaps seriously consider ways in which this can be dealt with.

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): Could the Minister indicate how the teachers' pension is actually calculated? Is it always on a formula basis?

* (2010)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, the standard formula is to take 2 percent of the average of the best seven or five years, depending on which plan the teacher bought into and multiply that by the number of years of service.

Mr. Laurie Evans: In the contract, how is this identified in the teachers' contract in terms of the employee versus employer input into the pension plan or is that not in the contract?

Mr. Derkach: No, that is not specifically in the contract.

Mr. Laurie Evans: What is the teachers' contribution then on an annual basis in percentage?

Mr. Derkach: The teachers' contribution is 7 percent.

Mr. Laurie Evans: But there is no matching 7 percent from the Government?

Mr. Derkach: There is no contribution at the time from the Government except the guarantee that the Government will pay half of the benefits at the time of retirement.

Mr. Laurie Evans: A supplementary question, if the teachers are putting in 7 percent, which they obviously are, they are accumulating a benefit fund. Now that benefit fund would be invested in some manner. Therefore, it would be my assumption that the equivalent amount coming from the Government should also be generating the same amount of investment. But I get from your comments that is not happening. Is that—

Mr. Derkach: That is correct. That is not happening. As I indicated in the previous answer, the Government does contribute 50 percent of the benefit at the time of retirement. But there is no contribution towards a trust fund or anything of that nature.

Mr. Laurie Evans: Has this never been attempted to be negotiated by the Teachers' Society?

Mr. Derkach: At this point in time, Mr. Chairman, the Government itself has never made any contributions or matching contributions to the pension fund, although back in the early Fifties, I guess, there were contributions that were made by the school boards. However, since that time there has been no attempt made by Government to contribute to a fund in a matching way.

Mr. Laurie Evans: I guess a supplementary question then is what do the teachers gain by having made very wise investments of their money if in actual fact the only return they can get is based on a formula?

Mr. Derkach: I guess some of the benefits were in that they were able to negotiate better agreements. Secondly, such things as early retirement, for example, were a result of the Government not contributing to the pension plan directly, but instead paying half of the benefits.

* (2015)

Mr. Laurie Evans: The point I am trying to make is, had this been a fully vested plan from the beginning, the teachers would have got a lot more credit for the

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period when interest rates were extremely high. We hear a lot of negative things about those high investment rates, but had there been a large pot of money which there should have been, had it been a fully invested plan, they would have been getting tremendous returns on that investment during that period of time. It would seem to me that the Government actually has not met its obligations by having allowed this to become an unfunded liability.

Mr. Derkach: That is a fact that I guess we cannot really dispute or argue in a hypothetical sense. I guess The Pension Act sort of determines or spells out what kind of pension benefits the teachers are going to receive. That is a statement that really I cannot argue about because this has been the practice for over 30 years.

Mr. Laurie Evans: I am just looking at it in comparison with the University of Manitoba Faculty Association, which of course has a very similar thing with the exception that in recent years at least the university's contribution has been maintained and therefore the individual staff members have this accumulation, which in those years of high interest rate has done remarkable things for the pension.

The other thing that concerns me is that there would seem to be almost a disincentive for the Government to be promoting the concept of early retirement because really, in effect, what it is doing is increasing the Government's liability through this increase in the pensions and if it went from the 3,900 that are currently retired and you brought in early retirement and this jumped up to 5,000 or 6,000, in a very short period of time I can see this climbing up to \$35 million to \$40 million that would be required on an annual basis. Does the Minister not regard this as somewhat of a disincentive to promote early retirement?

Mr. Derkach: That is somewhat difficult to respond to, especially since the process has been in place for such a long period of time. However, I think there are other—I would not consider the statement that the Member made as being factually true in terms of that being a disincentive. I think there are incentives that encourage early retirements such as getting rid of the older and higher paid staff and perhaps putting in some new blood, but certainly—you know I am reaching that age, too. I guess there are many benefits to having early retirement, certainly in terms of providing opportunities for the new staff coming in. However, I do not think that particularly is a disincentive.

Mr. Laurie Evans: That disincentive I am referring to is the fact that an early retirement plan would dramatically increase the amount the Government would have to come up with on an annual basis.

Mr. Derkach: I guess the only comment I could make is that when the early retirement plan was introduced, the teachers themselves covered the full cost of early retirement for a period of five years.

Mr. Laurie Evans: The other thing that surprised me a little bit was the fact that there were only 3,900

teachers retired at the present time. What is the number that you anticipate retiring this year, next year and so on, on the assumption that early retirement is not an important factor? Do you have those sort of figures on hand?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I think the Member for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger) had asked for that information and I said that I would provide that tomorrow in a printout.

* (2020)

Mr. Laurie Evans: That is a projection as to the numbers and to the cost.

Mr. Herold Driedger: On a point of clarification.

Mr. Chairman: A point of order—

Mr. Herold Driedger: It is not really a point of order, a point of clarification. It is just on this question. I just want to make sure that the figures that the Minister is providing for that, I thought I was getting, will include the data that my colleague from Fort Garry is asking for, not only the retirement figures based upon a normal retirement rate but also the retirement figures. That is two sets of figures on early retirement rate, so we can actually do some comparison of the costs.

(The Acting Chairman, Mr. Darren Praznik, in the Chair.)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, yes, we can provide those projections and will, but I just perhaps could mention that the teachers' portion of the pension plan is actuarially funded and inspected so that it is certainly in order and in place. We will provide the figures for you tomorrow in printout form.

Mr. Laurie Evans: Mr. Acting Chairperson, how long does a teacher have to be in the plan in order to actually be eligible for pension, as opposed to being paid out at the time they leave the profession?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, we have a conflicting set of figures here. I will take that question as notice and provide you with the information tomorrow.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): I would point out to the Honourable Minister that I prefer to be called Mr. Acting Chairperson.

Mr. Laurie Evans: One final question, Mr. Acting Chairperson, and that is, is there a provision for teachers who are in the profession and then leave for a period of time and come back into it to maintain the continuity of their pension program?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is the fact.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Shall the item pass?

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Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Acting Chairperson, just to ask a few more questions before we proceed on TRAF, the \$3 million increase, roughly \$3 million, that is essentially the cost to the province of 3,900 retired teachers, and how many new ones this year? This is an estimate, so this goes—

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, for the year 1987, there were 330; 1988, as of September 30, there were 269. We are projecting or estimating 302 for the rest of the year.

* (2025)

Mr. Storie: Mr. Acting Chairperson, just to anticipate what we might see tomorrow, how would that compare with, say, 1984 or '83, something prior to the early retirement provisions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I will just give the Member the figures from 1984. In 1984, there were 213; 1985, 260; and in 1986, 291. I have already given the figures for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Storie: In round figures, we have seen approximately a 40 percent or 50 percent increase in the number of teachers retiring, we can speculate, as a result of the early retirement provisions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I perhaps should read into the record the early retirements and then I will give the comparison of the regular retirements as well. If we start back in 1984, of the 213, 97 were 55-59, 116 were from age 60 and over. In 1985, out of the 260, 135 were between 55 and 59, and 125 were 60 and over. In 1986, out of the 291 retirements, 176 were at 55-59, and 115 were from 60 and over. In 1987, of the 330, 205 were 55-59, and 125 were 60 and over. In 1988, of the 269, 142 were between the ages of 55 and 59, and 127 were over the age of 60.

Mr. Storie: So we had a situation prior to 1985 where fewer teachers took early retirement than teachers who took regular retirement by a fairly significant number. We have moved to '87, '88 where there is a significant number of more teachers retiring early. It has been a fairly dramatic shift.

The \$3.1 million that it cost the province additional this year, that is obviously matched in some way either by contributions directly, the 7 percent that comes off of payroll for teachers, or is that a combination of money that comes off payroll or contributions through surplus?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, the \$3.1 million that the Honourable Member refers to is the Government's portion of the Teacher Retirement Allowance Fund.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Shall the item pass?

Mr. Storie: I am sorry, I was engaged in another conversation. I did not hear the Minister's answer.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would just like to indicate once more that the total sum of \$3.1 million is the Government's portion.

Mr. Storie: I understand that. Mr. Acting Chairperson, my question was, the other 50 percent that goes towards pension comes from either the teachers' contributions directly or surplus?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, that comes from the Teachers Allowances Fund.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Acting Chairperson, do the teachers' contributions from payroll exceed the \$3.1 million? Is there an ongoing building of the surplus at the present time?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, there is a continual building of the surpluses. Last year the growth in the fund after payout was some \$17 million plus change.

Mr. Storie: So after paying out \$26 million—last year \$23.4 million—the total of contributions plus interest accruing in the fund exceeded the payout by \$17 million.

* (2030)

Mr. Derkach: If you combine the 23 and the 17, I guess that would be the total growth of the fund. The fund would have grown by some \$40 million. The payout was 23. It is interest combined, I might add.

Mr. Storie: Could the Minister indicate how much of that \$40 million growth in the fund was as a direct result of the payroll deductions of teachers? Obviously the corresponding figure would be the amount that was raised through interest accrued to the fund.

Mr. Derkach: We can provide that information. We do not have it with us here, but certainly I will provide that information for the Member tomorrow.

Mr. Storie: Perhaps for the purposes of this evening's discussion, I guess the question is does that amount or would the teachers' contribution be more than half of that \$40 million or less than half of that \$40 million, the point being that my colleague from Fort Garry has raised the question of whether this in fact should be a fully funded pension on the part of the province or not.

Mr. Derkach: Although I do not have the exact figures before me, I can indicate that it is more than 50 percent.

Mr. Storie: The Minister has referenced the fact that there are savings as a result of early retirement for school divisions.

I am wondering whether TRAF, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, who obviously supported the early retirement provisions, whether anyone has done any specific calculations to determine how much they might save as a result of the difference between the teaching income of someone who has been in the profession for 20 years versus a starter and how that has actually affected the divisions? I know that argument has been moved many times. I am wondering if we have any detail to substantiate it?

Mr. Derkach: No, we do not have that specific information. But I am sure that the Teachers' Society

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certainly probably have done some research in that regard but the department has not.

Mr. Storie: I think it would be useful to have that.

I know we all make the general arguments. I am sure the Minister has, when discussing the early retirement provision, said that it is good for the system to have new blood, new teachers, new energy, new ideas into the profession. There has to be an economic argument as well, I guess.

This is a follow-up question on my colleague for Fort Garry's (Mr. Laurie Evans) question about the funded versus unfunded position that the province is in. I am wondering whether the Provincial Auditor has ever raised the spectre of this being an unfunded liability, one of my colleague's favourite terms, several years ago?

Mr. Derkach: No, the Provincial Auditor has not raised this as an issue to my knowledge.

Mr. Storie: The Provincial Auditor certainly has raised the issue of Crown corporation contributions to the Manitoba Telephone System and Manitoba Hydro, where the funding until recently has followed the same pattern, where contributions to pensions have been direct and not specifically funded. I am wondering whether the Minister has any concerns about the position of the province, whether consideration is being given, would be given to creating a funded position rather than following the current procedure, given that there are benefits I think to retiring teachers who may be able to provide themselves with additional benefits from surpluses which would be at no cost to the province if it was fully funded.

Mr. Derkach: I have to indicate, I find it kind of strange that a former Minister would be raising, after being in Government for some seven years and having every opportunity to remedy a situation, that he is now bringing forth as a problem, which has been there for some 30 years and expecting us to consider it within six or seven months of administration. I can tell you that the Provincial Auditor has not raised the issue of the unfunded portion of the Teachers' Allowances Fund by Government. Certainly it is not a Crown corporation and is not audited by the Provincial Auditor. It is in fact audited by an outside audit firm. So for those reasons, the Provincial Auditor has certainly not made specific reference to this as part of the, as the Member suggested, Crown corporation.

Mr. Storie: I believe the Provincial Auditor has already referenced the provincial Superannuation Fund, the Civil Service Superannuation Fund. I am not criticizing the Minister for not acting in six months. I will wait for another two months before I do that, but—

An Honourable Member: We will probably be here for two months.

Mr. Storie: We probably will be here for two months.

The Minister continues to be very defensive when I raise questions or ask questions. I do so not because

I am criticizing the Minister. I simply asked whether this was a concern for him, whether it had been raised by the Provincial Auditor. I think there may be many benefits to be had by teachers for changing the status.

The Minister may know or may have forgotten intentionally that the previous Government did address the unfunded liability of certain pension programs and was addressing them in Manitoba Telephone and Manitoba Hydro. So let it not be said that it was not recognized as a problem. As it turns out, it was not addressed in this circumstance. I was asking the Minister to consider addressing it. Given that is not being addressed at the present time, move on to another question relating to the pension benefits.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): I believe the Honourable Minister has an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would just like to indicate once again for the record that the Provincial Auditor does not audit the Teachers' Allowances Fund and therefore has never made any recommendations to my knowledge about the unfunded portion of the Teachers' Allowances Fund. So in that regard we have nothing specific to respond to in terms of recommendations by the Provincial Auditor. However, given the situation as it exists and this whole idea of the debt that our whole country may be carrying in terms of the unfunded portion of pensions throughout the country, has just been a recent issue, and I think certainly is one that will be addressed in due course.

Mr. Storie: I appreciate that it may be in fact addressed in due course and I would just ask the Minister to acknowledge that in fact the way the provincial contributions are structured creates on the part of the province an unfunded liability, one which his colleague, before he was Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), had amassed to a significant figure as an unfunded liability. Certainly whether the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) currently is aware of it, his colleagues have been aware of it and have raised it as a significant problem facing the province. It seems to have escaped the current Minister but I am not surprised.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Chairperson, it certainly has not escaped the Minister in any way -(Interjection)-shape or form.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Order.

Mr. Derkach: What I said was that the Provincial Auditor has not pointed to this specific fund as one that is a problem or one that needed to be addressed immediately. Certainly we are concerned about it; it has been brought to our attention. I am not indicating one way or another in terms of what our immediate action on this particular issue is going to be, but I have indicated to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) that we are aware of this and certainly because of the awareness I think throughout the country about unfunded pension plans and the enormous cost that certainly this will be addressed in due course.

Mr. Storie: I appreciate those final remarks. A question to the Minister: the teachers' benefits through their

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pensions have been under attack by the federal Government. I know that the Minister did receive a letter from the secretary, I believe, or secretary-treasurer of the fund, Mr. Glen Buhr, expressing his concern about the proposed amendment to the Income Tax Act. I know that the Minister received representation from the Teachers' Society and others. I am wondering whether the Minister ever undertook to write personally to the Minister of Finance to indicate his concern about the proposal.

Mr. Derkach: Well, not only did I write to the Minister of Finance, I have met with the Minister of Finance on this specific topic along with several other Ministers and we have discussed it at some length. We have not been able to resolve it to this point in time. The whole issue has been shelved, but I have met with the Minister of Finance, I might indicate, on this issue.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Praznik): Shall the item pass? The Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: The Minister has indicated that he has written, too. Would the Minister care to share with the committee what sentiments he expressed in the letter?

Mr. Derkach: Just a point of clarification, are you referring to the Minister of Finance of Canada, or the Minister of Finance of Manitoba?

Mr. Storie: Both.

Mr. Derkach: I am sorry. I misunderstood the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) when he said "his colleague, the Minister of Finance." I understood it to be the provincial Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), who I have discussed this issue with. I have not written to Mr. Wilson about this matter at all. As a matter of fact, we had occasion to chat with Mr. Wilson about the situation and I might indicate that the matter has been postponed for a period of a year. Certainly that does not resolve it, but it gives us some time to meet with the Manitoba Teachers' Society who certainly have a vested interest in this, to hear their position and their arguments for it, to take them and discuss them with my colleagues and then act on the matter from there.

Mr. Storie: Well, I am pleased to hear that the Minister acknowledges that the 12,000 or 13,000 teachers who are currently teaching who will be retiring, some in the not too distant future, have something to lose by these proposals. I am a little surprised that the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), after hearing presentations and I think hearing voices quite clearly expressing concern over the impact of those changes, did not take it upon himself to write to the Minister of Finance federally. I was not suggesting that his colleague, the Minister of Finance of Manitoba (Mr. Manness), had anything to do with the Income Tax Act, but I am surprised that he did not take on that responsibility himself.

* (2040)

Mr. Derkach: My colleagues and I in Government act as a unit, not as individuals who charge off in all sorts

of directions. I had indicated to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) that my colleagues in our Government have met, have discussed this matter. I have brought forth the opinions as they came to us from the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

I might indicate to the Member also that we are initiating a meeting between the Minister for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), myself and the interested Parties to discuss this issue further.

I must also indicate that the Minister of Finance of Manitoba has written to the Minister of Finance, Mr. Wilson, to bring this to his attention and certainly raise some of our concerns with regard to this situation.

Mr. Storie: I am pleased to hear that. Perhaps he could enumerate for the committee the concerns that the province has.

Mr. Derkach: I do not have the letter in front of me. It certainly was a letter from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to Mr. Wilson and I do not know whether it had an enumerated series of concerns in it.

Mr. Storie: I will just remind the Minister that, and I should say at the outset that it concerns me that the Minister is not aware of what was said by his colleague in respect of this matter because I should remind my colleague, the Minister, that his colleague, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Manness, was very much opposed to the early retirement provisions when they were introduced in the House in 1985. He was, the Minister of Finance was one of several Conservative Members, his colleagues, who opposed this legislation, and to now find that, rather than have the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), who is responsible for teachers, supporting the interests of teachers, we have that responsibility passed along to a Member of the Opposition who opposed the legislation in the first place. There are at least two other Treasury Board members who also opposed that legislation, and I would like this Minister to assure the committee and the teachers of Manitoba that he is prepared to speak up for their interests in this matter and not the interests of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) whose interests have been expressed previously.

Mr. Derkach: Just for the edification of the Member for Flin Flon, I have to tell him that I was not in the Legislature in 1985 and therefore have no knowledge of what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) said. If he wants to take issue with the Minister of Finance, I suggest he write to the Minister of Finance and express his concerns to him.

I might also add that it is almost strange to see how this Member has changed from his—he was, as a matter of fact, the Minister of Education who I believe suggested that teachers should get no increase in salaries at one point in time, a position he had to retract from very quickly. This fall I notice that the Member wrote letters to all teachers in Manitoba indicating how concerned he was about this issue, certainly, a very good change of heart. I guess maybe now he has come

to realize the error of his ways, Mr. Acting Chairman, or Chairperson.

Mr. Storie: The Minister has not answered the question, and the question was, why did he choose, or why has he allowed the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to be a spokesperson for the teachers of Manitoba when that clearly is his responsibility? The Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund comes under the Estimates of the Department of Education. The responsibility for the Minister to provide adequate pensions, support of pensions, responsibility for changes to provincial support are obviously the responsibility of the Minister.

My question was why has he not taken an interest in this? Before the Minister answers, just so that the record is clear, I had never required teachers or suggested that they were required to take zero. I made a proposal that the teachers had every right in negotiations to choose or not choose. They made their choice. But the Minister should not go around distorting the record. I think perhaps, if he understood the proposal, he would not do that but maybe he never did or did not attempt to understand it.

The Minister also suggested that he was not in the Legislature in 1985. Perhaps that is good thing because he may be defending a record he did not want to defend, along with some of his colleagues.

The question to the Minister is, provisions like the provisions in the Income Tax Act amendments, like the requirement that teachers be of 55 years of age and have a minimum of 25 years' service or be penalized for retirement if those conditions have not been met, is really counterproductive. It is the antithesis of what was intended by the legislation produced in 1985. I am wondering how this Minister can take such a cavalier attitude towards those amendments?

* (2050)

Mr. Derkach: I do not know if I can respond to all of those questions and comments. However, I would like to say to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) that in fact I am interested in what happens to teachers' pensions, and not as he indicates. I have to say that in Government, federal-provincial relations with regard to such things as pensions are not handled by any Minister who wants to charge off into the sunset with a cause. As a matter of fact, there is a way to deal with the situations and, in Government, that is handled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

That is the way that we are approaching this issue in a sensible way whereby we channel our comments through the Minister of Finance who then deals with the federal Minister. It does no good for me, as Minister of Education, and somebody else as Minister responsible for something else, charging off to the federal Government and putting our issues on the table. There is a better way, a more systematic way, and a way that I think will in the end bring better results in a situation such as this one. This does not only affect teachers. However, that is the area that I am concerned about. It also affects other professions.

Mr. Storie: I respect the Minister's interest in approaching it in a sensible way. I guess what the

committee would like to know, what is the sensible way? Is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) concerned about revenue loss to the province as a result of early retirement? Or is the Minister concerned about the welfare of teachers who want to retire with dignity? Is the Minister of Finance concerned about the loss of revenue to the federal Government or is the Minister interested in maintaining the benefits that teachers have won through hard work and negotiations over a long period of time.

Perhaps we would feel more comfortable and the teachers of the province would feel more comfortable if we knew what the Minister meant by a sensible way. Perhaps he can assist us by answering a few questions. Does the Minister support the amendments that were introduced by Mr. Wilson, the amendments to the Income Tax Act? Does he support the penalty that would be felt by teachers who had less than 25 years of service when they reached the age of 55?

Mr. Derkach: As I indicated to the Member before, our responsibility in this whole matter is to, first of all, consult with the affected groups. In consulting with them, we have to understand their positions, consider their briefs very carefully. As I have indicated, we are structuring a meeting for the Teachers' Society with the Ministers who have responsibility, that being the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Minister of Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), so that they in fact—and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery)—will be able to hear what the concerns are of the Teachers' Society and will also have the benefit of asking questions of the Teachers' Society. I think this is a sensible approach. Instead of us taking a position for or against immediately, without knowing what all the details are in the whole process, I think it is better for us to consult with all the organizations that are affected and from there to take the next step, and that is to approach the federal Minister responsible in terms of what we, as Manitobans, know and how we are going to represent our people best.

Mr. Storie: I am intrigued by the Minister's comments about, well, we have to be careful and we have to know what is in the best interest of the membership in the Manitoba Teachers' Society and those who retire.

I have a simple question. It seems pretty obvious to me, and I think to 13,000 teachers, and probably the 3,900 teachers who are already receiving pension, that something that is introduced that penalizes teachers who retire up to five years before they have 20 years of service, at age 55, lose 15 percent of their pension. I do not think it takes a genius to figure out that is a sacrifice that they should not be having to pay. I am wondering what other factors the Minister is including in his deliberations, or is it, as I suggest, that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is afraid that the province is losing revenue, or the federal Minister of Finance is concerned about federal loss of revenue, is that the main consideration? What other factors are there? Enlighten us, please.

Mr. Derkach: I guess what the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) should do is stop and think in broader

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terms. First of all, this was a proposal by the federal Government that was going to affect not only teachers in this province, it was going to affect other members of society.

I think if we are going to represent our province fairly and properly, first of all, we have to meet with those groups that are going to be affected and get from them some input. That is why the Teachers' Society, as an example, has put together a fairly substantial and elaborate brief. I am sure that they are still not finished working on the matter. We know that we have at least another year before that kind of legislation may be reintroduced and so, therefore, we have time to react. As we had indicated in our election campaign, we were going to consult with groups, with organizations, to ensure that we were representing them in a fair way when a decision was made.

Now, until that whole process is gone through, I am not going to sit here and say that we are taking this position or that position. I am simply going to indicate that we are consulting with these organizations, we have structured a further meeting with them. If we had made up our minds today, there would be no point in going ahead with this consultation process, but certainly we want to hear from these organizations what their position is. Then, based on those arguments, based on those presentations, we will be better informed as to our response and our arguments in terms of the situation.

Mr. Storie: I quite agree with the Minister if the Minister had made up his mind, if the Minister knew which side he was on. If the Minister was going to support teachers, further meetings would not be required, but it astounds me that the Minister can sit here and pretend that some decision to hold future meetings is an indication of interest. The matter should have been decided, the matter should be as clear as crystal clear water to the Minister that the interests of teachers should be protected because they have worked long and hard to develop those benefits. The interests of MONA, the interests of registered nurses, the interests of others who work for Government or Government agencies should be protected.

This Minister is trying to pretend that there is something else to be discovered from waiting and holding further meetings. I can tell the Minister that the Manitoba Teachers' Society's position is not going to change, nor is the position of Manitoba Organization of Nurses. The fact is that they are opposed unalterably to the proposed changes. They do not support them and the Minister is simply procrastinating for some reason or another which we would like to discover. What is the other factor that we should be considering? What other information does the Minister hope to gain? Why did the federal Government propose these amendments? Perhaps the Minister has some information that we do not have. What was the purpose of the amendments in the first place?

* (2100)

I think the purpose was fairly clear. It had nothing to do with considering the interests of teachers or

nurses or any of the other people whose pension incomes are going to be affected by this. I think it is quite clear. It was to try to balance the deficit; balance the budget to reduce the deficit on the backs of retired people—exactly like the Tory Government did when tried to de-index the seniors' pensions.

My concern is and the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mrs. Hammond) is down there saying, what nonsense. Perhaps we can find from the Minister some shred of a reason for his dithering on this issue. Can he help us?

Mr. Derkach: The gobbledegook that the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) puts on the record is certainly just that. Certainly he has changed 180 degrees since he has become a Member of the Opposition and I guess that is understandable. But I have to indicate and reiterate that we will not unilaterally go ahead without discussing the issue with the affected organizations. We said we would consult and that is what we are going to do. We are going to make sure that we represent the organizations and their views thoroughly. We are not suggesting they are going to change their minds in terms of the issue at all. I do not think I would expect the Manitoba Teachers' Society to all of a sudden change their views and their position on this issue.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair.)

But certainly I think that it is important that they in fact have an opportunity to express their views to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) of Manitoba, the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), who certainly do have some opinion over this issue and certainly when this issue is going to be addressed in the next year, we have to make sure that we represent Manitobans fairly.

In addition, I might say that the federal Government has not postponed this matter for a year for no reason at all. Certainly there have been some considerations that must have come into play that caused them to delay or at least put this matter on hold for a year.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass?

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister has not satisfactorily answered the question. If he acknowledges, as he just did a few seconds ago, that the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Organization of Nurses Association, MONA, have not changed their opinion and are unlikely to change their opinion because, well, you have seen their brief I hope—it was copied on it. I know that you received the information and their position. What we need from this Minister is a rationale for his reluctance—

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Storie: No, I am sorry, he was in conversation, Mr. Chairman, I did not want to interrupt. We need an explanation for the rationale of the Minister to say that his hands are tied. He does not want to get involved in this issue when the financial security of a whole generation, generations of teachers is at stake. Amendments are being introduced, were introduced

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by the federal Government, which completely contradict everything the teachers and the previous Governments, and Governments before that, have worked for.

I do not understand what other issues there might be brought to the Minister's attention which would require this delay. Why did he not state his stand on the issue? Why can he not take a public stand now? I have asked the questions more specifically, what is he opposed to? Does the Minister not object to a proposal which might reduce the pensionable earnings of a teacher by 15 percent? Is the Minister not sensitive to the fact that there are all kinds of people out there who enter the work force late, who do not get their teaching degree until they are 35, or get their teaching degree when they are young but interrupt their careers to have families? Does the Minister have no sympathy for those kinds of people? Does the Minister object to people interrupting their careers to pursue other interests and not being able to achieve 25 years of service? Are any of those things objectionable in and of themselves? If not, what is it that makes this Minister hesitate? I think that the Education community deserves a response.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I will not take the narrow-minded approach that the Member for Flin Flon (Storie) is taking. Certainly, he is now on a crusade, but certainly we are going to approach the matter in a diligent and a sensible way. I had indicated to the Member that we will be meeting with the organizations that are affected, and we will be discussing the issue with him. We are not avoiding the matter whatsoever. As a matter of fact, I indicated that I have already met with the Manitoba Teachers' Society on this issue and we are going to be convening a meeting with other Ministers with them. We will probably be meeting with MONA and with the other organizations that are affected by this proposed change.

Also, I might indicate we will probably be, through our Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), meeting the federal Minister of Finance once the election is over and discussing this very important issue.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister's mind is severely addle-pated. He seems to be saying on the one hand he knows the position of the teachers and the nurses, he knows it is not going to change—

Mr. Derkach: I did not say the nurses.

Mr. Storie: I have not heard him deny that the proposal is going to interfere unduly with the pension income, potentially of thousands of Manitoba teachers. I am wondering what other information he has to share with teachers, what other information the Minister of Finance has to share with teachers or nurses that might affect the way they view this problem, and if he cannot specify or indicate that there is something that might change their mind, why would he not just then take a position? He seems reluctant to take a position in support of something that is clearly detrimental to thousands of people.

I could talk about some of the other provisions which this proposed amendment will impact upon; the right

of teachers to take leaves, to interrupt their careers, some issues of portability and transferability of pensions. There are at least a half dozen other areas that the Teachers' Society and Mr. Buhr identified for the Minister. I am wondering if any of those arguments that have been presented were preposterous or did not reflect genuine concerns. Is there anything in their arguments that the Minister found unacceptable?

Mr. Derkach: Well, I do not know how many times we are going to chew this matter over, but I will just continue answering in the way that I have; that is, that certainly I have not met with MONA, and I have not discussed with them what their concerns are.

My meetings have been with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and I understand their proposals, in that teachers who have had to leave the profession for reasons of rearing a family and then coming back to the teaching field, and certainly I understand that concern. I have indicated that we will continue to listen to the organizations that come before us.

We will consult with them. There will be a two-way kind of communication in this whole matter. We still have lots of opportunity to discuss that and when we have done that, we will certainly indicate our position on the matter to the federal Minister of Finance. We will do it through the appropriate channels. We will do it as a Government.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, I am afraid to say that the word "consult" is taking on pejorative overtones when used by this Minister.

Mr. Derkach: You did not understand that word when you were in Government, did you?

Mr. Storie: Pejorative?

Mr. Derkach: No, "consult."

Mr. Storie: Well, it is taking on rather negative tones as far as the Minister seems to be concerned. He says he is going to continue to consult. I am not sure the point of it, given that the brief has been presented. It is quite clear, quite succinct. There is no chance of the teachers or any of the other organizations changing their view because they are correct. What they may be waiting for, if there is going to be consultation, is some differing opinions that would be shared with them by the Minister. This Minister has not been able to do that for this committee. He does not seem to have any concrete reason for not throwing his support behind, for not writing, not supporting their interest. He has not been able to, at least, present any rationale for his dithering on this issue. He is still ready to consult, but he does not know what about. He has not been able to share with us what his concerns are. I would ask him a simple question. What is the purpose of the income tax amendments and the regulation amendments? What is the purpose of them?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) should probably address that issue with the federal Minister of Finance because it

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is the federal Minister of Finance who is proposing the changes and not the provincial Government.

Mr. Storie: The Minister did not answer the question. Either I have to assume, either he does not know what the intention was, or like most of his colleagues, he would be embarrassed to tell the reason publicly. The reason they were introduced, for the Minister's information, was to save money from the public treasury, and to do so on the backs of retiring teachers and retiring nurses, and others who serve Government agencies. That was the purpose.

This Minister and his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and his colleague, the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) is not prepared to stand up for those people. There is no other reason. The Minister can be as obscurantist as he likes, there is no other rationale. He has not been able to put one solid rational reason for opposing, for not supporting the teachers immediately upon learning of the plans of his federal colleagues. He does so out of obligation to a federal sister, brother Party. He does so out of obligations to their political objective, and he does so over the objections of thousands of teachers and other concerned Manitobans.

The Minister would like us to believe that somehow this consultation process, this further discussion is going to lead somewhere. I can say quite clearly, given the Minister's response tonight, that it is not leading anywhere. He is not going to announce any support for the teachers or for those pensioners from 1990 or '91 on. That fact is reflected in the comments made by his colleague when he spoke on the resolution I introduced, calling on the federal Government to halt this process.

I want to read into the record a statement of the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) Wednesday, September 7, 1988. He said, the federal Government has, in fact, deferred their timetable in bringing in this legislation, but it is not because they feel that there was anything wrong with the legislation. They have deferred it because of a complexity in writing the legislation. They felt that some time would give them a better time to write the legislation.

I have even got a better explanation and probably three quarters of the people or all of the teachers and three quarters of the people in Manitoba also have a better explanation, if there was a federal election on the horizon and they did not want 12,000 Manitoba teachers and x number of hundreds of thousands of other nurses and teachers and civil servants focusing on another piece of legislation designed to deny retiring people a decent living. That is the explanation. The Minister is sitting here pretending that there could be no—there is no other purpose for his dithering, other than the need to consult, is not convincing anyone. If he was here to convince people, he would have an explanation. He would have some specifics that he could lay on the table and say, here are my concerns.

The purpose of the legislation was to take money from the pockets of retiring people. That is the purpose of it. If this Minister had the interest of teachers at

heart, he would take a stand. He would do so today. He would have done so back when this legislation was first introduced. He would not accept from his federal colleagues a suggestion that this delay is somehow a rethinking on their part. It is a politically-motivated delay. If we have a Tory Government, if we are unfortunate enough to have one, we will have an attack on the pension of teachers.

* (2110)

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass?

Mr. Derkach: If I could just respond, if the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) the only political rhetoric I have heard is the gobbledegook from this Member in this last statement, but I would like him to substantiate his statement about the fact that the intention of the federal Government—and he said that this is a known fact—was to take money from retiring teachers to fight a deficit—and that is not the quote—but if he has that information from the federal Government, we would certainly appreciate him sharing it with us because we do not have that information from the federal Government, Mr. Chairman.

I indicated to him before that this is not a matter which we want to make a political football of. We want to ensure that we listen to those people who are going to be affected by the legislation and hear their views on it, and that is appropriate.

Of course, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) is so narrow-minded he never did consult with anybody. He just bulldozed his way through until somebody slapped him across the nose. That was an indication when he tried to tell teachers in this province that they were not going to have any increase in salary but were going to take zero percent, and when the teachers kind of told him where to get off, he realized that he had better back off, better retract, do the backstroke.

That is not the way this Government operates. This Government is going to operate in a prudent way. We are going to consult with individuals who are going to be affected by the legislation and then, and only then, will we be able to make representation to the federal Government as a province.

Mr. Storie: The fact of the matter is that I have not been laying gobbledegook. I have been quite specific about the changes and their impact on teachers' pensions. The Minister has not been specific about his concerns.

He knows what the concerns are. They have been laid out for him by several groups quite specifically, including the secretary-treasurer of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund Board, an expert in his field, a person who understands the implications of the tax change.

If the Minister can suggest another rationale for the proposed amendments to the Income Tax Act, I would certainly like to hear them. I do not believe there is any other conclusion one can draw.

The remarks of his own Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) indicate that is the case, and

whether the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach)—and I am surprised he would admit that he knows nothing about this issue or nothing about the amendments that are proposed. Perhaps I should not be surprised, but he indicates that.

The Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) on Wednesday, September 7, 1988, said, "I would like to start by laying down some facts that have not yet been laid down about the proposed changes to the Income Tax Act." And he goes on to indicate that his concern is the fact that the pensions that are received by teachers and others, publicly supported pensions, cost money. That is the concern, the concern of the Minister responsible for Seniors. If that is not indicative of the attitude of this Government and their federal counterparts, I do not know what is.

Now, the Minister said that my—it is gobbledegook. Then it behooves the Minister to tell this committee what the motivation for those changes was, if it was not to reduce the cost of pensions for Government, the federal Government. If he can offer some explanation which is reasonable, I certainly am willing to listen.

The Minister suggested that I have not consulted, that I took this on as some sort of crusade. I can tell the Minister that I met with representatives of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I met with individuals who at that time were on the Manitoba Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund Board. I met with other individuals who have a lot more knowledge about the pension benefits and the effect that these amendments are going to have on those benefits than the Minister has.

I did not take it on as a crusade until I understood what the implications were, until I also understood what the motivation of the Government proposing the amendments was and, believe me, it was not anything to be proud of. The Minister can throw darts at me as much as he likes. The fact is he has not taken a stand at all and he has failed to understand that this issue is important to thousands and thousands of people. They deserve his support. If they do not get his support, they are going to be extremely disappointed and maybe some of his colleagues will be disappointed as well.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I guess I could say that my responsibility as Minister of Education is to ensure that I do hear the view of the teachers of this province who are going to be affected by it. I have talked on many occasions with teachers, not only who are on the executive of the Teachers' Society but certainly with teachers who are out in the field. My responsibility is to represent their views certainly to my other colleagues in Cabinet and to our Government. Certainly I will do that.

In doing that, I want to ensure that these teachers, through their society, have an opportunity also to make their views known to the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) who spoke on the issue, to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), so that they understand precisely the position of the Teachers' Society and of the teachers who are going to be affected by the legislation.

I know that there are members of other organizations who are affected by this same situation. My immediate responsibility is to my department and certainly the teachers who come before me from across Manitoba. I will represent them and give them every opportunity to be heard on this particular issue. Our Government will certainly take this matter to the federal Government.

Mr. Storie: I can see, Mr. Chairperson, that I am beating my head against—I was going to say a brick wall—but it is probably a brick head. The Minister says he wants to give the teachers an opportunity to be heard. I thought I had been trying to tell the Minister that the teachers should have been heard a long time ago. Their message was plain and simple and easily understood. Given them an opportunity to be heard once more to give him the same message in exactly the same way, drawing exactly the same conclusions, is not going to help anyone. The teachers did not need another opportunity to be heard, nor did the nurses, nor did any of the others affected. What they needed was a voice around the provincial Cabinet who was prepared to stand up and say, this is not right. That is what they were looking for. They did not get it. I am sure there will be repercussions.

Mr. Chairperson, the issue of teachers' pension is extremely important to Manitobans and I am assuming that this Minister will be making himself available to teachers should this item come back on the agenda, which it is likely to do. Can the Minister indicate today whether he is likely to stand on the sidelines should the federal Government decide to reintroduce these amendments at another date?

* (2120)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairperson, if the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) had been listening through our discussions, our answers, he would have heard that in fact the matter is not resolved, the matter is not dead, and that I will be meeting again with the Teachers' Society, with teachers of the province, and that we will be consulting with the teachers by giving them an opportunity to meet with the four Ministers who have some responsibility provincially over this matter. Once we have met with the teachers and the other groups that are affected we certainly will be making representation to the federal Minister.

Mr. Storie: We may actually be getting somewhere. The Minister has now said he is going to make representation to the federal Minister after further consultations. If the Minister will just humour me for a second and assume that the message from the Teachers' Society, etc., is the same, what message will the Minister be communicating to the federal Minister?

Mr. Derkach: I have no intentions of humouring the silly Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). All I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, or tell the Members of this committee through you is that we are not making any decision at this particular time, because there would be no purpose for meeting with the organizations. Certainly then it would be a confrontation rather than a consultation. We want to ensure that this process is consultative and

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that we have an open mind to the issue. That is the way we are approaching it at this time and will continue to approach it.

Mr. Storie: I am disappointed that the Minister did not humour me. If he perhaps would not have said anything, it would have been better for him. He simply is making it worse for himself.

He is now saying that if he does not meet it will be viewed as confrontation? The Minister says, if his mind was made up, it would be confrontation. Well, of course if his mind was made up as it should be made up that the issue of the teachers and those who opposing these changes was right, if he was defending the interest of teachers there would not be any confrontation, it would be a love-in and it should be because this issue is important to teachers. The teachers, I think, and others have a legitimate beef—this Minister defending the indefensible. He is defending a move to reduce the deficit on the backs of retiring teachers. It is that simple.

Mr. Derkach: Simply, I will reiterate for the Member's information that the reason for our consultation meetings is the fact that we want to hear and understand exactly what they have to say. I have said this half a dozen times, I think, this evening. Certainly that is our major intent.

It is not going to be a love-in but neither is it going to be a confrontational process. I indicated before, had the Member been listening, that if our minds had been made up to say, yes, we support wholeheartedly the position take by the federal Government, then the meetings would be confrontational. We have not indicated that whatsoever. Instead, we have said we will listen with open minds to what teachers, to what other organizations have to say. That is a position I will maintain regardless of what the Member for Flin Flon has to say about the matter. He may try to draw all kinds of silly conclusions from what I have to say. The bottom line is that we will listen to teachers. We will represent them fairly. We will listen to other organizations with open minds.

Mr. Storie: The Minister, if I understand him correctly, is going to listen to teachers and he is going to hear what they have to say and he is going to understand what they are saying.

The implication of that is, because he has already heard, is that he does not understand. That is a rather pathetic admission. I do not know that there is any need to pursue this any further. I think the Minister has made his intentions very clear by refusing to make a commitment. I do not expect the teachers or anybody else who has heard or listened to this debate will hold out any expectation that the Minister will act on their behalf, regardless of how many times he hears the message.

A couple of other questions on the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund. How many staff are there operating the Retirement Allowance Fund?

Mr. Derkach: The employees are not listed here. As a matter of fact, they are employees of the fund and are paid for by the teachers' contributions.

Mr. Storie: Does that include the executive secretary who from time to time has been here to answer questions on the fund?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, it does include the secretary. I regret to say that they are not here this evening.

Mr. Storie: The good news is we probably will not get past this, because that was my next question.

I would like to ask, request, that the secretary of the fund be available so that we may direct some specific questions to someone who, as opposed to the Minister, is knowledgeable about the impact of these changes to the pensions of teachers. Mr. Buhr is someone who I have a great deal of respect for and I know will answer both candidly and with some knowledge the issues that have been addressed. Perhaps we can get to the bottom of what the impact of the federal Income Tax Act amendments would be. I know the Minister is consulting with staff and I can say I know from personal experience that Mr. Buhr has been here before, has responded to questions. I do not think the Minister is going to object if we ask someone who is knowledgeable about this issue, which is important and he has acknowledged it, to answer questions which are obviously beyond the Minister's depth.

Mr. Derkach: The Member has gotten into Opposition and has forgotten the rules of the game. First of all, it is the Minister who responds and not members of staff. Secondly, Mr. Buhr is not a member of staff, he is a member of the Teachers' Allowances Fund Board and will not answer questions. The questions that the Member has are to be put through the Chair to the Minister, and I will respond to those questions.

If there is information that the Member wants, we will get that information from him, but certainly it is not a practice of ours to have a member of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund Board or the secretary here to answer questions of the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). If he wants to address questions with regard to the Statutory Boards and Commissions and with regard to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Board, then I will answer those questions for him.

Mr. Storie: I recognize that is tradition, but it is quite obvious this Minister knew nothing about the Income Tax Act amendments or the implications of those amendments. He seemed to know very little about the concerns that Mr. Buhr had raised with him. He seemed to know very little about the concern that teachers had. He could not enunciate any of their concerns. He could not respond to any concerns of his own about the briefs that have been presented to him. My assumption was that perhaps we could have somebody who knew something answer some questions. If the Minister is saying he would rather sit beside someone and parrot answers, then of course we will let him do that. That is his prerogative, but I had assumed that he too was looking for some edification, some enlightenment on these matters.

Mr. Chairman: On a point of order, the Member for Kirkfield Park.

Mrs. Gerrie Hammond (Kirkfield Park): It seems to me when I was the critic for Education that is exactly what the former Minister of Education did. To suggest that it is parroting answers, certainly no one is expected to know every answer. I would suggest that the former Member did exactly that and I hope that he would not suggest that a Minister would come in or anyone would come in, knowing every little question that could be thought of and not have staff there to help out. I really take offense at the way the Member has conducted his questioning, implying that he knows everything and no one else knows anything. Possibly, if that was what had happened, he would still be in the place that he was before.

Mr. Chairman: I thank Honourable Members for their input. It is not a point of order.

* (2130)

Mr. Storie: I would like to thank the Member for her point of order as well and I want to indicate to the Minister through you, Mr. Chairperson, that I did not suggest that I knew everything. I am just astounded that this Minister appears to know nothing.

I ask the question again, is the Minister prepared to allow Mr. Buhr to come before the committee and respond to specific questions about the implications of the Act or, if the Minister is not prepared to countenance that kind of departure from committee practice, then perhaps he will at least consent to have Mr. Buhr present at our meeting tomorrow so that we can pursue this in more detail?

Mr. Derkach: I would like to tell this Member once and for all that he should perhaps wake up and understand what the Estimates process is all about. He has not asked any specific questions. All he has done all evening has been to filibuster the process in putting rhetoric on the record and he has repeated it at least six times, the same thing over and over. He has not been substantive in his questioning and, if he were, we would answer the questions. All he has done is put political rhetoric on the record for no other purpose than politics, and I think it is time that he perhaps would get his senses together, get his act together, and ask some substantive questions that can be answered.

No, Mr. Chairman, we will not have Mr. Buhr or anybody of that nature come before this committee and answer questions. If there are questions to be answered, I will answer those questions. If the Member would so choose, he can start asking some substantive questions that have some meaning to them and are relevant to this particular line, and we will answer them. Otherwise, I suggest that he get off the issue.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, I am rather taken aback by the Minister's position. I thought I had been asking rather specific questions. I asked the Minister to enunciate the concerns that were addressed to him by the Teachers' Society with respect to the changes that were proposed by the federal Government in the Income Tax Act. Could the Minister outline the concerns as raised by the Manitoba Teachers' Society for us?

I have asked that several times. I have asked the Minister whether he objected to any of those concerns or had any comments on the nature of those concerns. He has refused to answer. It is not me who has been filibustering. The Minister did not answer any of the questions that were posed. He answered them with rhetoric. He answered them with I will consult, I want to listen. He has had that opportunity. I am sorry that he is frustrated. Perhaps if he came with some answers, he would not be nearly so frustrated.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, in a general sense, I think the concerns are quite straightforward. The Members knows them because certainly teachers have written the concerns to him as well. That is the fact that the teachers who have not had the 25 years of service or the combination to make up the 80 years figure will not be eligible for the early retirement. Secondly, it affects those people who had to take some time off to rear a family. They will find it very difficult, almost impossible to get the required years of service or the required amount of service to get the early retirement benefits.

For the Member's edification, I will tomorrow get a copy of the letter from the Teachers' Society and I will read it into the record so in fact the Member will be very much aware of the specific concerns as they were enunciated by the Teachers Society.

Mr. Storie: I am sure that will be a good start. I had also asked the Minister, given his reluctance to take a stand on this issue, to identify his concerns with the position that had been enunciated by the teachers. They have written and they have told you what their concerns are. They are straightforward, they are simple, they are understandable, they are correct. They reflect genuine problems with the proposal that his colleague, the federal Minister of Finance, introduced by way of legislation. They are very specific.

What we need to know from the Minister is why he will not respond. If the Minister is prepared to list the concerns for the committee, perhaps he will, as he will have an opportunity this evening and tomorrow, list as well his concerns with the proposals as addressed. What is preventing the Minister from saying categorically and quickly, yes, I support your concerns and I am prepared to take them forward not only to my colleagues but to the federal Minister of Finance?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I have indicated that I understand what the concerns of the teachers are. We have taken them into consideration and certainly we have discussed them at a meeting that we had with the Teachers' Society. I have also indicated that we will continue to consult with the teachers and provide them an opportunity—if the Member would like to write this down, perhaps then he would remember—and that we will provide an opportunity for the Teachers' Society and other groups to meet with the four Ministers who are responsible for this particular issue.

I have indicated, until that time comes where we have met and consulted properly with these organizations, we are not prepared to make any rash statements, as

the Member would like us to do, on this issue. We are not going to do that regardless of whether he sits here for the next 20 hours and asks the same questions over and over. We will not take that position until we have properly consulted with these organizations. I am afraid that may not be satisfactory to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), but certainly that is an approach that we have indicated we are going to take and we are going to continue along that path.

Mr. Bill Uruski (Interlake): In just sitting here for the last half hour or so and listening to the debate and just so I would be a bit clearer about the Minister's answers, I understood from the Minister that he indicated that he has already met with the Teachers' Society regarding their concerns about this proposal.

Although he has not indicated after hearing them out whether he has any concerns with their proposal or he has raised any questions, he has not indicated that and he is going to continue to consult. Can the Minister indicate what he sees in terms of the process as to further consultation vis-a-vis the proposal that has been made to him by the Teachers' Society, if he has no position on this issue? Maybe he has told the Teachers' Society that he has some concerns either with the proposal, with the federal proposal and, if he has, perhaps he would want to share it with Members of the committee.

Mr. Derkach: As I indicated, that consultation process is not complete yet. Until we complete the process, I have indicated to your colleague, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that we are going to meet with the four Ministers and the Teachers' Society plus the other organizations that are affected. Until those meetings have been completed and until we have had an opportunity for other Ministers to answer questions, our position is certainly going to be one of an open mind to ensure that we can approach this matter and then represent those organizations in a fair and practical way.

Mr. Uruski: I am just trying to facilitate and understand a bit. The Minister has indicated that the Teachers' Society has put their position forward to them and raised their concerns. Does the Minister, in terms of future meetings, has he raised with the Teachers' Society additional areas that he needs clarification on as to their submission to him as the follow-up consultation to them to that issue? I am trying to understand myself. If they have put forward a position that is fairly clear and concise, what is at issue in terms of further consultation that is required for the Minister to make up his mind with his colleagues? That is what I do not understand from the Minister's comments. Perhaps he can clarify them.

Mr. Derkach: The reason that we have structured a meeting with the other Ministers who are responsible for this issue is for them to get a better understanding of the teachers' position per se.

I do not think it is fair for me to try and recap the teachers' position without giving them the opportunity. That is why we are Government. That is why we are

representing the people is so that we can be accessible to them for them to bring their concerns to us as a Government, and then to be able to also ask questions of those organizations that come forth. I do not know what kinds of questions the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery) or the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) may have with regard to this issue. Certainly, I want to give the Teachers' Society the opportunity to come before them, present their case and have those Ministers as well ask questions of the teachers with respect to their positions on this issue. Certainly, there are questions that they may want to ask.

* (2140)

I think it is only fair that instead of me attempting to be the spokesman for the Teachers' Society at this kind of a meeting, it is only fair that we give the Teachers' Society the opportunity to respond in a direct way to these Ministers. I say it is not an intent on the part of this Government to stall the issue or to skate around it. It is a matter of, in a practical way, consulting with these organizations to ensure that we represent them fairly. My whole interest in this entire matter is to ensure that teachers have a fair hearing before us as a Government, so that all questions can be put on the table, so that all opinions can be put on the table, and then we will make representation and discussions will be held with the federal Government.

I have to say that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) did write to the Minister of Finance of the federal Government to indicate that we have concerns and questions that we would like to address, but certainly we want to be able to hear from the people who are going to be affected first. I do not see anything wrong with this process, especially when we have another year at our disposal to be able to deal with this issue, and it is an important issue and one that cannot be taken lightly.

I think that if we were to try and plunge ahead without much thought or consideration, considering all aspects of it—because certainly the legislation is not only going to affect, for example, teachers and nurses, it is going to affect all Manitobans. Certainly, it is going to affect them long into the future, and we want to ensure that we are fair to the residents of this province.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, has the Minister asked his department for their advice on this issue in terms of how the department views the Teachers' Society submission and their advice to the Minister?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, certainly we have had discussions within the department about this issue and we have, as I indicated about an hour and a half ago, gone to a meeting of the four Ministers who were involved and certainly had a discussion on it. However, we were relieved to know that there was still another year before this legislation would be reintroduced. Given that we are now in Estimates and Ministers have been extremely busy, we have scheduled some meetings as soon as possible to deal with the affected groups. As I indicated before, no decisions have been made with

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regard to the situation to this point in time in terms of how we are going to approach the matter with the federal Government. I think, as I indicated before, we want to ensure that we approach the whole matter with an open mind.

Mr. Uruski: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister indicate who actually is the lead Minister on this issue in terms of preparing a decision or recommendation to his colleagues on this issue? Are you the proponent on behalf of the teachers in this issue as it affects them, or are you basically one of the Ministers involved in the broader issue. If so, if you are not the lead Minister, would it not be your role to act as an advocate on behalf of the teachers in this whole area, whether it be the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) who has likely the broader responsibility for pensions and to act as the teachers' advocate in this whole area?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I am the proponent in terms of the position of the Teachers' Society and certainly on behalf of the teachers of the province to make representation to the group of Cabinet that is meeting, and that is the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

With regard to making representation to the federal Government, that falls under the jurisdiction, as I indicated some time ago, under federal-provincial relations, and certainly that matter falls on the shoulders of the Minister of Finance. However, he does not act unilaterally and certainly it will be a Government decision based on, I think, some very serious and thoughtful considerations and discussions that will take place over the next while.

Mrs. Yeo: I think that the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) used the term "debate" very loosely. I have found it somewhat amusing to sit back and listen to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) debating, if you will, with the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) and it reminds me of sitting at home and watching my two Schnauzers trying to decide who was going to be the winner of the pillow with which they enjoy playing on many occasions.

I think perhaps it was interesting sitting here listening to these two jousting together, perhaps even more interesting than it would have been had I left and enjoyed listening to the Premier of Quebec as he chatted with the other Members of the Liberal caucus.

I am not sure if either the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) or the Member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) were in the House this afternoon to listen to the discussion on the resolution set forward by the Member for Flin Flon, but I certainly did. I listened on September 7 to the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld) and was somewhat floored by much of the statements that he made, and today I was equally floored by the statements by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), and later on by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I had the feeling that the Minister of Finance was severely rapping the knuckles of those women who chose to go out to work in the work force. I felt as

though I should be apologetic for having all my life had the good fortune of having the support of a husband who would say sure, if you want to practise your profession, go right ahead. I have spoken with MONA, who represent the 8,500-plus nurses in the Province of Manitoba, and they do have concerns about the federal Government's income tax amendments.

I have also met on several occasions with members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and they, too, have a great number of concerns and I am pleased to have heard the Minister repeat over and over and over again how very concerned he was. I assume, from his statement, that he has sometime in the past met with some members from MTS and that his intention is that he and his colleagues are planning to meet with MTS in the future to look at some sort of a brief or letter, or some formulation to send to the Minister, the federal Minister of Finance.

* (1150)

I would hope that the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) would have the lead position—I cannot remember how the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) used the term. I would be very concerned if either the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), or the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), were the lead individuals and I can only hope that my faith in the Minister of Education will be upheld and that he, in fact, will take a firmer stand and be more supportive of MTS and their concerns.

Can the Minister tell the committee if he has established a date to meet with the teachers and, if he has not, what are his plans? Will it be within the next couple of weeks? Will he wait until after Nov. 21 and then put the meeting on hold, or what are his intentions?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, this is an important issue to me, there is no question about it. I think it goes without saying that I did not meet with the teachers just to put them off. I met with them because certainly I was concerned about their plight and certainly their position on this issue, in the full recognition that this was going to be affecting many of the women who are in the workforce.

Certainly I must indicate to the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) that I have a wife who works and certainly she has taken time off from her work to raise a family and certainly I supported her in her efforts to go back to work. Although she has a business of her own, it is the very same situation whereby we respect the members of our society to all find gainful employment and to be able to be treated fairly when it comes to such things as pension benefits in the long term.

The reason that I felt that it was important for the Teachers' Society to meet with the other Ministers is that I think they have something to say about pension benefits and about the legislation that has been proposed and I think it is only fair that the other Ministers who are responsible for this very important

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issue have an opportunity to hear from the Teachers' Society directly and then be able to pose questions of them.

In terms of the time frame for the meeting, although we have talked about when we can schedule the meeting, it is at this point in time a little difficult to get all the Ministers together at one time and there are so many groups that want to meet with us. We have not met for the first time. A specific date has not been set yet, but certainly there is an intention to have this matter dealt with as quickly as possible. Hopefully in the next couple of weeks we will have an opportunity to meet with the Teachers' Society and to discuss this very important issue.

Mrs. Yeo: I hope that the Teachers' Society will have faster access to the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) than the Liberal Education critic had. It took me some three-plus months to find a time and then I think my meeting date was scheduled for 7:30 in the morning, something like that. I appreciate that the Minister is very busy. I also appreciate the fact that these other Ministers may have something to say and I think that is a quote from the Minister of Education.

I would be more concerned that they are also capable of listening effectively, because I think that I have heard what they had to say and I was concerned that they were coming to the floor of the Assembly with a mind set. I would hope that they would back off and say okay, let us really listen to what the members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society have to say and perhaps listen to the members from MONA because they also have a great deal to offer, stating their concerns for this particular change in the income tax reform.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, certainly those points are well noted and I know the Member had difficulty in getting to see me back in the early part of the Session. However, I must say, once she brought it to my attention that she was trying to get in to see me, it was just a matter of a day or so before she was able to get in and talk to me, or perhaps a couple of days at the most. My office is open to all individuals to come and meet with me and certainly we try to schedule those meetings as quickly as we can. As a matter of fact, I have to indicate that yes, our day does start very early and at 7:30 in the morning we are in the office and trying to accommodate as many groups as humanly possible. However, we know that we cannot accommodate everybody quickly or overnight. The meeting for the Teachers' Society and the Ministers will take place just as quickly as we can convene it.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass?

Mr. Storie: Following up on the comments made by my colleague from Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo), I also read into the record some of the comments made by the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld). I have heard on previous occasions the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) speak on this issue, have had a report on his comments today, and I also drew the conclusion very quickly that the meeting that is being

scheduled is not to address the teachers' concerns but perhaps will be used as an opportunity for other Members, as this Minister suggested, to put their views on the table. Views which very clearly are not supportive of the teachers position, in fact, run diametrically opposed to their position. Certainly, unless there is some opening of minds, some conscientious undertaking on their part to be more open-minded about the impact of these amendments, then it will be a waste of time and effort on everyone's part.

The Minister has not answered the question I do not think satisfactorily addressed by my colleague, the Member for the Interlake (Mr. Uruski), or the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo), when it comes to his support for the proposals and support of the concerns that were raised by the Teachers' Society. Is he going to be an advocate among his colleagues? If he fails to convince his colleagues, is he prepared to take it one step further and indicate that he will be addressing the Minister responsible for this Act directly, and that is the federal Minister of Finance?

Just so the record is clear, I want to indicate that the other areas of concern that have been raised by the Teachers' Society, the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Mr. Buhr of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund Board. They include benefits which would be negatively affected, early retirement benefits, inflation adjustment benefits, optional forms of pensions, interplan transfers and reciprocal agreements, past service contributions and pre-retirement death benefits.

The Minister has indicated that he would be getting a list of those, and I would be asking the Minister to take this opportunity to canvass his colleagues, the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Neufeld), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery), to identify for this committee any major concerns that those Members have, and the Minister seems to be relying heavily on their judgment, with respect to the concerns of the teachers or the nurses. What we need to do, I think, is to get some indication of where this Minister stands on those issues and what is likely to become of the subsequent meetings with these groups. Certainly his responses to those questions may give us an indication of whether there is likely to be any tangible support from this Minister on those questions.

Mr. Derkach: It looks like we are back where we were an hour ago. But for the benefit of the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), I will tell him again that the purpose of the meeting is not for Ministers to have their views heard by the Teachers' Society, rather it is for the Teachers' Society to speak directly with the Ministers that have responsibility over this issue, as I have indicated on several occasions before. Each of those issues will be addressed at that meeting that are outlined in the letter, and that the Member just outlined. At that point in time, the discussion will take place, and I am sure will be a very fruitful discussion.

Unfortunately, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) will not be invited to that particular session. It is just a Government kind of meeting with the Manitoba

Teachers' Society. So I guess the Member will just have to wait patiently for the outcome.

Mr. Chairman: Shall the item pass? The hour being ten o'clock, what is the will of the committee?

Committee rise.

SUPPLY—HEALTH

* (2000)

Mr. Chairman, Mark Minenko: Order, please. Sections continuing to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health, we are presently considering item 1.(d)(1) Research and Planning: Salaries—the Honourable Member for Kildonan.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, under the heading of Medical Manpower, could the Minister tell us what is going to be the impact of the Free Trade Agreement on medical manpower?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): None.

Mr. Cheema: The impact from the Free Trade Agreement on medical manpower is not clear, for it is not clear that a U.S. company could set up a Canadian operation such as an emergency centre or surgical centres. If so, they could be still stopped by the U.S. professionals who do not meet Canadian licensing and certification requirements by receiving benefits from a U.S. parent company. According to the free trade negotiation of this interpretation of the agreement, however, the U.S. position would have to meet the Canadian requirement. The enforcement of these standards on a large scale could prove to be extremely difficult. Does the Minister view this as a possible threat for the planning of medical manpower in Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cheema: In the Free Trade Agreement, there could be an influx of temporary health professionals and that could have a serious effect, distorting the medical manpower in Manitoba and other parts of this country. As well, it is still unclear if we would have the ability to define competency specifically as it relates to the health care professionals. Can the Minister tell this House if his manpower planning study will address this issue of competence?

Mr. Orchard: In terms of manpower in Manitoba for the delivery of medicine, before any physician who is not educated in Manitoba and passed, of course, the Manitoba exams—now, I should be cautious here because I believe if you graduate from a medical school in Saskatoon or Edmonton or a Canadian medical school, you can practise medicine or can achieve the right to practise medicine in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman, anyone who comes from outside the boundaries of Canada must meet and pass appropriate accreditation exams in medicine—medical doctors. I am sure my honourable friend knows about that. In

terms of the professional standards for almost all other disciplines in the delivery of medicine, there are professional associations established for various disciplines of nursing, all of which set standards which have to be met before an individual is allowed to practise. That exists today without free trade. That will exist tomorrow with free trade and will have no impact on medical manpower. The impact we have had on medical manpower in terms of our relationship with our neighbours to the South has been our manpower, our trained and skilled manpower if you will, both in the medical profession and the nursing profession leaving Manitoba and Canada and practising in the United States. There has not been, to my knowledge, a great inflow the other way but there certainly has been an outflow of our trained medical manpower to the U.S.

Free Trade Agreement has nothing to do with that outflow that is happening today, happened last year, happened the year before, nor will it have any impact on future changes in medical manpower because we set the standards for professional practice through various professional associations and in terms of medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mr. Cheema: In 1984, there was a program set by the Manitoba Health, Employment and Immigration Canada, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba and the University of Manitoba. That program was the Refugee Physician Training Program. Could the Minister tell us whether that program is still in place and what are the number of people who are currently being trained?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed that federal program probably still exists through Immigration and I believe there may well be up to five positions or slots open for refugee, if you will, or offshore physicians in Manitoba.

Mr. Cheema: Throughout the medical manpower, there are—that is the last option. I am not saying this should be the first option. There are a large number of graduates who have passed the evaluation exam, who have passed even the qualifying exam for the Medical Council of Canada and those numbers are more than 400 or 500 in Canada. Can the Minister indicate to us, has he or his department been in touch with those people to get some training here under this Refugee Program, or a separate program, so that we could have at least some of those physicians utilized in our northern communities or some of our rural communities?

Mr. Orchard: That is, I suppose, a potential source of medical manpower, but what has been happening in our recruitment efforts which are through the department and through SCOMM is that from time to time offshore doctors—and I use specifically the example of some South African physicians who have immigrated to Manitoba to provide medical services, and quite often part of the conditions, if you will, of their coming to Manitoba are that they practise for up to two years in rural or northern or remote communities.

However, that does not necessarily solve the problem. It has, in a couple of areas with, particularly the South

African trained physicians, but often what happens is after a couple of years those new physicians end up coming to Winnipeg anyway.

• (2010)

Mr. Cheema: There is a program which has been implemented by the Ontario College of Physicians and Ontario Ministry of Health to solve the problem of psychiatrist manpower in that province; and also Nova Scotia has a similar program. In that program, they are recruiting physicians from overseas as a last resort, those physicians who have met the primary requirement from the college. However, to practise for them to full time in any province in Canada, they have to meet the standard after two years or four years. What Nova Scotia is doing they are making their services, utilizing the hospital for three days and, in two out of five days, two days those people go for in-patient training to meet their requirement. That program has been very useful and has solved the problem in Nova Scotia. Will the Minister consider such a program in Manitoba as a last resort?

Mr. Orchard: No potential solution is going to be rejected out of hand. But let me tell you that one of the discussions that we have gotten around to, in terms of discussions that I have had with psychiatrists and with the psychiatric community, is that the preferable option, and this is the difficult one is to, not that they are being racist or exclusionary or anything like that, they make the point that the best long-term solution is Canadian graduates, preferably Manitoba graduates because there is an understanding of the social mores and values which help, of course, in any kind of mental health treatment that is undertaken.

But certainly, for instance, in Great Britain, there have been efforts by other provinces and I believe Manitoba has even participated at some point in time in terms of recruitment from Great Britain of psychiatrists to assist in relieving a manpower shortage in psychiatry in the province. Those options certainly are ones that the door is not closed on, because the problem is serious enough to need addressing by all means possible.

Mr. Cheema: If it is agreeable with the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), I will go to the other topic of Adult Medical Ward Study. If he has further questions, if he wants to ask on manpower, then I will follow him.

Will the Minister describe the criteria established for the Adult Medical Bed Study? What hospitals are involved in this study? What are the objectives of this study?

Mr. Orchard: I am told this was done last year. The Winnipeg hospitals plus Brandon General Hospital participated. The survey was of all adult medical, surgical and psychiatric patients admitted to acute beds in, as I say, Winnipeg and Brandon. The objective was to classify patients by the severity of their condition on admittance to determine whether services might be more appropriately provided in a community or an out-patient mode.

Mr. Cheema: As the Minister indicated that this study was completed last year, can he tell us what are the recommendations from that study?

Mr. Orchard: I am told that some of the findings of that study are still being discussed with the hospitals involved. I think it is fair to say maybe there was some disagreement in terms of the acuity of illness upon admission. That being, I suppose, a subjective analysis, there is still some discussion ongoing with the various hospitals.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, could the Minister indicate to us, in that study, what was the control group used?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, there was no control group because all adult surgical, medical and psychiatric patients were part of the survey.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, could the Minister tell us, during that survey, were the patients and their families notified of the study?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, because there were no names attached by individual patient to the study, that it was a study by patient in terms of their admittance for either medical, surgical or psychiatric needs, there was no identification to the individual. It was one of the many ongoing statistical analyses that used data available in a non-identifiable or non-individually identifiable mode that is often done to accomplish research within the department on various trends and patterns.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, the confidentiality of a medical record is one of the most important things. While you are conducting a study, how can you not notify the patients and their families? Still you are using their medical records, even though it is for the benefit of all the people. There must be some mechanism of informing the patients and their families. What kind of mechanism was put in place in the hospital?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, this was not specific patient identification along with the survey. I realize my honourable friend may have some concerns and rightfully so, if I was admitted to hospital and my name became part of a survey which was part of a Government base of information, but that was not the case.

The patient's identification did not go along with the statistic in terms of the amount of nursing care that the individual received, once admitted, determining the acuity of that patient's admittance. It was not individually identified. It was, if you will, a generic study which has taken place on a rather routine basis. That is one of the advantages of Medicare, for instance, in that we do have a rather complete and substantial information base which from time to time is made available without identification to the individual to make epidemiological studies, if you will, and this was yet another one. There was no jeopardy to patient identification or confidentiality.

* (2020)

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Chairperson, could the Minister tell us what was the cost of that study? What were the major factors determined by that study in reference to the per patient per day cost in the hospital?

Mr. Orchard: The study did not cost anything in terms of an outlay because it was part of Research and Planning's ongoing program. I suppose, if you wanted to assign 1/22 of the annual cost of Research and Planning or 1/52 or 1/23, and even that I cannot give you because that simply is not available in that kind of detail. So there was no outlay of cash cost. The hospitals participated at no cost to MHSC, and there was no information generation on per patient cost per day.

Mr. Cheema: The Minister has said that the study was completed and they are going to follow up on that study. Could he indicate to us when he will table the findings of that study in this House?

Mr. Orchard: That is one of the working studies that the department has in terms of its ongoing research and planning. There was not any intention to table that particular study.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): While there may not have been an intention to table this study, I think the question was not whether or not there was an intention but would the Minister be prepared. There are some studies that can be tabled and there are other studies that one does not table. I think it is with the right of Government to determine what it is they should table according to established standards and what it is they should not table, and then they have to suffer the political fall-out if there is any fall-out if they go too far in respect to not tabling information that should be available to the public.

So I would just repeat my colleague's question with respect to the tabling of the study. Is the Minister prepared to table it, although it may not have been the intention to table it? If not, can he enlighten us as to why he would choose not to table it? What would be contained within that study that would not be right for the general public to know?

Mr. Orchard: The answer to the first question is it was never intended to be tabled. I do not intend to table it. It was an internal research document to attempt to determine acuity of patients' health care needs upon admittance. From that standpoint, it was not intended, when taken by your administration, that it become a public document. I am simply prepared at this stage of the game to concur with that decision.

Mr. Cowan: A lot of reports we did and materials we put together were not intended to become public documents and they did, as the Minister full well knows. He knows how they became public documents on numerous occasions as well.

We are particularly concerned about this Minister and the gag memo which was tabled in this House the

other day which shows that, in spite of what this Government said about being an open Government and being a Government that wanted to provide fuller information and fuller data and freer access to Government work than previous administrations—and they were especially critical of the most recent administration in that regard—we are seeing a Government that is much more closed, a Government that is much more reluctant to provide information. The memo which we saw the other day goes far beyond what I know I ever did as a Minister. The Minister of Environment is—how to phrase it—clicking his lips it seems, saying tsk, tsk, perhaps tsk, tsk.- (Interjection)- Well, he says that one Minister made him go through the Deputy to get any information at all.

I can tell him what happened in my own portfolio, and there are members on his side of the House who will substantiate this. If it was a technical question, I encourage Members to go directly to staff, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) can confirm that. If it was a policy question, I encourage them to go to the Deputy Minister, and they were told to release information of a technical nature and a policy nature freely and to have free discussions with Opposition on those particular items. If it was a political issue where there was a political requirement to defend a decision or explain a decision, I said, I will do that. That is my job. Technicians are technicians, they should provide technical information. Deputy Ministers deal with policy, they should provide policy information where it is established. Where it has a political ramification, the Minister should deal with it.

(The Acting Chairman, Mr. Parker Burrell, in the Chair.)

What we have with this Minister is a gag memo, a gag order that says do not even provide an annual report without first consulting with the Minister. Do not provide background materials, do not provide background information. That goes far beyond what any of our Ministers did during our tenure in office. I do not think that even the Minister of Labour (Mr. Connery) or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) would suggest that if they wanted an annual report, they could not call the department and get an annual report or that sort of technical information without having to go through anyone other than the person they contacted for that particular report.- (Interjection)- The Minister of Environment (Mr. Connery) says that one day they got the Environment Annual Report as they were walking in to do the Estimates. It may well be that is when it was available.

But I did not hear him say that he asked for an annual report and did not receive it when it was available. He knows full well that happened from time to time, and I do not condone it. It was not a good practice and it was one that improved over time and, I would have hoped, would have improved with this particular Government, but we see them going in a different direction. So we have a reason to be suspicious and a reason to be concerned.

The specific question I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is, what is in this report that he does not think should be made public? If there is something in there that he wants to stand up and defend and say,

I do not believe it should be made public for these reasons, then it is up to you, Mr. Acting Chairperson, and all of us and others of the general public to judge whether or not we agree with the Minister with respect to that particular information.

I do not want to be overly critical right from the start because I really do not know why it is the Minister has not provided or the Minister has indicated he will not provide this background report, but I would like to know from him what it is in the report, not the specifics but the generalities within that report, that he feels would be detrimental to our work as legislators or to his work as a Minister of the Crown if it were to be made public and become generally known.

Mr. Orchard: This study, which was undertaken last year when my honourable friends were governing, was done in cooperation with the Winnipeg hospitals and with Brandon General Hospital. Because we needed their full cooperation and it cost them some monies, no doubt, in their internal budgets to provide the information on patient care, one of the agreements of cooperation was that the results would not be shared publicly.

The choice obviously to the previous administration is, is the information valuable enough to comply with that criterion, and obviously the previous Government believed that was a reasonable request that the hospitals made to provide cooperation for this study. I do not think it is an issue of what is in there that the previous Government "wanted to hide" from the people of Manitoba. That was simply one of the conditions under which they undertook the study with the hospitals.

In my estimation, that, I am advised, was a reasonable decision and allowed us to put together information which could well be important in future policy and decision making. So I do not think the previous administration had anything diabolical in the back of their mind when they did not want this to be a public document. I certainly have nothing diabolical in the back of my mind when I concur with the decision made by the previous Government.

* (2030)

Mr. Cowan: How easy it would have been for the Minister just to say, when we asked the question instead of trying to be somewhat sharp-tongued, it is not being provided because the hospitals requested it. I am assuming that the hospitals requested it because they did not want information out that would judge them directly one against the other, that might be perceived to be detrimental. They wanted to use this as a building process, as a learning process and as research and, for that reason, made the decision to ask that the information not be provided.

Had the Minister said that, it would have saved us a bit of time in Estimates. I do not want to give him too many helpful hints on how to save time in Estimates and make his job easier for him. If he was more forthright and more open right from the start, instead of those short, quick answers that do nothing towards moving the Estimates along, we would be better off for that reason.

With respect to another activity that was being undertaken by the department in this particular area, can the Minister provide us with some more detail as to the information which was being reviewed in the Walk-in Clinic Research Project?

Mr. Orchard: Basically, Mr. Acting Chairman, the information being reviewed was an attempt to determine whether an individual using a walk-in clinic—I will just wait until my honourable friend has finished his conversation. You cannot do two things at once. Basically, the information was to attempt to determine a couple of things primarily, (a) whether individuals using a walk-in clinic then visited another physician the next day or went to an emergency of a hospital in addition to a walk-in clinic, or in fact there was some reason to believe from the statistics that the use of emergencies in hospitals declined as a result of walk-in clinics. There are those who argue that the walk-in clinic may well relieve pressure from the emergency wards of hospitals.

The results of that first year of statistical analysis seemed to indicate some small decrease in the use of emergencies with the advent of walk-in clinics, but it is not I guess statistically significant would be the appropriate terminology. That is why we are hopeful that this year's analysis for March 31, 1988 would maybe be more definitive as to whether there is double doctoring, whether in fact there is a visible reduction in the use of emergencies.

Mr. Cowan: So if I understand the Minister correctly, the information needs to be substantiated before it can be of any real value, given that it is not (Interjection)- or broadened. The Minister indicates it needs to be broadened. I want to talk about that for just one moment. I know my colleague wants to talk about walk-in clinics as well.

Is there any research being done to determine if walk-in clinics are being used by a large number of their clientele or even any number of their clientele as a family physician, in other words, replacing the normal family physician where you have, rather than a doctor's office, a walk-in clinic? You build up a relationship with the doctor in that clinic and that becomes your family physician.

I will tell you the reason I ask the question is because my family physician does indeed run a walk-in clinic. Although I recognize that his business is classified as a walk-in clinic, in my mind, he is a family physician. He is my doctor. I go to him on a regular basis. I do so for a number of reasons, and I think that there may be others out there who either have happened across a physician by going into a walk-in clinic that they happened to like or they happened to believe is a good physician, and then that physician becomes their family physician, or there are some who were in the profession before going into walk-in clinics and they take some of that trade that they had before as family physicians with them. There are others, because of locale, the walk-in clinic just becomes another doctor's office and they build up a family physician relationship with either one doctor or a number of doctors in that particular office. So I would ask the Minister if there is any research being done in that particular area as well to determine

the impact on walk-in clinics as replacements for family physicians or normal doctors' offices?

Mr. Orchard: The Member poses an interesting question. I think the answer, whatever the answer will be, may come out of two or three years of statistical analysis. We cannot just base it on just the one year that we have. I do not even know whether we will be able to conclude that from even two years, because you are going to have to have two sets of circumstances in place for a period of two, three, four years, i.e., the same physician practising out of the same walk-in clinic, seeing the same family or individual and thereby establishing what one might describe as a family-physician relationship. We simply do not have any ability to determine that kind of trend from just one year's information. I do not know whether it can be a conclusion we can reach out of even two years of information—that may take three. In the meantime, there are pretty strongly held opinions on both sides of the fence in terms of the utility of walk-in clinics.

Mr. Cowan: The Minister is absolutely right, no doubt there are some very strongly held opinions. It is a new development in medical care that is going to have to be carefully considered and carefully reviewed over time and studied to determine whether or not there is not some way of reconciling those strongly held opinions to the benefit of the health care consumer.

When I talk about the benefit of the health care consumer, I talk about benefit not only from the cost to the health care consumer's society—because we all pay that—but also the benefit in the quality of health care. What I hear the Minister saying, I just want to confirm it then, is that the matter of whether or not walk-in clinics are being used as replacements for family physicians is part of the study that is ongoing. I accept the fact that it cannot be done in one year or even in two years, and maybe not even three or four years, but what I would like to be assured is that is one of the factors that is being considered as this whole matter is being reviewed by Research and Planning.

Mr. Orchard: I do not want to have my honourable friend jump up and say I am playing cutesy with him or anything, but basically the answer I gave you in the last question applies. Even if you had two or three or four years of data on walk-in clinics and recurring use of walk-in clinics, it would have to be determined whether they were using them as part of the treatment regime and in addition seeing specialists or other general practitioners. If there was some way that one could be assured that family "B" used doctor "A" in clinic "C" for four years and no other place in the system with the exception of possibly a reference to a surgeon for elective surgery, then you might conclude that they were serving as a family practice entry point.

But the main thing that we hope to get out of the statistical analysis is whether there is—we need to be concerned about double doctoring, etc., etc., and whether the walk-in clinics are a straight add-on to cost in the system, a duplication of services presently available in the system. That is I think really the intent of the first statistical analysis and will continue to be

what we are trying to determine because at some point in time we may have to come to this House with a policy discussion in which all Members will be asked to voice a policy on walk-in clinics. Any direction we may think we have to take as Government in terms of their licensing or regulations.

* (2040)

Mr. Cowan: I appreciate the dilemma of the Minister and the fact that this is a new area and they do want to first find out the cost effectiveness and cost efficiencies of walk-in clinics and whether or not they are just a straight add-on and a duplication of services. One does not want always to use their own personal experiences and I can tell you that even within my own Party, there are some very strongly held feelings with respect to walk-in clinics and that they should be not for profit and that they should be community based to a much greater extent. I philosophically agree with that and support that position and would support directions that would, in a reasonable fashion, take us toward that objective.

On the other hand, because it is something new and because there is not a lot of experience in it, I have a sense that if one just dwells on it from one perspective—in other words, are they a straight duplication or add-on of services—you may miss a productive role that walk-in clinics can play, and can play for a large portion of the province. I would like to encourage the Minister not only to look at the cost effectiveness or the cost equations, but also look at how we may work with the medical community and the medical profession to deal with any concerns we have with respect to walk-in clinics being straight add-ons or duplications, and through regulation—and that could be regulation that is brought in by way of legislation or regulations, or it may be regulation that is brought in a self-regulatory fashion—make certain that we are getting the most benefit from walk-in clinics, and at the same time ensure that we are not adding on unnecessarily to the costs of our Medicare system. It is a system that does cost a great deal. It is well worth the value, it is well worth the money we spend on it, but it does cost a lot and we have to be concerned with how that system shapes itself in the future to ensure that we are getting maximum benefits from it.

I would ask him to give some special consideration to when he meets with representatives of the medical profession, and I include in that representatives from walk-in clinics as well as representatives from community clinics and representatives from the hospital emergency wards and general practitioners and doctors who run their own offices, that he follow the path that he said he was going to follow earlier with respect to a very consultative, collaborative, cooperative approach to making certain that we find some common objectives and define some common ground that will place us eventually on those objectives and that we use the best of all the systems. I am afraid if you look only at the negative of one system, you may lose sight of what possible potential benefits could arise out of a new form of medical care which may have some benefits that would be worth ensuring that it becomes a stable part of the whole health care continuum.

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That is a decision that is going to have to be taken on the basis of the information that is developed over the next number of years. I accept the fact that the Minister says it is going to take three, four, five years. It may even take a bit longer. In the meanwhile, I do not think the fact that we are doing research should preclude us from working together and explaining to the medical profession what is involved in walk-in clinics, what our concerns are with walk-in clinics and the cost duplications, and at the same time asking them if they have ways of ensuring that those concerns are dealt with in a reasonable fashion.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, that is correct, except my honourable friend's suggestion and that in part is what is being done. My last question dealt on the double-doctoring concept, but also what the analysis is attempting to determine is whether in fact, as some of the proponents of the walk-in clinics say, i.e., that they serve as an alternative to emergency wards and hospitals. On the basis of one year's statistics, there seems to be a small indication that is the case, but we will not know that until we have two, three years of statistical information to prove or disprove that theory. But if that were happening, that would be a positive to the system from walk-in clinics. We are not doing the analysis simply to look at all of the negatives that may well be part of walk-in clinics. But the double doctoring is the easiest one to pull out and the most obvious demonstration that you may have a duplication of resource. The less obvious one is whether in fact there is a tangible decrease in the use of Emergencies—that being a benefit to the system if that were to occur.

Mr. Cowan: I thank the Minister for his comments and wish him well with this survey. I just want to put a couple of other points on the record. I know my friend has some other questions in this area that he wants to ask.

One has to be concerned with the level of the quality of care and ensure that walk-in clinics are providing a good quality level of care. I, in my own instance, believe that they are and as a matter of fact know that the one that I attend does provide that level of care. I also think that same level of care can be provided by a community clinic. I have to tell you that from time to time I have had discussions with my doctor and owner of the walk-in clinic about that. We disagree in that particular area. But that is a philosophical question that can be settled over a period of time. I personally would prefer to see more community-based clinics and also more community-controlled clinics. I think the two are the same thing.

At the same time, I think there is some room in the system for continuum where you have some walk-in clinics as long as they are providing good quality service at reasonable costs; in other words, that they are not, as the Minister says, duplicating services and they are not straight add-ons. I have also heard in the past, and I think you have walk-in clinics that operate from one perspective and walk-in clinics that operate from an entirely different perspective and probably a number of different perspectives, but I have heard in the past

there were some concerns with the level of testing that was being done by some not only walk-in clinics but other physicians. It appeared that there might be too many patients being sent for tests. I think that is another area that has to be considered when reviewing this whole area.

So it is an area with some very strongly-held, philosophical approaches and beliefs in an area where research is needed. I think that the approach has to be one of undertaking the research which is going to take some time to compile, develop and analyze and come forward with recommendations out of that and at the same time work with the medical community to ensure that we are getting the best use of all our medical personnel, including those who are working out of walk-in clinics.

My final question to the Minister then is, given that this is an area that does have some impact with respect to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, can he indicate if the College of Physicians and Surgeons are involved in this study and, as well, can he indicate if representatives of walk-in clinics themselves, either as a part of the body of College of Physicians and Surgeons or on their own, are involved in this study? I have to tell him, I do not know whether there is an association or not or a group of walk-in clinic doctors that have banded together to provide assistance in their particular area on studies like this. I would ask him if there is. If not, how do they encourage that direct input into a study that will have so much impact on the walk-in clinic over a period of time?

Mr. Orchard: The College of Physicians and Surgeons has taken a look at the walk-in clinic as a growing method of medical delivery and have done that in conjunction, presumably, with some of the owners.

Our analysis has been a statistical one if you will, and has not involved owners of the walk-in clinics in terms of the negotiations. It has been done with full discussions with the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In terms of the quality of care and the standard of care, of course, those are fairly closely regulated. The Medical Review Committee, for instance, would pick up anyone, whether they are in a walk-in clinic or whether they are in normal office practice of anyone going above the norms in terms of certain requests for tests. The Medical Review Committee, of course, has the ability to, when they notice abnormal practise patterns, call the individual in and demand answers. If answers are not forthcoming—you periodically read in the newspaper where someone has been asked, as a physician, to make restitution to the system because they have overbilled in some fashion or another.

* (2050)

So I think that from that standpoint, the walk-in clinic per se and the physicians practising out of it are not different than any other general practitioner or practitioner out of the Winnipeg Clinic or the Manitoba Clinic, clinics that have been there for as long as I can remember and I suppose in the purest sense of the

word, might well have been called walk-in clinics with the exception that they did have appointments. They used those offices for visitation as set up by appointments. It is only the pure non-appointment walk-in clinics, the growth of which of late has caused us to start taking a look, caused the previous administration to start taking a look to see what their impact on the system was.

Mr. Cowan: One final comment on a related but somewhat different matter, and then we move back to walk-in clinics, when dealing with the whole area of clinics, and I have mentioned my own philosophical bias towards community-based clinics, I would hope that the department would be continuing on the work which the previous administration had asked them to commence with respect to health cooperatives. I think that is an area that is one of some great potential. There are a whole number of reasons why, I believe, that the whole area of health care co-ops can provide better service in numerous communities and should be carefully considered. There is some great deal of experience with respect to health care co-ops in other jurisdictions. It is one area where I regret we were not able to do more in our own jurisdiction. It was one of the priority areas identified by the cooperative sector in Canada in their major report of a couple of years ago. It is one where, I think, we have some unmet potential that should be pursued.

We had just initiated some studies in the area. We had started to look at it. It was not an area where, I think, there had been any definitive decisions taken as of yet, although I had my mind made up in this particular regard as to the value of health care co-ops. I would like to see that work continue, because I think if the research is done and it is unbiased research and it is carefully thought out research, it will lead to the conclusion that there is room for health care co-ops in the Province of Manitoba, and that they can provide some very substantial services to communities.

When I say communities, I am not talking about a town or a village. I am talking about different types of communities within our urban areas and outside of the urban areas in the province. So I would encourage the Minister to continue that work on a priority basis.

Mr. Orchard: I fully accept my honourable friend's exhortation. One of the difficulties that I am informed exists in terms of pursuing this would be -(Interjection)-the bottom line is that the idea might have been in the Cooperative Minister's mind but his staff did not pursue it, and so a continuation of the development plan is rather easy because it never got off the ground.

Mr. Cowan: There were papers done.

Mr. Orchard: There were papers done by whom?

Mr. Cowan: By your department.

Mr. Orchard: If my honourable friend has those papers, he might want to bring them or send them over to my office because the indication I have is that the initiative did not simply get off the ground. There was nothing

that got off the ground. However, if my honourable friend has a number of papers that he wishes to send over, we would be pleased to look at them.

Mr. Cowan: Just to make a point, there was research undertaken and there was work done between my Deputy Minister and my departmental staff and staff in the Department of Health. There were materials that were produced. I can produce them. I said it was at a very preliminary stage and indeed it was at a very preliminary stage. What I asked the Minister to do was to continue that work. I told him quite frankly that it did not go as far as I would have liked it to have gone. It was an area where a lot more work needed to be done. For him to suggest that nothing was done I think is unfair and not entirely reconciled with what actually happened.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I still have a question in regard to medical beds study. The study was completed. Why does the Minister not want to release the report? If he thinks that report is not important or the findings are not relevant, why has he included it in this year's activity identification when we have a study? Will he table that study?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, the answer is still no, as I indicated to my honourable friend from Churchill (Mr. Cowan). Part of the agreement through which the hospitals cooperated was that this would be an internal working document. It is still on the activity identification because despite the fact that the analysis has been done, policy formulations and discussions with the institutions still can ensue and will ensue from the findings of that study. This is one of the studies that is not going to be left on the shelf because it has some useful information that the hospitals can use in their own administrative practices. It cannot be tabled, not that it has anything earth shattering in it, but that was part of the agreement under which we received the cooperation from the hospitals to undertake the study.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, this study, if it has any implication, whether on a positive side or a negative side, I think we as Members of the Legislature have the right to know so that we can contribute to that, so we do not have to repeat the study. That is the question I am asking. I understand the Minister has the authority to get hold of that study and let the Members know what are the findings so that whatever areas are concerned, and if this study was done mainly for the basis of cost saving or the other factors that were involved. My main concern also is that if patient confidentiality was involved or not. I would like to know that.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, as I indicated to my honourable friend, patient confidentiality was not a factor in the study because no patient name was identified. That is the third time that I have indicated that to him. I will indicate for the third time to my honourable friend that part of the agreement between individuals, agreements which I think are important to maintain the cooperation between the department and the facilities, one of the agreements was that the

information would not become public information, that it would be used for the internal planning and information requirements of the department.

If I was to follow my honourable friend's advice, I would be breaking the previous Government's word with those hospitals. That might suit my honourable friend, the Liberal health critic's present circumstance, but it would not help my circumstance as Minister of Health or any future Minister of Health if you made an agreement with the hospitals through which they cooperated with you, and then you turned around at the first opportunity and broke that agreement. Surely my honourable friend is not asking me to do that.

* (2100)

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, in regard to walk-in clinic study, we, on this side of the House, definitely feel that walk-in clinics had played an important role, initially, and they are still playing an important role to provide the health care, mostly in Winnipeg, and I am not aware if there is any walk-in clinic in Brandon. There is one walk-in clinic in Portage. However, as the number of walk-in clinics are growing every day, that is having an impact on our health care. We are not talking just about the medical manpower, we are talking about the tests that are being done; we are talking about the x-rays that are being done; we are talking about the cost for Pharmacare; we are talking about the other professions involved in the system. So there is a definite possibility that it could be we are duplicating services.

As the Minister has indicated that last year's study was done there must be some findings from that study, but the Minister is going to consider having a new study done. Can he tell us what was the major findings from last year's study?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I guess I have to admit I am getting a little confused. First of all, my honourable friend says the Liberal Party supports walk-in clinics because they believe they have been good for the delivery of medicine. Then my honourable friend identifies a whole series of costs from diagnostic costs to pharmaceutical costs and duplication of service which he says may be coming out of walk-in clinics, which would seem to indicate that you did not support them. Now, which is it? Are you a wholehearted supporter of walk-in clinics, or are you saying that they are an add-on to the service, because I did not quite find out which it was from your question.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am definitely sure what I am saying, that the walk-in clinics definitely played a role, initially, and they are still playing a role. We are not disputing that fact. What I am saying is that once you are conducting a study on a walk-in clinic the number is growing and we are concerned, definitely, about the duplication of services. And that does not mean that we are opposing walk-in clinics, but when the numbers are growing, you are studying for a particular case, what was the finding from last year's study?

Mr. Orchard: Well, the findings did not really point any particular trend that we were trying to get a handle

on, or the previous Government was trying to get a handle on. There was some indication that there was a lowered use of emergency wards in our community hospitals in Winnipeg; there was some indication that there was double doctoring, seeing another physician the next day, or the regular family physician the next day, which would seem to indicate that it was an add-on to the system.

But on the basis of (a) the number of clinics that were in service at that particular time, which was the fiscal year ending March 31, 1987, there were no conclusions that one could make upon which to formulate policy or identify problems or identify benefits. That is why this year's analysis is attempting to further quantify the findings from last year to see, indeed, whether there is a trend to lowered emergency department use, to see whether there is simply additional doctoring, double doctoring, as a result of walk-in clinics. I simply cannot tell you, basis first year's information, whether in fact either of those circumstances exist. Hopefully, we will have a better indication after this year's analysis to March 31, 1988, but I would suspect it is going to take until the end of this fiscal year and the analysis of the data that we have there before we really have a clear trend emerging from the impact of walk-in clinics on the Medicare system in Manitoba.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as the Minister has indicated earlier, there is a Medical Review Committee in Manitoba which does review the physicians as regard to using services now. Could the Minister indicate to us, is he considering having a similar mechanism involved in walk-in clinics where the services, other than physician services, will be monitored so that duplication of services can be avoided?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I hope I understand my honourable friend's question that basically the only thing we can analyze in terms of the walk-in clinics are the fee-for-service billings and the diagnostic tests that are thereby ordered and paid for by the commission. As I indicated to the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) earlier on, if any physician, whether he is in a walk-in clinic or otherwise, goes above the practise norms for the ordering of tests or other areas that go beyond the standards or the norms of practice, he will be called in to justify that before the committee and that applies whether he is a physician operating out of a walk-in clinic, or a long-standing clinic, or his own private office.

Mr. Cheema: Can the Minister indicate to us the number of total walk-in clinics as of today, or as of last week or so?

Mr. Orchard: First of all, I could answer yes, and I am going to have to answer no, but my honourable friend could help me if he would give me the definition of a walk-in clinic and then I could tell him how many there are according to his definition.

I am not trying to be facetious or funny or jest with my honourable friend, but I had the opportunity to have lunch with a very distinguished gentleman who has been

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highly involved throughout the department and with the Standing Committee on Medical Manpower, Dr. Wilt, and we discussed walk-in clinics. Dr. Wilt is of the opinion that one of the most difficult tasks—and that he is going to provide us some assistance in this—is an attempt to define a walk-in clinic, because I said earlier, the Manitoba Clinic, the Winnipeg Clinic have been there for years and I do not think anyone would call them a walk-in clinic.

There are possibly—even my honourable friend from Churchill's walk-in clinic might be more like a family practise office with a sign to attract people, I do not know, and that is the difficulty in (a) answering definitely how many walk-in clinics there are, because we quite frankly do not have a definition for a walk-in clinic that is probably apropos right at the present time, but that issue is to be addressed in the near future.

Dr. Wilt has offered his services in helping to define categories of walk-in clinics wherein he suggested that there may well be five definitions, or five categories by definition of walk-in clinics from pure walk-in clinic as we might envision if the three of us were to sit down and write down some criterion to a family physician's office with a sign on it.

Mr. Cheema: Could the Minister indicate to us if he will consider limiting the number of walk-in clinics?

Mr. Orchard: I would consider that if my honourable friend were to tell me which it is his Party believes in, whether they are good for the system or potentially bad for the system, and again I am not being facetious. We simply do not at this stage have sufficient and indicative enough statistics to make any conclusion that would lead us to do carry through on my honourable friend's suggestion.

Mr. Cheema: As I indicated previously, walk-in clinics are playing, and they have played an important role. More specifically, as the Honourable Minister had indicated, that there are major clinics who have outlets for walk-in clinics also and that is part of their clinic. So we are not saying that is the criteria for a walk-in clinic. What we are getting at, the growing number of walk-in clinics where there are only offices open just for office visits and there is no follow-up, and that is what I am getting at. Will the Minister consider limiting the number of those clinics, if the study proves that is costing money to the taxpayer and if that is not providing the adequate health care services?

* (2110)

Mr. Orchard: Let us approach this in a reasoned fashion: (a) let us, first of all, establish a definition which appropriately categorizes as a walk-in clinic or a category of walk-in clinic the circumstance my honourable friend just talked about, that they provide no follow-up care. They are just there for if you walk in with a sore throat and you want to get a prescription for antibiotics and you never intend to go back. You happen to be driving by or driving through.

Okay, we established that is a category 1 walk-in clinic. Then, having that definition of a walk-in clinic,

one could follow the billing patterns there and determine whether, within that type of walk-in clinic, there was a significant add-on cost to the system. If that were the case, then we would have to give consideration to some method of assuring that we are receiving value for the dollars we spent. What that would be, I simply cannot speculate at this point in time but, if the circumstance is as my honourable friend describes where the clinic is there, you walk in, you get what you need, you walk out and you never see anybody else again, then that is probably a pretty efficient way to deliver medicine.

It may be that we do not want to do anything with them. So until we have a better information base on which to make decisions, I simply cannot speculate as to what we might do in the future. I simply indicate that the previous administration considered the issue serious enough to undertake a statistical analysis, basis March 31, 1987. We likewise consider it a significant enough issue that we are updating that information for the fiscal year just past, and there is no question that we will do it again for this fiscal year that we are currently in.

Mr. Cheema: I thank the Minister for his comments and certainly will be looking forward for that study to have input from this side. Could the Minister tell us what is the status of day hospital pilot project.

Mr. Orchard: I will read to my honourable friend what I put on the record this afternoon. "Research and Planning Directorate, in cooperation with a consultant geriatrician and the heads of Geriatric Services, spent considerable time designing and pretesting two forms for collecting admission and discharge data on day hospital patients. Information was collected on approximately 400 patients starting in January 1987. Data collection is now complete and the data have been checked thoroughly for completeness and consistency. Computer data entry is in process and analysis will proceed upon completion. Once the results are available, the decision will be made as to whether the forms will provide a base for ongoing admission separation abstract for day hospital patients."

Mr. Cheema: Could the Minister indicate to us, what was the control group used for the same study?

Mr. Orchard: I am informed that there again was not a "control group," that all patients who were admitted and discharged in the day hospital program were surveyed in again the same circumstances. In case my honourable friend's next question is patient confidentiality, there were no names attached. It was done as a statistical survey involved with patients without identification so that patient confidentiality was maintained in this survey as well.

Mr. Cheema: Could the Minister tell us when we will have the findings from this study?

Mr. Orchard: There is the likelihood that we may have some of the analysis completed by year end.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the hospitals are playing an important role more specifically when we

want to cut down the cost and provide the health services, most specifically for the age group 65 and above. Two hospitals have really proved they are doing an excellent job. Will the Minister consider expanding the program to the other hospitals in Winnipeg as well as to the rural communities?

Mr. Orchard: At the risk of seeming presumptuous, if all of the criteria that my honourable friend put on the record are consistent with the statistical analysis and it is a more cost effective way of delivering service, particularly to senior Manitobans, and institutions are able to provide space and manpower to undertake the program, certainly in the interest of cost effective quality health control that is a direction that we would be foolish not to take. I tend to believe, as my honourable friend believes, that is a valuable program and meritorious of further support. We will have that presumably in black and white at year end.

Mr. Cheema: I would like to ask a few questions on the Seven Oaks Hospital Psychogeriatric Review. Could the Minister indicate to the House when this review was started and what are the criteria and what is the data basis going to be used?

Mr. Orchard: I will just read into the record. The Research and Planning Directorate is examining this program's attainment of objectives, service delivery, cost effectiveness and patient outcome. As with all new programs, there have been numerous changes and adjustments to program operation. The Seven Oaks Psychogeriatric Program is now developed to a point where the program evaluation can be completed. The hospital administration set the completion of the evaluation as one of its objectives for this fiscal year. To this end, the administration has responded promptly to all requests for information and has facilitated interviews with key program personnel.

Mr. Cheema: The psychogeriatric program at Seven Oaks is playing a crucial role in the delivery of health care and has also worked very well in connection with the day hospital. Can the Minister tell us during the study of two years, from September '86 until September '88, what are the specific programs, what are the specific goals he is looking for this time?

Mr. Orchard: Basically the specific goals I have indicated to you, the cost effectiveness, the patient outcome, whether indeed it is meeting the objectives that were originally set out in terms of the inception of the program. I have to tell my honourable friend that the way this particular program is structured and set up is very valuable and instructive to future programs, because all too often in the past Government has been broached with an idea. They have said, yes, sounds good. Away they ran with it. They did not do the ongoing monitoring and evaluation to see if the outcome in the final analysis of the program was as projected when the program was sold to Government, if you will. This one had a starting point with objectives set out and has been monitored and statistically analyzed throughout. Hopefully, by the end of this fiscal year, we will have the kind of result examinations that will

allow us to make a program evaluation with some accuracy and some assurance that we have good sound data.

* (2120)

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, for any program to be evaluated, we need a control study group. It is my understanding that for this program there is going to be a patient study from a different part of Winnipeg. That is not going to reflect the total evaluation of this program. Will the Minister please look into that so that the control group is from the same part of the city, and also have the same age group involved? Particularly, we should look at how it is affecting the outcome in terms of personal care home placement, in terms of the cost saving for the medical beds and also the rehabilitation programs.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, there again was no control group. That was because the participating physicians, I am told, did not want to have a control group. As a result, where we were hoping to analyze the program is in the areas that I have already mentioned and, hopefully, the analysis of experience over the year and a half, two years will prove the program's utility and value to the system in terms of either delayed entry to an acute care facility or a personal care home, any number of positive indices we hope will come out of the analysis and the experience.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, could the Minister indicate to us what is going to be the time frame to have this study completed?

Mr. Orchard: The end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, now we are at one of my favourite subjects, the psychogeriatric program. Can the Minister indicate to us, has he reviewed the report from the Psychogeriatric Review Committee and could he table the recommendations from that program?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I have read the review. I also know my honourable friend has read the review because he was waving it in the House. If he wants me to give him a regular copy, I will. It is a report which offers some advice, some of which no doubt will be taken and put into practice. Some of it may not. If I could offer a suggestion to my honourable friend, when we get to the Mental Health line, we could have a full and complete discussion of his pet subject, psychogeriatric care.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, could the Minister indicate to us, out of the 19 recommendations, what are the main recommendations he is going to recommend so that this program or the further program could be more effective?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairman, I would be pleased to provide that information to my honourable friend either at the Medical line in the Manitoba Health

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Services Commission or the Personal Care Home line in the Manitoba Health Services Commission or indeed when we reach Mental Health.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Burrell): Is the committee prepared to pass?

Mr. Cowan: Please do not interpret politeness for willingness to pass the items. I was just giving my friend, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), a chance to continue on if he wished, but there are a number of other issues that we would want to address under this particular item.- (Interjection)- We will get to that item, some specific items either tonight or tomorrow.

The Minister has indicated, in his earlier comments in this area, that this is the area of the department that does general research. I do not know if I asked him specifically but I will now. Is there any other area in the department that undertakes research and planning functions?

Mr. Orchard: Not what you would call research per se. There is program planning that is specific to each departmental division which involves planning but not necessarily research.

Mr. Cowan: Then this will be really the analytical component of the department in a pre-empted sense. In other words, you may do evaluation which would provide you with some research and data but that would be after the fact in monitoring and evaluating programs. When you are developing a specific program, you may do some program-oriented very specific targeted and focused research in that particular program. But this would be the area of the department that would do the general reviews, the general analysis and come up with a broader more general thrust with respect to health care policy.

Mr. Orchard: In general, that would be a fair assumption.

Mr. Cowan: Perhaps the Minister can indicate if he believes all the priorities are being addressed in the Activity Identification list which was provided earlier. I asked him that question because, while he has been in the portfolio for six months, there may be some areas that are coming to his attention or some new information that is becoming available to him that would have him think that there might be other priority areas that should be addressed as well, or there might be areas on this particular list that might be dropped because they were a large part of a priority of the previous administration and he would like to have the stamp of his administration placed on the activities and, therefore, would have different priorities that he would be asking the department to review in the near future.

Mr. Orchard: The Research and Planning is available to undertake these studies and provide research and statistical backup, if you will, to the Minister, to MHSC to a great degree, and indeed will be also providing similar activity to the Health Advisory Network.

Mr. Cowan: But the Minister does not see himself any personal priorities or any Government priorities that he would bring forward as being more important or at least equally important to that work that is being done now by the department. Is that the case, outside of the Health Advisory Network, which is understood?

Mr. Orchard: The list that is here is a number of areas that Government needs information on. As I indicated to him earlier on, the teaching hospital review, although conceptualized 18 months ago, never got off the ground and will. Of course, Research and Planning will have an active role to play in that.

Mr. Cowan: The Government promised, as a political Party during the campaign, that it would undertake a comprehensive review of health care needs before it closed any hospital beds. The exact promise I can quote to the Minister. I have done so on many occasions in the past. Would this be the section of the department that would undertake that complete review?

Mr. Orchard: That review was done by the Manitoba Health Services Commission staff.

Mr. Cowan: Has that review been completed?

* (2130)

Mr. Orchard: The review has been undertaken with regard to the request by the Health Sciences Centre to close respiratory beds. That review involved an analysis of the system need as well as the Health Sciences Centre need and, yes, that aspect of it has been completed.

Mr. Cowan: The exact promise, Mr. Acting Chairperson, was a comprehensive review and it did not confine itself—nor did the Premier, nor any of the other representatives of the Conservative Party confine their remarks to a review of the Health Sciences Centre when they made that campaign promise in April of this year. I would ask the Minister if he can indicate what is happening with respect to that comprehensive review and when we can expect that it will be complete?

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friend did not hear my response obviously. I indicated to him that the review was undertaken to determine the effect on the system of the request by the Health Sciences Centre to close 22 respiratory beds. That review involved a study of the needs at the Health Sciences Centre and, as well, as I indicated to my honourable friend a couple of minutes ago as well as on several occasions in the House, involved discussion with all the other Winnipeg hospitals to assure that the program resolution at Health Sciences Centre did not impact negatively on the Winnipeg hospital system. That review has been completed to the satisfaction of the commission in the information provided as indicated to me that from a program standpoint the review was complete involving not only the Health Sciences Centre but the other Winnipeg hospitals. The conclusion is that those beds are not needed from a program standpoint in the system.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair.)

Mr. Cowan: If I understand the Minister correctly, and I apologize if I have misinterpreted what he said, the comprehensive review which was referenced by the Premier and other representatives of the Conservative health party with respect to the review that would be done before there were any more permanent bed closures has now been completed.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, the review (a) is comprehensive, (b) dealing with the request specifically by the Health Sciences Centre to permanently close one respiratory wing; a second wing to be closed in the last five years incidentally because the first respiratory bed wing closed in 1982-83. This is the second wing. There are now I believe 35 respiratory beds remaining in the Health Sciences Centre. I am not certain of that number but close to.

Mr. Chairman, that review that was undertaken and the reason it took another eight weeks roughly was to assure that the Health Sciences Centre's request did not resolve their problem and simply transfer it to other hospitals. That is why the review involved consultation with the other hospitals in Winnipeg and to the satisfaction of the commission and subsequently to myself it was determined from a program need the 22 respiratory beds at the Health Sciences Centre were not needed from a program standpoint.

Mr. Cowan: The Minister of Health is very good with words and he is being very careful in the way he answers my question. I do not want to appear to belabouring the point, but I do not feel that I have got a full answer from him.

The Conservative Government promised a comprehensive review before any further beds would be closed. Is this the comprehensive review that they promised during the campaign, and is the Minister now assured that they have met their campaign promise by having undertaken a comprehensive review, as was promised, before the closure of any permanent beds?

Mr. Orchard: No, Mr. Chairman, that will be subject to more review than what has been done, because there is no question that the eventuality may well be there that other hospitals may wish to either change service usage of beds, or indeed close beds if they become surplus to what they consider to be their program need. When those requests are made, we will go through the same process we went through this time. We will (a) make sure that within the hospital environment those beds are not needed, the requesting hospital environment; and, secondly, within the system. In terms of comprehensive review, that was a comprehensive review focused specifically on a request from a hospital.

There will be still the broader program review of the Winnipeg hospitals, as well as the teaching hospitals, as two separate aspects. Those reviews will focus in not only on beds and use of beds in the urban facilities, but indeed will try to seek out program of excellence within the community hospitals and the teaching

hospitals, and that review certainly has not been done. But in terms of the decision-making process that we went through over the last two months, that review involved the institutions in the City of Winnipeg specific to a given group of specifically dedicated beds.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please.

Mr. Cowan: It is Monday evening, I guess. The fact is, Mr. Chairperson, that the Government has not kept its promise. It did not keep the promise it made in April. It did not keep the promise that it reiterated August 22 when the Minister of Health is reported on CBC TV, 6 p.m. on that day, as saying, he reiterated the Conservative election promise that "no beds would be permanently closed until there is a full-scale review of the province's health services." What he has told us is that they went ahead on the basis of an ad hoc review of one particular situation in closed beds. We have seen the Minister attempting to backpedal and his Government attempting to backpedal against this commitment ever since it became known that they were anticipating the closure of beds back several months ago.

Just the other day, the Minister finally came forward and said that the beds were closed and were being used as office space, which we had said all along was what was going to happen because even as of several months ago the offices were starting to be constructed in that particular area, and the Minister knows that. So, in order to try to weasel out from under the election promise, the Government—and I am not attributing that to any particular individual, Mr. Chairperson, in case you were concerned—as a whole tried to say, well it really was not a comprehensive review that we promised. It was just a review of this particular situation.

That just will not wash. That is not what they promised; they broke that promise. They obtained votes on the basis of that election promise, and the Minister very early on suggested that it probably was not a very good promise. I know he did not want to undercut his leader, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), when he said that but, in essence, that is what was happening, because it was the Premier who very specifically made that promise and it was the Minister of Health who very specifically was breaking that particular promise.

So I just want the record to be quite clear that we have not seen the comprehensive review, the full-scale review of all the province's health services, and I do not believe that Government really intended to keep that promise as soon as they figured out that it was probably a very poorly crafted, worded, and poorly thought-out promise that they just could not possibly keep. I just wish they would have been a bit more forthright in coming forward right from the very beginning and saying, hey, we made a mistake on this one, we cannot keep that promise, it was not a good promise. We did not know what we were talking about. We have learned a bit since we have assumed Government, and we have no intention of keeping that particular promise, and that probably would have saved them an awful lot of embarrassment and an awful lot of suffering as they tried to figure out how to reconcile their position with that which they knew they could not do in the first instance.

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I am not certain. I would ask my friend, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), if he wanted to pursue that particular issue any further.

Mr. Cheema: I will leave that one up to you.

Mr. Cowan: I would just ask one question on that. Can the Minister table the review which was completed with respect to the beds at the Health Sciences Centre and their closure?

* (2140)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Chairman, I rather am fascinated with my honourable friend's machinations. If we go back and revisit approximately one year ago, the previous administration dictated to the hospitals in Winnipeg that certain beds had to be closed. For instance, one of the mandated closures at the Health Sciences Centre was 24 surgical beds.

One of the criticisms that I levelled at the previous administration, and I believe it is an accurate and standing criticism, that they went in with their machetes and hacked at the health care system without consultation between the hospitals because the Health Sciences Centre pointed out to the previous administration, who had picked the magic figure of 24 surgical beds, presumably out of the air without any sort of discussion with the hospitals or the other urban institutions, to come up with 24 surgical beds, and at the time the Health Sciences Centre told them they may not be able to comply with that and, in fact, they did not. The best they could do, and maintain a reasonable semblance of program, was 19 surgical beds.

My honourable friend kicked, snorted, wheezed, grunted and moaned on Friday and before that, that the 19 oncology beds that were being opened were always in the system. And that, oh, the Minister is not really indicating correctly what is really happening. Well, they were in the system. Before the NDP came in with their health care machete and ordered them closed, they were surgical beds, but because the Health Sciences Centre was under directive from the previous administration, they were closed.

The Health Sciences Centre decided to use that closure as an opportunity to provide better patient care and renovated those 19 beds and a ward in the Health Sciences Centre to basically state-of-the-art rooms for oncology program—for treatment of cancer patients. That was instrumental in acceding to the Health Sciences Centre's request to close 22 respiratory beds because from time to time, unfortunately, individuals occupying respiratory beds were individuals with lung cancer. The oncology beds provided a much higher quality environment of care and would have decreased even further the need for those 22 respiratory beds now that the oncology beds are open for service, and service at a much higher level of patient care.

I know my honourable friends made those decisions without the kind of consultation that we have undertaken in the last two-and-a-half months to arrive at the decision to accede to the Health Sciences Centre's

request to close 22 respiratory beds. I know that in some ways that bothers my honourable friend because as of today there are more beds in service at the Health Sciences Centre than there was a month ago, two months ago, three months ago, and certainly in terms of the surgical beds, the 19 that were ordered closed by the NDP a year ago, those 19 are now in a different service mode and in reality what has happened is that the administration of the Health Sciences Centre has made the decision—as they made in 1982-83 when they closed the respiratory wing of the Health Sciences Centre—that for program needs those beds could be removed from service.

Before we gave them permission we wanted to assure that a number of things were in place and those assurances have been received to the satisfaction of the MHSC and myself that the respiratory beds are no longer appropriate to leave in the system. I will just give my honourable friend a global figure.

What is the Health Sciences Centre now, at about a 1,080 beds? Approximately 10 to 15 years ago, they were at almost 1,300 beds, I believe. The closing of beds in the Health Sciences Centre is following, I guess if you will, a pattern of outpatient service delivery. If you can undertake a procedure without admission to the hospital, without inpatient admission and inpatient care, you have a much more economic system. That is what is happening. As technology allows portable or mobile oxygen concentrators to be put at bedside in a person's home, a respiratory bed with the piped-in oxygen is not an absolute necessity any more. Technology has allowed us to move away from the institution. That is something that we all concur with.

The previous administration, however, ordered, without the analysis within the system, closures of certain beds. We did not do that. We said that before beds would be permanently closed we wanted to have a comprehensive review. And we have done that over the last two months, a review involving the hospital that has applied to close those beds as well as the other facilities to make sure we were not simply transferring a problem, a budgetary problem. And we were not. On the basis of that, we complied with the request to close for program purposes.

I know my honourable friend is not satisfied with that. I do not know whether he would have been happier had we opened those beds, staffed them and had no patients in them. I do not know whether he would have been happy with that. I would not have been happy with it. I do not think the Health Sciences Centre would be happy with him. I do not think the people of Manitoba would be. I think that the basis under which we made the decision not only has complied with our commitment to the people of Manitoba but it has been undertaken in a most prudent, cautious and informed way. As those kinds of decisions are made, should more of them be made in the future, they will be approached in exactly the same fashion to determine what the impact on the system is. I make no apology for taking two months to do that because I think we made an informed decision based on system needs. If my honourable friend finds that objectionable, I suppose he can make his case to the people of Manitoba, and I wish him luck.

Mr. Cowan: What I find objectionable is the way that this Minister tries to dance around giving a straight answer in this House every time you ask him a question to which he cannot provide a short, snide comment to.

I want to go back and review the record on this. The record points out how not only is this Minister trying to blame everything on the previous administration but he has got a fourth envelope that imaginary Minister in my story the other day did not have and that is, blame the media. I am certain that is what you are going to hear him do at the end of my comments. What he has said and what his Government has said on a number of occasions, and I am going to go through the chronology, just does not match up with what has happened with respect to this particular issue.

During the campaign they made a very specific promise to the people of Manitoba. That promise was that no beds would be closed until a comprehensive health care review was completed in the Province of Manitoba. When this matter was brought to the attention of the Minister and the Premier in the House on August 22, we had them making some statements. The statement that the Premier said on August 22 was that they would keep their commitments—and they would keep the promises that they had made prior to, during and since the election campaign.

I want to read into the record some of the things which the Minister is quoted as saying on different media. On the CBC TV six o'clock news on Monday, August 22, I will read the story: "The Health Sciences Centre wants to shut down 22 beds. Hospital director Don Carlos said the Health Sciences Centre applied to have the beds closed because they are not in demand. The ward which handles TB patients has been closed all summer, but Health Minister Don Orchard was not aware of the hospital's request to close the beds permanently. He reiterated a Conservative election promise that no beds will be permanently closed until there is a full-scale review of the province's health services."

* (2150)

What did the CKY six o'clock news on the same evening say? "The Manitoba Government has refused the Health Sciences Centre's request to close 22 beds in its Rehabilitation Hospital. The decision came just hours after New Democrats accused the Government of approving the closures. Mary Barroll explains, 'Premier Filmon and Health Minister Don Orchard appeared to be caught by surprise when NDP Leader Gary Doer accused the Manitoba Government of approving the permanent closure of hospital beds in spite of a Tory election promise of no bed closures until a health care review was completed.' In lieu of this commitment to the people of Manitoba, why his Government has allowed 22 beds to be closed on a permanent basis contrary to his commitment to the people of Manitoba at the Health Sciences Centre, outside the House, Orchard denied giving approval for any bed closures, nor has he ever been approached to do so. 'That is false information. I have given no such approval. I have not even been asked for such

approval. So where Mr. Doer got his information, I cannot indicate, but it is incumbent in the House that a Member come forward with proper information in Question Period and Mr. Doer did not comply with that today because that information was not correct."

We find out in fact that it was the Minister who was wrong and indeed that information was correct.

"President of the Health Sciences Centre, Rob Thorfinnson, confirms the hospital made a request to the Manitoba Health Services Commission to approve the permanent closure of 22 beds in the respiratory unit at the Rehabilitation Hospital. Doer said that even if the Department of Health did not approve the closures, the Minister should have been made aware of the request."

"I don't think," and he is being quoted here, "I don't think either of them were fully aware of this issue, which again concerns me because there seems there should be safeguards in place to the health administration saying these are our promises, do not act contrary to our promises until we have completed our comprehensive review as we have committed to the people of Manitoba."

"Later in the day, Orchard said he was never approached by MHSC about the request because the commission had been told under no circumstances would bed closures be allowed and that Government was standing firm on its election promise. Orchard said there is no issue because there will be no bed closures."

CKND the same evening, a shorter story, Mr. Chairperson, "A plan to close 22 beds at Health Sciences Centre raised a storm of controversy. NDP Leader Gary Doer told the Legislature that Government wants to close the beds even though they promised not to close any beds until the Government finished a review of the health system, but the Health Sciences Centre says the beds aren't closed yet. They have only asked permission to close them. Health Minister Don Orchard said the Government plans to do a review. Orchard said the advisory panel—now I can only assume he is talking about the Health Advisory Network here—the advisory panel that will conduct the study has not been appointed yet and Health Sciences Centre wants to close the beds because fewer patients are being treated for respiratory problems."

The next day, you see the Minister clarifies the bed pledge and apologizes for the confusion and he says the promise should have made it clear that there would be no bed closures for budgetary reasons but there could be some for other reasons. "We should have said that. I apologize for not saying that," the Minister is quoted as saying. That is on August 24 from the Sun.

Then on September 2 from the Sun, we have the Health Minister saying, "But Health Minister Don Orchard replied the hospital has not received permission to close the beds permanently and the beds are scheduled to reopen next week."

A number of different contradictory articles that go on. Another one from the Free Press at the same time, September 2, where he says the Tories will stick by

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their election promise not to permanently close beds for budgetary reasons until after a comprehensive review of hospital care is completed in about two months.

We have not seen the comprehensive review they promised in the first instance. We have not seen the advisory panel that they promised. We have not seen the review. I asked the Minister if he would table it and I am not certain whether he answered that question or not, so I will ask him again.

Will he table the review that was completed in this very specific and focused way with respect to the respiratory beds at the Health Sciences Centre, or is he going to continue going along, muddying the water and trying to stand by a commitment which he says never should have been made in the first instance and one which they obviously cannot keep?

The last article I just want to read into the record is with respect to when we brought this matter to the attention of the House again. The Minister said that it was just a temporary closure for another few weeks and the article from the Free Press is quoted as saying, "Orchard repeated his pledge that the beds will not be allowed to stay closed forever until a review has identified how many hospital beds are needed in the province."

So can he table the review which was done? Can he table the review which was done by the advisory panel which he said was being done? Can he table the review which has identified how many hospital beds are needed in the province? Can he table the comprehensive review which was promised by his Government but which we know he cannot produce?

Mr. Orchard: No, yes, no, no, Mr. Chairman.

My honourable friend is quoting a lot of information from various newspaper articles, and I just want to remind him that every step of the way -(Interjection)- he is absolutely correct. When the issue was first broached, you might recall, Mr. Chairman, because you sat in the back row and you listened to the Leader of the NDP Party indicate that the beds were permanently closed and gone forever, etc., etc. At that stage, that was not an accurate statement by the Leader of the NDP Party, and I made that point to the press, I made it correctly.

Secondly, at that stage of the game, there were no requests from the Manitoba Health Services Commission forwarded to me to make a decision on because they were aware that the policy was no permanent bed closures pending a review. That statement was quite accurate as well. That review took a couple of months to do and has been completed. That would mean that in the NDP management ability that we erred in that as of September 1, I guess it would be. We ought to have staffed up those beds, put a complete staff on them, even though there were no patients to go in them necessarily, or maybe there would have been two or three patients, who knows, but we should have staffed up that ward for two months whilst we were doing the review on the system to determine whether those beds were needed from a

program standpoint, and had that money spent by the Health Sciences Centre. I guess that is where I disagree with my honourable friend.

That is not the way we would want to do it obviously. Maybe that is the way he would have recommended to his Government they do it. We extended the summer closure of those beds until we had a review of the system done, including the other hospitals, to determine whether in fact those respiratory beds were needed in the system. Mr. Chairman, I simply indicate to my honourable friend that that meets with the commitment we made, that meets with the information base that we said was needed before you make decisions on permanent bed closures. I recognize that my honourable friend would want to develop a political issue, and I fully expect them to do that. This is a very political environment.

I would expect my honourable friend to make whatever political points he sees appropriate and he sees fit. That may satisfy his role in life, his mandate in this House. I simply point out to my honourable friend and to the people of Manitoba that we did exactly as I indicated we would do. We would not allow permanent closures of beds until we were satisfied through a review of the system that -(Interjection)- One of my honourable friend's biggest problems is that he has a total fixation on always being right. My honourable friend will sit over there and natter to himself and eventually tear his hair out, because my honourable friend in nattering, why are you not just admitting you made a mistake? Well, that is of course what he would like a person to do. I can honestly say to my honourable friend in the NDP Party that the mistake was made a year ago when the NDP machete came down and forced bed closures on the hospitals in Winnipeg without a comprehensive review of the impact on the system.

No, Mr. Chairman, my honourable friend is still nattering from his seat. He says, blame the previous administration. You are right, I will blame the NDP for mistakes they made. I will also give them credit when they have made correct decisions. I have done that upon occasion. It almost tears my heart out to do it, but I have done it.

An Honourable Member: Name one.

* (2200)

Mr. Orchard: But in the case of -(Interjection)- Well, name one. I might name a couple. Off the top of my head right now—it has been a long day and my memory is failing me about something good the NDP did.

Mr. Chairman, one thing I simply tell my honourable friend that they did wrong was use their machete on the health care system. In doing so, they forced decisions on three Winnipeg hospitals that were not appropriate, not adequately researched and not done in a comprehensive fashion to determine the impact on the system.

We did not do that. We undertook and took two months to do it. We reviewed the requests made by the Health Sciences Centre in the context of their

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operating budget, their operating requirements, in addition to the other hospitals in the City of Winnipeg. We came to the conclusion, the Manitoba Health Services Commission came to the conclusion, that that request could be met without jeopardizing patient care or quality of care because, as my honourable friend ought to know—he is still garbling from his seat, Mr. Chairman, and he is wont to interrupt my clearly enunciated line of thought.

What my honourable friend did not do was what we did. When we do something right I know my honourable friend will not give me credit for it. He did not do it right when he was part of a Government that got out the health care machete, the NDP machete, and hacked at the hospital beds of Winnipeg. We did not do that until we were assured as Government that the request for closure would not have a negative impact on patient care.

That reflects change, as my honourable friend the Liberal Health critic knows, change in method of delivery where more services are done outside the institution, something I used to believe my honourable friends in the ND Party believed in. I am beginning to seriously question whether they do or not because decisions we

make which enhance that, reflect that direction of outpatient services, do not seem to be supported by our honourable friends in the New Democratic Party.

I have no apologies. We did not break any election commitment. We followed through. We delivered on what we said we would to the people of Manitoba. I have no apologies to make to my honourable friend, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan).

Mr. Chairman: Is it the will of the committee to pass this item? The Honourable Member for Churchill.

Mr. Cowan: I move, seconded by the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), that the committee adjourn.

Mr. Chairman: Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 10 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).