



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

40 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIB
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	ND
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	ND
DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIB
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	ND
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	ND
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	ND
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIB
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	ND
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	ND
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	LIB
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	ND
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	ND
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	ND
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	ND
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	ND
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	ND
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	ND
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 7, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Routine Proceedings, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Dominique Bauduin, who is the Consulate General of the Netherlands.

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

Also with us this afternoon, we have from the Fairhome School fifteen Grades 7, 9 and 11 students, and they are under the direction of Anna Maendel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member of Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery).

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

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

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I have the pleasure of tabling the Annual Report for 1989-90 of the Status of Women.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg International Airport Cargo Potential

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Last Friday, in questions to the Minister of Industry, Trade

and Tourism, the minister said, "If there was any suggestion whatsoever that this project"—the Pines project—"jeopardized the long-term viability of the airport, I would not be supporting it, and our government would not be supporting it. I can assure you of that."

Mr. Speaker, in light of all the concerns that have been raised for a number of groups dealing with the economy of the province, I would ask the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism whether in fact he has read that Daiyasu Trading Company of Canada Ltd. report dealing with the study that indicated that Manitoba and Winnipeg could even have greater trading cargo potential concerning the airport of Manitoba as it exists with a 24-hour operation? Was that part of the decision-making process that the government made on the Pines project?

* (1335)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, while the report that the honourable Leader refers to I am not necessarily familiar with, I am certainly familiar with the opportunities of the Winnipeg Airport in terms of its 24-hour operation.

I know my predecessor in this portfolio has worked very actively and aggressively with several companies in terms of pursuing those very types of opportunities for our airport. We will continue to do that under my portfolio.

Pines Project Impact on Airport

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed the minister has not read this report. I would imagine the Premier has read the report, because he had been sent a letter by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce on March 25, 1991, indicating that they are very concerned that no action is planned in terms of implementing certain recommendations and further indicating that the Pines development near their airport will be a dangerous precedent, that it can only lead to further development.

Should this occur, one can surely anticipate complaints and restricted use of the airport, Mr.

Speaker. Many years ago, this same fear was expressed in Toronto, but it went unheeded, quote unquote. Residential development around the airport was permitted, and now a curfew exists.

I would ask the Premier, given the fact that he has been sent this letter by the President of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, has he read the study that has been quoted by the President of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce? Are the economic considerations for the Winnipeg International Airport, as articulated by the president, a consideration of this government in terms of the decisions they are making to put public money into the Pines housing project?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, of course, the fact of the matter is that, when you talk about precedent, all of the existing apartment blocks that are closer to the runway and closer to the airport are the precedent that prevails. All of the thousands of dwellings that are closer to the airport and closer to the flight path are the precedent that prevail.

The new precedent that this government is setting is that the minister has written to the City of Winnipeg saying that, in consideration of the city with respect to a renewal of Plan Winnipeg, a redrawing of Plan Winnipeg, we ought to give the consideration to changing the policy with respect to airport development to provide for a halt to further expansion.

The Leader of the Opposition had that opportunity when he was Minister of Urban Affairs in 1986. He did nothing of the sort. He ignored that opportunity and, in fact, rubber-stamped and approved Plan Winnipeg, which provided for the Pines development as it now exists.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I will not even deal with the inaccuracy of his statement.

Cancellation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Chamber of Commerce in a letter to the Premier, while the Premier will not listen to the citizens of Manitoba, he will not listen to the advisory committees, he will not listen to all the interdepartmental committees, he will not listen to his own transportation minister, he will not listen to the development plan for the Plan Winnipeg, I would ask the Premier whether he will listen to the President of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce when the Winnipeg President of the

Chamber of Commerce says to the Premier, all these opportunities could be lost forever if we allow short-sighted decision making to prevail?

Would he stop the short-sighted decision making, stop this project and stop the public funds going into this unnecessary and dangerous project for the people of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will not respond to my comment because it is the truth. He prefers to deal in innuendo, but he will not respond to the truth. We have responded to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, by virtue of the letter that was sent to the City of Winnipeg, urging them to come up with a new element of their Plan Winnipeg in its renewal phase so that there would be long-term restrictions on further developments within the proximity to the airport. That is something that could have been done by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) when he was Urban Affairs Minister in '86 and instead rubber-stamped the Plan Winnipeg development plan, as it currently exists, that provided for the Pines development. That is his mistake, and we are not going to repeat it.

Pines Project Affordability

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the Premier continually states that Rotary Pines is affordable housing for seniors. Given that all tenants must purchase equity of approximately \$30,000 and given that rents are projected as \$750 per month, does the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) seriously believe that Rotary Pines is affordable housing for the vast majority of tenants in Winnipeg?

* (1340)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, the community of St. James-Assiniboia experienced its largest growth in the 1960s. Those people who originally settled in St. James-Assiniboia at that time are today approaching being seniors or are seniors. They have worked very hard over their lifetime to create an equity in their home. With that equity, they can purchase, if they sell their home, a life interest in this building that protects their ability to control their housing costs and what they do for the remaining years of their life. That is a very reasonable thing for them to do. This project will satisfy that need.

Seniors Housing Government Policy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Why is the Minister of Housing ardently defending a \$4.6-million loan and \$357,000 in grants to affluent seniors when he says in his letter of April 26, 1991, that, quote: in these times of severe fiscal constraints and limited resources, housing subsidies must be fully targeted for those in greatest need (end of quote).

Why will he not follow his government's policy as stated in this letter, which I will table?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): There are a wide variety of people in Manitoba; there are a wide variety of needs of people in Manitoba. We target almost all of the money that is included in the budget of the Department of Housing to low-income people, but there are other people in this province who are taxpayers. There are other people who also have needs. What we are providing to them is a \$350,000 grant toward a \$7.1-million project, which money we will get back by virtue of the taxation that is levied in this province. We will get that back and then a lot once the project is completed.

Mr. Speaker, those people have needs as well, and we are attempting to service those needs as well as the needs of the low-income people in this province.

Pines Project City of Winnipeg Permits

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Will the Minister of Housing tell this House whether or not Rotary Pines or developer Bob Akman have obtained a City of Winnipeg permit to park a trailer on the proposed site on Portage Avenue, and if not, why is it there?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member asks a question which is not within the responsibility of the government and, therefore, is out of order. I would ask the honourable member for Burrows to kindly rephrase his question, please.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask if the Minister of Housing has received any communication from the City of Winnipeg to inform him of the situation at the site with the trailer parked without a permit?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): No.

Lions Court - Charleswood Funding Refusal

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since the whole debate and discussion began of the Pines project, we have been looking for some fairness and for some equity from this government. First, we find that they take money from seniors living below the poverty line and they give it to a self-defined upscale housing project.

My question is to the Minister of Housing: Today I received a letter, which I am prepared to table, which asks the question that I now ask to the minister.

How could this minister turn down the request for the funding for Lions Court in Charleswood at the same time as he was awarding money to an upscale housing project?

* (1345)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I did not.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister can answer this question of the person who wrote to me. We had paid our deposit, as had others, making a total of more than was required for the government grant. The Lions Club was then told there was no money left in the housing fund.

Why was there no money left for these seniors, who are not upscale seniors, who have no equity to put into their homes? Why were they denied accommodation by this minister when he is providing accommodation for those not in any way, shape or form in need?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I became the Minister of Housing in this government on February 10, 1991. The project that the Leader of the second opposition party refers to was turned down in 1990. It was turned down on the basis that they could not achieve the required number of commitments in order to make the project go ahead. That requirement, I believe, is either 80 percent or 90 percent of the total units to be built. They were less than 50 percent.

Pines Project Advertisements

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us today why there are still circulars being deposited in mailboxes throughout St. James-Assiniboia advertising the upscale housing at the Rotary Pines

project if, in fact, they have their so-called 80 percent or 90 percent commitment?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, technically that matter was without the jurisdiction of the minister. I do not know why anybody would be putting out circulars in that regard. At the meeting at the beginning of April—I am not sure of the exact date—there were some 300 people who attended at St. Paul The Apostle Church seeking information on this project. I am advised 104 of those people paid deposits for the 86 suites proposed in the development.

Solvent Abuse Legislation Proclamation

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, as the economy has worsened, so too has the problem of solvent abuse. Children as young as age five and six are turning to sniff. They are starting earlier in the day. The number of sniffers is growing daily, and the effects on the health and lives of our young people is devastating. All this time, we had a bill waiting to be proclaimed that would have made a difference.

I want to ask the Minister of Health why this government, after supporting Bill 91, did nothing for 14 months, only now to say that he is studying the matter and may want to amend the legislation it supported after receiving the advice from the department officials that it was enforceable?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased my honourable friend asked this question today because, as per my discussion with her last week, I indicated that the legislation is currently receiving opinion as to the ability to enforce. Should the opinion come back, as I indicated to my honourable friend last week, that the legislation as written is enforceable and meaningful legislation to provide the kind of protection against abuse of compounds for sniffing, then it will be proclaimed.

If the legal opinion comes back that it is not enforceable and needs amendment, I indicated to my honourable friend that I would present her with that information and we would propose amendments immediately in the House, which I would hope, my honourable friend, with the sincerity which she has towards this issue, would achieve a very rapid and expedient passage.

I have not received that information from the ministry as I stand here today. When I do, the legislation will either be proclaimed as written or I will make the offer to my honourable friend that we bring forward amendments to make it work.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, that does not explain why 14 months passed before anything was done. It seems the minister does not know what is happening or not happening in his own department.

I want to ask a question of the Premier. Since I do not know how I can explain to the children and their families who are victimized by sniff that this government is caught up with government bungling and oversight while this problem is before us, I want to ask the Premier: Why was no one given the responsibility to ensure that the technical difficulties were sorted out, that the regulations were drafted, that the information was circulated to businesses? Why did no one take charge to ensure that this bill was passed a year ago, after it was unanimously supported in this Legislature—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

* (1350)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, therein lies the exact problem. When The Public Health Amendment Act, Bill 91, was presented to the House, there was the mover—the member for St. Johns introducing the Bill—there were two speakers from the then official opposition and one speaker from this side of the House. The bill was not debated, but one assumed that the exact issues my honourable friend brought forward about enforceability of this legislation had been studiously checked into by herself, as sponsor of the bill, and that she sought the appropriate legal advice.

I am simply indicating to my honourable friend that that process appears to have been flawed. I simply say to my honourable friend that, if the legal advice comes that the bill, as written and brought to the House by my honourable friend, is enforceable, then it will be proclaimed. If it is not, the legal advice will come up as to appropriate amendments, which I will discuss with my honourable friend and hopefully enjoy her good will to have the bill amended so it will be enforceable.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, that is unbelievable. This government supported the legislation. The Minister of Justice—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member for St. Johns, kindly put your question, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Let me ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), who said he believed in this legislation, who really seemed to care and supported it because his advisors said it was enforceable: Would he act on that commitment? Would he get the information he had to the Minister of Health, which caused him to give this government's support to Bill C-91, and would he try to ensure that this bill is proclaimed as soon as possible before any more lives of children and young people are hurt because of the effects of solvent abuse?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, the issue is attaining the objective as proposed in the bill, and that is to prevent the abuse by young people and others of solvents that are sniffed.

It is not the first time that legislation has been proposed and agreed to by all parties. I simply refer my honourable friends to the bill to protect the health of nonsmokers proposed by the then Leader of the second opposition party, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer). That bill had a better opportunity to become legislation because it had gone through appropriate checks and balances in its drafting and, in its drafting, allowed government to proclaim it, something that was an agenda of all members in the House and acceded to.

There are not the rhetorical arguments made by my honourable friend circulating around this bill. We are simply wanting to assure that we can achieve the aims that this House agreed to in passing the antisniff bill, i.e., enforceability. When I am confident that we can do that as written, it will be proclaimed. If it cannot be enforced as written, then I will approach my honourable friend, and we will bring forward amendments to make it enforceable.

Education Funding Government Priority

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Since this government has come to office, they have made much about their so-called prioritization of education funding, yet last night the minister indicated in the Estimates process that, of all government departments, since the Tories have come to power,

Education is not first in terms of total percentage of spending. It is not second. It is thirteenth, behind such departments as Culture and Justice, et cetera.

How can the Premier reconcile this fact, which the minister admitted yesterday, with the fact that—and this is the real reason why we have school closures and small schools facing closure all around Manitoba in places like Cartwright and other locations?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): I thought that the opposition critic, after considerable explanation in the House yesterday, would have understood precisely the amount of money that has been forwarded to Education over the last four budgets. In the last four budgets, Mr. Speaker, it was made very clear to him last night, that Education and Training has received in excess of 18 percent of the budget in each budget year. That indicates that, as a department, this particular Department of Education and Training has received a major share of monies allocated through the budget process.

Mr. Chomlak: My supplementary is to the Minister of Education. As we indicated and as feared, this year, funding to public education is not first in the country. It is not second; it is eight out of the 10 Canadian provinces.

In light of that factor, will the minister, at least in his new funding formula, promise to move us back to the Canadian average and not have us near the bottom of the Canadian average in terms of public funding to education?

* (1355)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to the member opposite that, first of all, as a portion of the gross provincial product, Manitoba spends more on education than do most of the provinces in this country. I can indicate also that, when we have the best special needs programming in our K to 12 area, when we have the finest student aid program of all provinces in this province, that indicates that we do support education at a very respectable level.

I would have to indicate that, in terms of the money that was allocated to education this year, some 3.5 percent increase over last year, indeed, that is a major improvement in terms of the amount of commitment that we have to the education of the province, and it is a priority of this government.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, documents tabled by the minister last night indicated that grants to public

schools is only half of 1 percent increase to all of the schools.

My question for the minister, since the minister is studying education and has indicated that rural education, distance education and Native education is a priority, how come, in the last three years since the Tories have been in office, the grants to all those areas have decreased on a percentage basis since the Tories came to office?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I really wish the member would be able to read the documents that are provided to him in Estimates because indeed he has misinterpreted every single document that has been supplied to him. Perhaps, it is an indication that we will have to simplify the documents so that he can better understand what they really mean. We will endeavour to do that in the Estimates process today.

School Closures Guidelines

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of last week, the minister met with the trustees of the Turtle Mountain School Division about the closure of the Cartwright school. This morning, he met with parents with respect to the closure of the Cartwright school.

Will he now finally agree that he has allowed this school division to disobey his guidelines with respect to a closure, which is clearly a closure, that the use of the word "transfer" is simply a euphemism and that he will now stand by his guidelines?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I think we have gone through this discussion with the trustees and with the parents from the area, and indeed we have made it very clear that in fact the decision of the trustees to move Grades 10, 11 and 12 out of Cartwright into Killarney does not constitute a closure of a school.

Mr. Speaker, the school will still exist. The principal of the school will still remain. There will still be classes conducted in the school from kindergarten through Grade 9. That does not constitute the closure of a school.

This morning, I met with some parents from the Cartwright area. Once again, I explained to them that indeed it is their responsibility to petition their school board if they feel that the decision is wrong and it should be changed. The school board has the

complete authority to make that decision with regard to moving the students from Cartwright to Killarney. That is why the school board was elected. Indeed, if the residents of that area feel that the decision was wrong, then it is clearly up to them to take the matter up with their school division.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, they have taken it up with their school division by walking their children out of the school.

Cartwright, Manitoba Quality of Education

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Can the Minister of Education and Training tell this House what he has done to ensure himself of quality education taking place in that particular community as a result of the decision of the parents to withdraw their children? He must not, as he has done with the transfer, abrogate his responsibility. The insurance of quality is his responsibility.

* (1400)

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, we have been in touch with the school division. The officials from my department have been in touch with the superintendent of Turtle Mountain School Division to ensure that students, although they have been taken out of the school system, regrettably, are still receiving as much support as is possible and that indeed the teachers within the school are making themselves available to counsel students and to indeed provide them with the kinds of instructional resources that they can.

Mr. Speaker, the superintendent has informed us that indeed the process is working, although not ideally. It is the parents' choice to remove the students out of the school system, and the teachers in that small community are indeed co-operating as best they can to ensure that students are given all of the information, all of the assignments and the assignments are corrected on time. The principal of the school has assured us that students will be given the opportunity to write their examinations, and certificates will be issued to allow them to progress either into a new grade level or in fact to get their Grade 12 diploma.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, if all of those things are being done, perhaps the minister can explain why, at the last board meeting, questions were posed as to could the trustees withdraw the

textbooks from the children who were studying in the community centre, could indeed resources be withdrawn, could their busing be withdrawn?

Can the minister tell us how he can assure us today that there will be quality of education when school trustees are asking those questions at their own school board meeting?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, there is no way that I can impose my will on the questions that school board trustees may want to ask of their superintendent and of their administration. Let me assure you that staff from my department are in constant contact with the superintendent of Turtle Mountain School Division.

Indeed, we have been assured by the school division, as of our meeting on Thursday night, that they will provide every opportunity possible to make the educational process as complete as it is possible within that community of Cartwright. I would have to indicate that the superintendent has gone out of his way to ensure that the students are given every opportunity to obtain the best possible educational program that they can, given the circumstances that exist in the community.

The Wildlife Act Amendments

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radlsson): On April 10, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources said in the House, "I have never, and nobody could accuse me of being an independent person with respect to the Oak Hammock Marsh project." We continue to see the evidence of this lack of independence as the minister now intends to tamper with The Wildlife Act to suit his own stated preferences. Again, this government is putting the interests of their friends ahead of the people of Manitoba and the environment in Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Natural Resources if this new legislation is an attempt to protect Ducks Unlimited from court action?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, The Wildlife Act is an important act that, like any other act that governs the affairs of Manitobans, from time to time needs amendment, not tampering with. The officials in the department have recommended a number of possible amendments to that act. Those are being taken under consideration. It would be inappropriate for me to speculate on them until

honourable members see them in an act that may or may not appear before you.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, the priorities of this government are becoming clear when there is money available for corporate headquarters for the Pines for upscale housing but no money for English as a Second Language or ACCESS Programs or 55-Plus.

I want to ask the minister if he issued any direction to his department in developing the legislation that we are expecting?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, I refer to the original answer that several amendments are being considered that have been recommended to me by my officials. They are now being given consideration by myself, by my government, and they will be made available to honourable members when the bill is presented to the House.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, the minister, on April 10, boasted how the independent Clean Environment Commission okayed the project. I am tabling an internal memo from the Department of Environment which raises questions from the C.C. about the inadequacies of the assessment.

My question is for the Minister of Environment. As the minister responsible for protecting the environment and preserving wildlife management areas, does he support the amendment that the Natural Resources minister is bringing forward in this session?

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the question is totally out of order. Legislation that is sponsored by any minister of this department is as determined by Executive Council as a whole. It is a government initiative. Members know that fact. I ask the member to withdraw the question.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, after the statements of the Minister of Highways conflicting with the rest of his government on the Rotary Pines project—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised, I would like to ask the honourable member for Radlsson to kindly rephrase her question, because the honourable member's question was seeking an opinion and is, therefore, out of order.

* * *

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my second supplementary then also to the Minister of Natural Resources.

I want to ask the minister when he intends to bring forward the proposed amendments, whether he will ensure the objectivity of the legislation and not strengthen his powers to tamper with the legislation and affect development in a wildlife management area?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I just can best answer that question by indicating that I seek no greater power than that which the former government had when the current Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) exercised, when he permitted the Home Oil Company to enter, construct and drill on a wildlife management area. The date that occurred was December 22, 1987.

I do not criticize that because it enabled the branch at that time to better manage several thousands of acres of wildlife in that area while at the same time accommodating a private industry to drill and construct an oil well within a wildlife management area.

There appears to be some ambiguity. It was all right for him to do it; it is not all right for this minister to do it. It was all right for that government to allow the town site of Conawapa to be contained within a wildlife management area, but it is not all right for this government to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon this government to clearly state what it is that the law says can happen in a wildlife act, and those are some of the suggestions that are being made or recommended to me by my government.

Seniors RentalStart Transcona Application

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, on March 6, 1990, the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch No. 7, applied for funding under the Manitoba RentalStart program. This project exceeded the necessary criteria for approval under RentalStart, but in September 1990, the sponsors were asked to resubmit under nonprofit housing with no explanation why it was not accepted under RentalStart.

I would like to ask the Minister of Housing: Will this Minister of Housing tell this House the reasons why this Transcona Seniors RentalStart housing

project did not receive approval of funding under RentalStart?

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, under the rules of our House, and Beauchesne through 408, 409 and 411 fully indicate that present ministers are not responsible for decisions made during—and are not answerable to those former decisions either.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, while indeed it may not be in order to ask a question to someone who was the former minister, who is no longer in that portfolio, for example, the former Minister of Housing, this question was addressed to the current Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) and relates to the policies of this government in regard to the Transcona Legion. I would ask you to rule that question in order because it is a matter of responsibility for this government.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised, Beauchesne's 6th Edition, 410.(16): "Ministers may be questioned only in relation to current portfolios." I would ask the honourable member for Transcona to kindly rephrase his question, please.

* * *

Mr. Reid: I would like to ask the current Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst): Is he aware of any reasons why the Transcona seniors housing project that was applied for under RentalStart did not receive approval of funding under RentalStart?

Point of Order

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I know questions of awareness have been judged either way as far as their acceptance to the House, but I say to you, the import of the question was exactly similar to the very first question that you ruled out of order, and I ask you to rule this question out of order also.

Mr. Ashton: The same point of order. In regard to the questions of awareness, Mr. Speaker, there has been a change in terms of Beauchesne from the Fifth to the 6th Edition. Questions of awareness have increasingly been ruled in order, so that element of the question was in order. Once again, the member was asking a minister of this government in regard to the decisions of this government, the current minister. I would say it is,

not only in order, it is in the public interest that we get answers to such questions.

* (1410)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised, from time to time, I have noted that some honourable members are commenting that ministers' awareness questions are out of order, or questions that mean essentially the same thing. I have had the authorities researched, and no reference supporting this view has been found. Beauchesne's Fifth Edition, Citation 362 does indicate that, and I quote: "It is the Member's duty to ascertain the truth of any statement before he brings it to the attention of Parliament."

The question "is the minister aware" does not imply that the member asking it has not ascertained the accuracy of the facts of a particular occurrence involving the minister's department. His purpose, in my opinion, is to determine whether the department has informed the minister of the facts. Therefore, the honourable member's question is in order.

* * *

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): As has been indicated, Mr. Speaker, these alleged matters have occurred some considerable time before I became the minister. As a result, I will investigate and report back.

Funding Criteria

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, to the same minister.

Will this Minister of Housing tell this House the reasons why some projects, like the Rotary Pines, which fall far short of the requirements are accepted while the Transcona project which greatly exceeded the RentalStart requirements was rejected?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I am not familiar with the details of that particular project as to the veracity of the member's allegations. I will investigate and report back.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister.

I ask the Minister of Housing to explain why the Transcona seniors housing project was redirected to nonprofit housing with 107 projects while the Rotary Pines was allowed funding under RentalStart, where there were only six projects?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated twice already, I will investigate the circumstances

surrounding this particular allegation and report back.

Children's Dental Health Program Funding

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

During the 1990 election, the Dental Auxiliary Association of Manitoba sent a questionnaire to the candidates, for the future of Children's Dental Program, and the members of the Filmon team, including five cabinet ministers. I will quote what they said. They said, this program is very effective. Somebody said, it is really great. No changes are required. We will continue with the same program.

Can the Premier tell this House why he did not keep his promise that he made during the campaign? Why did he cut this special program which is very important for the children of Manitoba?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate of the Department of Health Estimates where I can explain more fully than in the limited time we have in Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my honourable friend that the children's dental health program has been a very successful program because it has emphasized preventative techniques to children and educational programs wherein they learned proper dental hygiene, proper care of their teeth, et cetera. All of those elements of the program are maintained to all of those who received the program prior to this budget.

What the decision involved was the removal of service for filling or extraction of teeth for ages 13 and 14 years, but the major benefits of the program, being the education, the hygiene, the fluoride treatments and the other preventative measures, are maintained in this program.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, the Premier answered the question. He said we will continue it, and if it could be shown a way, we will expand for the seniors also. The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) said an interesting quote. He said it was a very effective program.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health reverse that decision and establish that program?

Mr. Orchard: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is why, within the children's dental health program, we have maintained two essential features: first of all, the

parallel delivery of service between a program delivered in house by government, by dental nurses and employed dentists; and the parallel program in other school divisions of equal number delivered by the dentists of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of enhancing the prevention aspect of the children's dental health program, a year and a half ago, we commenced a sealant program wherein sealant is applied to teeth to maintain their ability -(interjection)- it is not a total waste of money—to the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs). The Liberal Leader said—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister should deal with the matter raised. The honourable minister to finish his response.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, you are exactly right. I do intend to deal with the matter raised because I believe the Liberal Health critic was saying the program was good while the Leader is saying it is a total waste of money.

Point of Order

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very clear that I was saying to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) thought the children in the program and seeing dentists was a waste of money but that it will continue with no changes—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, well, I certainly did not believe there was that much dissension in the Liberal Party that the Liberal Leader would be disagreeing with the critic. Although they do disagree on—well, I will not get into that.

I want my honourable friend to understand that in making these budgetary decisions we maintained the education and prevention components of the children's dental health program because that is its strength to the children of Manitoba so they can develop good habits at a young age.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): May I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Selkirk have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave. It is agreed.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in recognition of mental health awareness week.

Increasing awareness of mental health issues through the declaration of weeks such as this is important in helping to remove the stigma which surrounds mental health illness in our society. It is especially crucial to be able to discuss mental health issues during times of economic recession, such as we are now facing.

Many people are having to deal with hardships and stresses, which can affect the mental health well being of individuals, families and communities. This is particularly the case for those living in rural Manitoba, where it is very important that they be given adequate resources and facilities that will enable them to deal with the pressures caused by the ongoing farm crisis and many threats to their qualities of life.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I hope that this week will serve to heighten society's awareness of mental health matters and foster an appreciation for the work of those involved in the mental health field. Thank you.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave of the House for a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Health have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? That is agreed.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable friend the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) for pointing out Mental Health Week. I think it is appropriate to reflect on a pretty significant event this week in terms of Mental Health Week, in that yesterday I signed a proclamation declaring this Mental Health Week but as well Nurses Week.

I think it might be appropriate and significant to note that in yesterday's newspaper there was an article wherein Ms. Oulton, from the Canadian Nurses' Association, has indicated that the Canadian Nurses' Association, in celebrating National Nurses Week, is focusing in on the issue of mental health. The reason being that it has been pretty clearly established that governments in this

province and across this nation in the past have not adequately dealt with the issue of mental health.

* (1420)

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that in my address to the Mental Health Network yesterday, where the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Manitoba and the Winnipeg region and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba Division, were all there at the luncheon sponsored by the Mental Health Network, really I think we reinforced the desire that we move the system off centre where it has been highly concentrated on institutional services and get on with the very essential and necessary job of reform of the mental health system.

I certainly look forward to the support of my honourable friend from Selkirk as we approach that very, very challenging aspect of reform in the health care system as it pertains to the services that are needed by those who suffer from mental illness in the province of Manitoba.

This week can have no greater goal than to raise all of our awareness collectively around the issue so that we approach it with some common sense, some compassion and with some dedication for reform. Thank you.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? It is agreed.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) in expressing first of all appreciation for the individuals, the volunteer organizations, the professionals and above all the patients who are playing a great role in mental health.

I think it is very important that we must take care of those individuals who cannot speak for themselves. I think that ours will be the biggest contribution if all members of this House continue to work together on a nonpolitical basis to make sure that all the necessary reforms are brought to the forefront, and that has been happening for the last few years.

Our party's commitment is there and it will continue. We will continue to press for changes. I would like to again say to the minister and to the

members of the House, let us work together on this very important issue and make sure that every Manitoban is heard on this important aspect. Thank you.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY

SUPPLY—CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Today, this section of the Committee of Supply will continue considering the remaining Estimates for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

When this section last met it was considering lines 6.(k) Multicultural Grants Advisory Council \$1,009,200 and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), which reads:

I move that line 6.(k) be omitted and that line 6. be reduced to \$31,717,100.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as we ended last night there was considerable discussion regarding the removal of funding as is indicated by the resolution that has been put forward to this committee. We have indicated clearly that we are not in support of removing over a million dollars of funding to multicultural organizations as the intent of this resolution. I would like to await the -(interjection)-

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that the resolution speaks for itself. It is very clear that if, in fact, this was to be supported by a majority of members of the Legislature, there would be \$1 million less in this current budget for members of the multicultural community to access grants. I think we had considerable discussion on it last night. I am just awaiting the critic for the New Democratic Party before I put some comments on the record regarding the comments that were made last night on funding for the multicultural community through whatever body.

I do want to indicate—we have had considerable discussion. I know the critic for the New Democratic Party put a lot of her thoughts on the record last night, and I guess the thoughts and the comments that she has put forward indicate a complete flip-flop on the New Democratic Party's part. When we go back to when the NDP was last government in 1987 before the last election, and they at that time established the multicultural—

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radlsson): Having just arrived, if the minister is referring to comments I made, I would appreciate if she would begin again so I can hear the full—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: I would like to remind the honourable member that the minister is just answering some of the questions, and I do not believe she answered anything relevant to what you were debating last night. She waited until you were here before bringing anything that you had said last night.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not have the exact comments on record because Hansard, I do not believe, is available as yet. What I was indicating was that the critic from the New Democratic Party last evening put her thoughts on the record that we should not have a Multicultural Grants Commission and that, in fact, the funding should be returned to the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

This is a complete flip-flop from the New Democratic Party position when they were in government, because on May 21, 1987, the former NDP government put in place a task force on multiculturalism to go out and hold public hearings throughout the multicultural community with several different questions to be asked for feedback from the community on a number of issues. There was a green paper at that time presented by the task force, and this was a task force that was implemented and instituted under the NDP

administration, and the members of that task force were picked by the NDP government.

I might ask whether we have the names of the people that were participants of the task force? The chair of the task force was a Dr. Neil McDonald who received his early education in Newfoundland and had completed post-secondary studies in Nova Scotia, Alberta, Ontario and Dublin, Ireland. He was, at that time anyway, the professor of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba and was teaching courses in Canadian history and cross-cultural education. He was very well known and well respected within the multicultural community, and he was the chair of that task force that submitted a green paper to the community with questions that were developed by the task force in consultation with the then NDP administration.

The other members of the committee were a Dr. Meir Serfaty, who was the Vice-President, Academic and Research, an associate professor of Political Science at Brandon University, involved in many various community activities in Brandon including a term as president of the West-Man Multicultural Council, someone who had made a contribution to the multicultural community.

* (1440)

The other people who were on the task force were: Ms. Pam Rebello. She was at the time the chair of the Manitoba Intercultural Council. Dr. Yantay Tsai, the immediate past chair of the Manitoba Intercultural Council. Ms. Alexis Kochan-Budyk. She had a Masters degree in psychology from the University of Manitoba, had worked with the mentally-disabled children at St. Amant Centre and was a counsellor and lecturer at the Misericordia General Hospital School of Nursing. She had taken part in the Manitoba Arts Council's Artists in the Schools Program and she was working as a music specialist for the Winnipeg public school system.

There were three other people: Dr. Claudia Wright, Antoine Lussier and Joy Santos were also appointed to the task force in May. In fact they went out and held broad consultations throughout the community, with their green paper, asking for community input on many different issues affecting the multicultural community, including the issue of funding to ethnocultural organizations.

It heard all of the problems associated with being a registered member of an organization, of a government advisory body which had the

responsibility of distributing funds to that same organization.

So I guess the task force must have been set up by the NDP administration because concerns must have been raised to the then government about these concerns and these issues. Obviously, the green paper was established and put forward in consultation, the NDP government and the task force that they appointed, to go out and consult with the community.

I guess there were various communities, people and organizations that came forward and some of the concerns and issues that were raised to the task force were: the difficulty of participating fully in the business of council as a member organization applying for funding; problems with the perception of conflict of interest in the grant allocation decision-making process; the duplication of funding to community organizations through the various sources available to these organizations; and the fairness with which the grants were distributed.

So those were issues and concerns that were brought forward at the public hearings, I might repeat again, through a task force that was appointed by the NDP government and the recommendations that came back.

In the interim, as the task force was doing their work and there was in excess of \$100,000 of public money, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, spent on the deliberations of the task force and the job that they did in their broad consultation and they came back with recommendations.

Now, I will have to indicate that the recommendations came back to a new government and that was to this Conservative government. It was the same task force. We decided that they had done most of their work while the NDP were in power and we did not want to shelve the recommendations that they brought forward.

They continued through with their work and the recommendations that were brought forward to us as government in 1988 was a recommendation that the government establish a multicultural grants commission to ensure the co-ordination of the granting process by centralizing funding to multiculturalism and to allow an independent body, without ties to any particular organization, to make decisions based on need, merit and past performance.

If I might just quote from the task force report and the recommendation, it says: Manitoba

Intercultural Council was never given legislative authority to distribute grants. Its role was meant to be that of an advisory body to the government.

That was initially, and the task force, as I said, appointed by the NDP administration, who in fact set up legislation for the Manitoba Intercultural Council back in the early 1980s, made these recommendations to government. The government changed, but, I must say, the task force which was appointed by the NDP government, because they had every confidence in the quality of the people whom they appointed to come forward with recommendations, made those recommendations to government.

It is fine for the New Democratic critic now to indicate that she would like to see the funding go back to the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I would caution her that maybe she should have checked with some of her colleagues and the former minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Recreation, one of her colleagues still sitting in the legislature, and maybe asked her why they felt that it was necessary to spend \$100,000 on a task force to meet with the broad multicultural community to ask for recommendations and to make recommendations that would indicate that they should change the funding structure and remove it from the Manitoba Intercultural Council and put it in another independent body, an organization.

Why the NDP government of the day then put its faith in that task force to come forward with recommendations—and now we see a complete flip-flop where the New Democratic Party is indicating that the Multicultural Grants Council, an independent body not associated with any organization, should not do the funding but it should go back to the organization that the NDP-appointed task force made recommendations should not continue with the funding.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Deputy Chair, I think I made it clear in my comments yesterday that I was aware that there had been problems with MIC in the past. I guess it is an issue of, do you throw out the baby with the bathwater? Does the minister believe in the principle of having some decision making and some authority and power with a body that is representative of the community and is not politically appointed? Does the minister believe in the principle in having that kind of community control?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, governments are elected to make

decisions and they have all kinds of advisory bodies that are appointed by government or elected by community organizations to give advice to government. I would indicate that obviously the New Democratic Party, in its wisdom, back in 1987 felt that their elected advisory body, through the Manitoba Intercultural Council, was experiencing some problems, and they put in place a task force which cost the taxpayers of Manitoba \$100,000-plus. I know that the final bill was over \$100,000.

In fact, they obviously did not believe that the advice they were receiving from the Manitoba Intercultural Council or the work that the Manitoba Intercultural Council was doing was the kind of work that they wanted to see done or they did want the community to respond to this task force report indicating what the problems were.

The task force came forward with recommendations that indicated a change in structure, and I guess the question that she is asking me needs to be thrown back at her and, I suppose, maybe she could go back and speak to her colleagues who were then in government and ask them what the rationale was for not accepting the work that their advisory body that was put in place by legislation under an NDP administration obviously was not serving the purposes of the multicultural community. If in fact they were, there would have been no need at that time for the NDP administration to second guess the Manitoba Intercultural Council and put in place a task force that was going to get recommendations that would change or restructure the function or the role that the Manitoba Intercultural Council had.

Ms. Cerilli: Without getting into more arguments about history, as I have said, I think it is responsible if there are problems that their body was developed with representation from MIC. The minister has read into the record that there was a body that was developed to address the concerns that people had.

Like I said yesterday, I think the fact that those concerns were aired amongst the committee and came to the attention of the minister—that is a healthy thing. The principle, though, that we are discussing, and I think was in essence what was the spirit of the motion moved by the Liberal critic yesterday, was to not have authority solely in the hands of the minister for making decisions about grants to community organizations.

* (1450)

Today, when I contacted the MGAC to request information about—and it was interesting because I do not think that the person on the other end of the telephone realized who I was—but when I requested -(interjection)- no, I am sure that is one of the advantages of being a new MLA is not everyone knows who I am—

An Honourable Member: They do not know the old ones either.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, perhaps they do not.

What was interesting about the phone conversation is when I asked for a report and a listing of information of people who had received grants, and I asked for a report from the organization; I was referred to the minister's office. I was told that all of that information was up to the minister, and the committee merely made recommendations to the minister, and it was actually the minister that approved all of the grant applications. So the principle that we are debating here is, can we not have a system where the community—and they are all adults—where they can work together? I would think this would be multiculturalism in action, when a group of people have to work together to decide how resources are going to be distributed, people that represent those communities—to have that kind of a system in place rather than having everything dictated from cabinet.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess any decisions that are made by government or any funding that is approved ultimately falls on the shoulders of the government, because if the opposition or if there are any complaints that come from communities that funding is not being done in a proper manner, ultimately the minister responsible has to answer those questions because they are public funds. It happens under any administration. The minister responsible for a department is responsible for the budget that is allocated and distributed through whatever means, and that does not change from one government to another.

I remember when we were in opposition, we probably asked and brought up some issues that were under certain ministerial responsibility that we had some question about. It is ultimately the government of the day and the minister that is responsible for that portfolio that has to answer.

As far as information on multicultural grants, in fact that information can and will be provided to the critics with absolutely no problem. Information that

is available will be provided. As a matter of fact, I have spoken to staff to have that information compiled and pulled together.

I guess the issue that is brought forward is an issue that I have to go back to the NDP government questioning the role of the Manitoba Intercultural Council and putting in place a task force that cost in excess of \$100,000 to determine what the role of the Manitoba Intercultural Council should be and whether in fact they should be an advisory body and a funding body.

You know, I was questioned last night on accepting all of the advice that the Manitoba Intercultural Council gives to government, and I know that former administrations have accepted advice from advisory bodies and have acted on some recommendations and not acted on others. That is not unusual. They bring forward recommendations and the government of the day, whoever that government might be, accepts some recommendations, acts on those recommendations and does not act on others.

In fact, they had a task force that they put in place. I guess that the question remains whether if the NDP government had remained in power and the task force recommendations had come to them, whose advice would they take? Would they take the Manitoba Intercultural Council's advice that is telling them we want to maintain the funding, or would they take the task force's recommendations that they appointed as government to study the whole issue, would they take that recommendation that there should be an independent grants commission appointed?

Unless the New Democratic critic can answer that question for me on what their government would have done, and whose advice—because they actually had two bodies that were giving them advice. Two bodies, one was a community organization that was put in place under legislation under an NDP government. The other one was a task force that was called forward by the New Democratic Party, so they had two different bodies and organizations giving them two different kinds of advice. I wonder which advice they would have taken. Would they have taken the community's advice, or would they have taken the task force's advice? Maybe I could ask for some sense of where the member would think that her government would have gone or what they would have done.

Ms. Cerlill: I will make one more comment and then I will let the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) continue on with this line. What we are talking about here is a process, a process where a community is going to feel like they have some role in the community organization, some role and say in the grants that are going out to their communities.

I think that is the principle that was attempted in the previous method of allocating the grants. In my mind, that is what is important. I have heard the minister in other situations say that oftentimes a democratic process takes longer.

I think for example of the hiring of staff for the secretariat. In the House when she was asked about that, well, it would have taken too long to use the regular Civil Service hiring procedure, so we had some people appointed. Again, with a process where community organizations are going to have to negotiate and work through the allocation of funds for organizations, again that might have been a more time intensive process.

It certainly would not have been as quick as to have 15 government-appointed individuals make recommendations and have the minister either approve or reject those recommendations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are talking about a process, and I guess in order for an opposition party to be critical of a government, we would have to go back and look at the types of processes that administration used. The process that was used under the NDP administration was to put in place a task force that would question the workings of the Manitoba Intercultural Council, a duly elected body of representatives of the community. That was the process that they undertook at that point in time. We can discuss process, but I think that she seems to be advocating a different kind of a process than what they used when they were in government.

Ms. Cerlill: What I am advocating is what kind of request we get from community groups and members active in the ethnocultural organizations, as they feel like they are not being listened to in a lot of situations.

What I would like to ask then is, would the minister consider changing the representation on the MGAC committee, so that a number of the positions were not appointed by cabinet, or by herself and her colleagues, where a number of them were appointed either from MIC or some of the other ethnocultural, multicultural organizations?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not think that we want any one representative of any one specific organization, because if you pick and choose one organization over another, there is an organization that is going to feel that they should have a representative, and there are some 400-and-some organizations throughout the province of Manitoba. We do not want to pick specific organizations. We have not necessarily picked people from specific communities. We have picked people, and we will continue as government, because I have to be held accountable for the money that is expended through my department, and I will be held accountable for that.

I know the member may not want to put anything on the record, but I would be willing to sit down with her if she wanted to share some information with me on a community group that has come forward to her with concerns. It would be confidential. I would guarantee that I would not make that kind of thing public information, just as those who appeared before the task force wanted some confidentiality at times and that was granted to them. I would not make that kind of information public either.

We will, from time to time, make changes in the members of the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, but it will be a government decision. We will put in place on that council people who have a community interest in volunteering their time because they have a desire to enhance the multicultural community at large within Manitoba society. We will, from time to time, make changes in those appointments, but those will be decisions that will be made by government.

* (1500)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I find it somewhat humourous. The minister says, what is happening to MIC is not my fault, all I am doing is following recommendations. She agrees with my comment. She is following the recommendations of a task force.

Well, the DeFehr Report cost the same amount of money. She is not following any of the recommendations. We have a double standard. The minister has to come to grips that she and her government are the reason why the funding was taken away from the Manitoba Intercultural Council, and she has to come to grips with that. What she is doing to MIC is to belittle them, to destroy the organization by some of the actions that she has

taken. Part of those actions includes taking the funding away from MIC.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, MIC was a broadly based board elected from all of the different communities. It did a superb job in distributing the funds. In fact, that is where the money should be distributed. It should not be distributed from an organization that she has created through this line, through line 6.(k).

Yesterday or last night I asked her questions regarding the make-up of that committee and how those people were chosen. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister said that: These were individuals that I approached, that my colleagues had suggested to me. She had said some community organizations, yet was not able to say one of the community organizations, because it slipped her mind. -(interjection)- Well, fair is fair.

The Liberal Party's policy has not changed at all. The Liberal Party supports multicultural funding. We have said that right from the onset, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. Next Wednesday we will be dealing with a resolution that tells the minister or requests the minister to restore the funding back to MIC.

What the government is trying to do is to say if this line is in fact defeated, multicultural communities—and the Liberal Party says that the multicultural communities should not receive any funds. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is not what the Liberal Party is saying.

What the Liberal Party is saying is that if you oppose this motion, you support MGAC. So if the Conservative backbenchers and ministers oppose this motion that I have put forward, then what they are doing is they are saying that they support MGAC. They support what the Minister of Culture and Heritage is doing. They support what they are doing to MIC.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it surprised me yesterday to hear that the New Democrats could end up voting against this motion, because how can you say that you do not support this motion and yet, at the same time, say you do not support MGAC? It is a question of do you support MGAC or not. If you support MGAC then go ahead and defeat the motion, but if you do not support MGAC, then I suggest to you that you should be voting in favour of this motion or at least support the motion.

I believe that the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) in his comments he had asked, well, how was the previous organization? Who selected

those individuals who were giving out the grants? I should answer that for the member for Portage. Those individuals were elected from the different ethnic communities to the board.

The minister has, through the legislation, capabilities to appoint members to the MIC. So she can have her influence that she wants or to get some consistency or to fill some of the gaps. She has that opportunity through the legislation to do that. In fact, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, she can even appoint the chair which is something, I believe, that we both agree on. She should not be appointing the chair; it should be elected from within the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

Let us not confuse the issue, and that is what we heard from the minister yesterday, last night. That is what we heard from the Minister of Health, the acting Culture and Heritage critic and for Multiculturalism. Let us not confuse the issue. Every political party supports our multiculturalism in this province. Every political party wants to see multicultural grants given out to different organizations, with the possible exception of possibly the Minister of Energy and Mines, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld). If there is an exception, that is the only exception, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. -(interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: The member for Portage (Mr. Connerly) brings up a valid point. The minister is not present here to defend himself, so I will give him the benefit of the doubt, that, in fact, he too supports but let us not get off by saying a political party does not support multicultural funding because under no circumstances whatsoever can this government or any minister or any backbencher say that the Liberal Party does not support multicultural funding. It is a falsehood and it is trying to mislead Manitobans by saying that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I oppose, in a very strong fashion, the direction that this government is taking when it comes to multicultural funding by giving it to an appointed body rather than a body that is elected from its own community, and that is why I move this motion. That is the reason why I say that I support multicultural funding, as every member of this Chamber does, and I ask those from all political parties to address this motion in the sense that I put it forward. That is, if you support this motion, you oppose MGAC, and if you vote against this motion,

then you are supporting MGAC. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, some very interesting comments have been put on the record this afternoon by the Liberal critic, and I guess when we talk about support of MGAC or nonsupport of MGAC, I do not believe that the people who represent the community on a volunteer basis, a broad cross section of the community, are any lesser people than those who are elected by community organizations to serve on the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I believe that, and I would like to put the names of those people on the record, as I did last night, and I indicated that I would bring a brief background of the members who are sitting on MGAC today.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do want to read them into the record because I feel it is very important, and then, if the Liberal critic takes some exception to the qualifications and the ability of these people to serve their communities, I want him to indicate to me today after I read these names into the record who he feels does not represent the community, and who does not have the ability to serve on a committee that would allocate grants to the multicultural community. I do not think it is the vehicle through which the grants are allocated, but it is to ensure that the grants are allocated to the multicultural community in an accountable way and in a way that serves the community.

To date, I have not received any criticism from the community about how the grants have been allocated through the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, and I have challenged both opposition critics to come forward with allegations that have been made by any community organization that has been unfairly treated by the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. To this point in time, today—I asked several times last night and I will ask again today, if there have been allegations made that these people are not credible people who have a voluntary commitment to serve a community that they have been asked to serve, then I want that kind of information brought forward to me and I will re-evaluate.

I have not heard to date. I want to indicate now the people who are sitting on the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council with some background on who they are and what part of the province they come from and some of the contributions that they might bring around the table.

* (1510)

The first person is Beverly Shymko from Balmoral, Manitoba. She is a volunteer with a variety of organizations including the Manitoba Ukrainian Arts Council. We have Jyoti Desai of Winnipeg, an active member of the East Indian community, former delegate to the Manitoba Intercultural Council; Surinder Pal of Thompson, a founding member and current president of the Thompson chapter of the National Association of Canadians of Origin in India.

We have Paul Grenier from St. Leon, a former member and past president of the St. Leon Cultural Committee and former executive member of the SFM; Linda Oswald of Steinbach, president of Steinbach Parents for German Education and a regional representative of Manitoba Parents for German Education; Patricia Daly of Winnipeg, a board member of the Folk Arts Council of Winnipeg and an active member of the Irish Association; Philip Lee of Winnipeg, chairperson of Recreation and Municipal Services Committee, Community and Race Relations of Winnipeg and an active member of the Chinese community; Jock Low of Brandon, president of the West-Man Multicultural Council and president of West-Man Multicultural Holding Company Inc.; Lorna Tergesen of Winnipeg, secretary of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine Board and active member of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Ba Van Nguyen of Winnipeg is president of the Free Vietnamese Association of Manitoba and a board member of the Vietnamese Nonprofit Housing Corporation; Gladys Cook of Portage la Prairie, a long-time volunteer and professional member of the human services profession who has directed her skills in assisting Native people; Arnold Eddy of Winnipeg, a vocational counsellor who has worked extensively with new Canadians and has participated in a program which puts Canadians in touch with new immigrants; Sam Loschiavo of Winnipeg, a member of the Citizenship Council of Winnipeg, former vice-president of the Folk Arts Council and a founding member of Folklorama.

We also have Lou Fernandez. He is a current council member on the Community Advisory Council for the Winnipeg Core Area Initiative, treasurer of the National Council of Canadian Filipino Association, and he is currently the chairperson of the Winnipeg YM-YWCA Filipino International Committee, and he is the first

vice-president from 1984 to 1990 of the Philippines Association of Manitoba; and Tom Denton of Winnipeg, executive director of the Citizenship Council of Manitoba and the International Centre of Winnipeg.

So I believe, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that we have a broad cross section of our Manitoba community which happens to be multicultural that is represented on the Multicultural Grants Council. Those members are appointed for one, two or three-year terms. When their terms are up, they may be reappointed, they may be replaced with other members of the community that on a voluntary basis will continue to serve the community well. I have no qualms about recommending and indicating that these people are as equally representative and will do a good job of providing funding to the multicultural community.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the Liberal critic, says the issue here is funding and, yes, it is funding for the multicultural community. If, in fact, that funding is allocated in a fair manner by whomever in the community, whichever volunteers may from time to time be appointed to allocate those resources; and if, in fact, the community does not come forward and indicate that they are doing it in an unfair manner and treating any one organization any differently from another; then I believe that we have a system that is working and will continue to work.

As long as the communities are being served and are continuing to be funded, I think that is the issue here today. It is not the vehicle that the money is funded through, but it is the fact that communities are being treated fairly, that we have committed volunteers that have the community at heart and will continue to act in a manner that they can be proud of as Manitobans, that they can be proud of as being participants in a multicultural society. It does not matter who in fact is making the allocations.

What we have to do is ensure that the allocations are made in a fair manner, which they are being done, unless in fact the Liberal critic has some information to tell me that these people are not capable or are not worthy of dealing with the multicultural community, and he might want to make recommendations or suggestions on people who he thinks might be better. I have every confidence in the ability of these people to manage in a very fair and equitable manner the resources that have been allocated to them to allocate to the community.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Chairman, the minister says it is not the vehicle. MIC was working, it was doing the job, it was doing the job well. Maybe I can reverse it. Can the minister tell me which members she felt on the MIC Board were not doing the job, were being unfair, were being biased towards the communities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Acting Chairman, if I can just indicate, the task force report that came forward to us as a government indicated clearly that there was difficulty and there was a feeling in the community, and these were hearings that were held, and I do not believe that the members of the task force would bring forward information that was not information that was provided to them, and it says, and I will repeat over again, I did repeat it at the beginning of the afternoon, but I will repeat again that the task force heard of the problems associated with being a registered member organization of a government advisory body which has the responsibility of distributing funds to that same organization.

I am not saying that the community came to me. The community went to the task force that was chaired by Dr. Neil McDonald and had representatives from the Manitoba Intercultural Council as well as other community representatives on that task force. This is what they heard, and the Liberal Party may question whether in fact they received that information or heard that information, but in fact they have indicated clearly that was the kind of message they were getting from the community, that there were difficulties encountered.

The difficulty of participating fully in the business of council as a member organization applying for funding, problems with the perception of conflict of interest in the grant allocation decision-making process, the duplication of funding to community organizations to the various sources available to these organizations and the fairness with which the grants were distributed were some of the concerns that were brought forward. These were concerns that I did not make up in my own mind. These were concerns that were brought forward to a task force that was initiated by the NDP administration, reported to us as a new government and in fact were portrayed to that task force by the community.

(Mr. Deputy Chairman in the Chair)

I know that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the Liberal critic, was not in the Legislature at the time the task force was initiated. He was an elected member in 1988 when the task

force did report. I believe he probably received a copy of that report and has read through it, and those were real concerns that were brought forward to the task force report by the community. The Liberal critic may choose to not agree that that kind of thing happened, but I certainly did not go out and solicit that kind of information. It was presented to me as the task force wrapped up their review.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess I do choose to disagree with some of the recommendations, just like the minister herself chose to disagree with the recommendations from the DeFehr's report. There is no real difference in that. The minister implemented—in addressing part of the concerns raised in the task force, in addressing the concerns of the grants; she put in an appeal process. My question to the minister is: Have there been any appeals?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There have been. I do not have the exact number of appeals that there have been, but I would say, if I could make a round number, around 10 appeals have been heard.

* (1520)

Mr. Lamoureux: Appeals, some might argue, are complaints of sorts. I ask the minister, if her concern was about complaints, why not just institute an appeal system for MIC?

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable members that we are dealing with the motion of the honourable member for Inkster, which was that line 6.(k) be omitted and that line 6. be reduced to \$31,717,100, and I would appreciate if we kept the debate relevant to that and we can move onto further questioning of the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council once this motion has taken place.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know you want to keep the debate relevant, and it is on the motion but, in fact, I guess my final comments might be that we as a government made a decision two years ago or a year and a half ago, whenever it was, to implement and institute a Multicultural Grants Advisory Council headed by the people who have been listed today with the qualifications that they have and, in fact, we have put that body in place.

They are distributing funding to the multicultural community in a very efficient and effective way, and I will be held accountable for the decisions that they make and that they will continue to make. It is a

decision that we have made, and we are going to continue with the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council as long as we are government, and we will agree to disagree with the opposition. All kinds of questions can be asked on why we did not put an appeal process in place in MIC. It is not normally a government responsibility to dictate to an advisory body what they will do.

We made the decision to remove the funding from the Manitoba Intercultural Council, to establish the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. That process has been in place for a year and a half. It is working well. We are going to continue along those lines. The Manitoba Intercultural Council is aware that we are continuing to move in that direction, and they are prepared to work with us in whatever manner they can to ensure that they continue to advise government on issues. They know that we will accept some of the recommendations that come forward, that others we will not accept, and they will continue to make those recommendations. They are prepared to work with us.

I might say that maybe the Liberal critic should sit down with the Manitoba Intercultural Council at some point in time and ask them about the last meeting they had with cabinet and what a positive meeting it was, that they feel that both of us as government and as an advisory body to government have made considerable progress over the last couple of years, that we had a rocky start, that, in fact, things are working better.

We will continue to work together in partnership, in instances. I know they will speak out when they believe government is doing something they do not agree with, and that is their right. So we have made a decision. We are happy as a government. The people of Manitoba re-elected us to government in a majority situation because they believe that the decisions we are making are the right decisions.

We are not going to please everyone. I know we are not going to make the Liberal critic happy with our decision, but the decision has been made. We are going to continue as a government. We want to continue to provide funding to the multicultural community. We will agree to disagree on this issue forever and a day.

If ever the Liberal Party becomes the government of the province of Manitoba, I guess at that point in time they can make the decision on which vehicle it might be to flow funds to the multicultural

community. We have chosen the vehicle of the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, and we are going to continue to use that vehicle to distribute the funding, unless of course, as I have indicated, the opposition can come up with some specific instances where communities have been treated unfairly through this process.

Mr. Jack Relmer (Niakwa): As a point of clarification, during Estimates there is a lot of moving around within the contents of what is being discussed. One of the things that we are talking about and we seem to go back and forth on, is the MIC grant and this one particular line that we are now talking about which is the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council.

The amendment that was put forth is in regard to 6.(k) Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. The one line that has been put forth is that this whole section—I moved that the line 6.(k) be omitted and line 6. be reduced to \$31,717,100. There is no mention anywhere in here about the transfer of money to MIC, because if we—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, had there been an addition to that to transfer it over to MIC, would it have been ruled out of order?

Mr. Deputy Chairman: The honourable member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: The answer is yes, Jack.

Mr. Relmer: What I would like to point out that under the Manitoba Intercultural Council, which is Section (XIV) 4.(e), we have not come to that section of the Estimates. In looking at the deletion of monies from one line of the budget, I believe it is appropriate for opposition to move matters or to reduce monies or salaries which is appropriate, but in going one step further and trying to allocate funds to a different budgetary item, I believe that it is totally out of order, because of the fact that this cannot be accommodated because of the budgetary process.

So there seems to be an ambiguity in the whole resolution that has been put forth because the resolution put forth is regarding one section of the budgetary process which is indicating a total unequivocal elimination of two jobs, salaries in the excess of \$65,000. There are other expenditures

that are also being asked for elimination which is almost \$25,000, \$24,900 and the grants themselves which are \$919,200.

It would seem that the resolution is looking at this whole section as an elimination of funding whereas to tie it into a transference to a different area of the budgetary process is totally inappropriate.

I would think that the motion itself in debating it is really a nonentity because it has no validity or hope of being passed. If you look at the motion as it is presented, and interpret it strictly as what has been presented to this committee, it would appear, and as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has made it known, but it would appear that this is a total withdrawal of fundings to the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council.

I would think that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), as pointed out by himself, he is a very strong proponent of the multicultural community—I have had the privilege and the pleasure of attending many events with him, and the sincerity that he has come forth with bringing greetings to these groups is well recognized. The respect that he brings with his party and himself is well noted by the groups.

* (1530)

I would think that in bringing forth a resolution like this it sort of reflects in a sense of not having a conscious awareness of where the monies are eventually being allocated, because we are talking of over 230 different groupings of peoples and cultures that benefit by this particular area of funding.

When we look at eliminating this whole area, it smacks of a very hasty resolution.

The resolution, I would think, could have been handled possibly in a different area when we were in the Estimates regarding the Manitoba Intercultural Council, and that a more appropriate time could have been brought up at that time for the motion to be brought forth to possibly increase the funding, which would have been out of order, but at that time it could have been discussed and taken out of context.

However, the member brought forth a resolution to totally take away all funding to the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, which is a council that was set up, and which, as pointed out by the minister, has not had any problems of administration, has set up a strong rapport and contact within themselves, within the community and with the minister in

implementing direction and funding allocations and the prioritization of what they believe is best for not only their own groups but in partnership with the government.

It would seem that in debating this motion that we are debating two different entities but at the same time trying to satisfy something that is perceived. It is not an actual fact or an actual condition that is happening in the community where there is a groundswell of concern. There are not people coming in or groups that are making strong presentations that they are being unjustly handled.

In fact, I had the opportunity to meet with Manitoba Grants Advisory Council, and in talking with some of the people, they showed very strong and positive signs that they looked very optimistically on the future. They were very supportive of the minister in the fact that she was able to not only go to the cabinet and keep her elbows high and keep the monies exactly what they got last year, which was in a very tight economic time, as we have seen with the budget that has just come down by the Finance minister, where we have noticed that all of the areas of monies that have been allocated have gone down.

The minister has been able to go to the table, if you want, and fight for this type of allocation of funding to the groups. If we look at the budgetary items and we look at 1990-91, where we had funding allocation of \$1,009,200, which was well used and which was allocated through the grants assistance program by the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, and this year, with the tight monetary and tight budgetary process that we witnessed here in Manitoba, with the Finance minister and all ministers trying to get funding, this minister is very commendable in being able to come back to the table with monies that are of the same amount.

It is a very commendable job that this is what the minister has come forth with, and when a motion comes forth, a one-line motion, a motion that does not have any type of substance to it by just totally decimating this whole area and totally saying that we are decimating it on this area, but we want to put it on another area when the intent is not there in the sense that it cannot happen, you cannot add to the budgetary items that are already in the system. The deletion of it can come about, but the addition cannot, so the justification of saying, well, we are going to move it somewhere else so that we can get better use of this funding is not appropriate in

looking at the budget here, because the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council is a group that has been able to allocate funds. It brings in various areas of entertainment to this city, the various ethnic organizations.

As I mentioned, I believe there are over 230 groups that take advantage of this funding, and if we look at the funding that is available, that is over \$4,000 per group. For some of those groups, that \$4,000 represents their whole budget, to some extent, in trying to get things set up. They look at this funding in a very serious way as the budgetary item and the funding that would become available are all areas that should be recognized.

Here in Manitoba we have a very high proportion of people who are not of what we may call English-French descent. In fact, it is well over 40 percent of the people of Manitoba who are of various ethnic backgrounds. These ethnic backgrounds and these people are very proud of their heritage and their involvement with the community and in having the availability of funds through the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The honourable member for Niakwa has the floor, and I would also ask the honourable member to keep his debate relevant to the motion which is before us, and that is the motion of the honourable member for Inkster, which is that line 6.(k) be omitted and that line 6. be reduced to \$31,717,100.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I believe that, yes, it should be kept relevant, because this is a very important item and the fact that the line has created a fair amount of controversy. I would think at this time maybe the minister would like to just comment as to how she feels the total deletion of over a million dollars, which she has fought very, very hard to come by, would affect her department and the grants under her control.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think I have indicated quite clearly that—I guess the issue here today is funding to multicultural organizations throughout the province no matter what the vehicle. If the vehicle is providing an opportunity for many different community organizations to access funding, and it is done in a way that is fair, and it is done in a responsible way by committed volunteers who have the best interests of the community at heart; then I have absolutely no argument or no concern with the vehicle today that is being used to fund our communities.

I might just indicate, as I said a little bit earlier, that we have in place an organization that can provide that kind of service. We, as a government, have made those decisions. We are going to follow along the path of the decision that we have made if the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council continues to work in the manner they have been working to serve the community they serve.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know this debate has enraptured members of this committee for several hours, according to reports I have received. I am sure this debate could continue ad infinitum, or some might suggest ad nauseam, but the bottom line, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is that I think we have had probably enough debate up to this point in time. I would suggest we have a vote on this particular resolution and move on to other areas of Culture.

I would point out that we do have a limited number of hours for Estimates consideration. Any time we spend debating this particular resolution comes off discussion of other items. I think the concerns that we have expressed are fairly clear.

By moving this resolution, I believe the Liberal critic has made a fundamental error in terms of reading our rules, and that is you can delete but you cannot add. The impact of this resolution, unfortunately as I understand it, will essentially just delete, period. Even though in terms of the principle obviously—and we have stated publicly we disagree with the direction the government has gone in terms of grants—in terms of multiculturalism, and in terms of the handling of that; I would have some difficulty, and I know our caucus has difficulty with the impact of deleting without being able to add back. We definitely do not have that ability. From the understanding I have from the government, they have no intention of accepting this motion and adding it in under MIC or other areas. So we are left with the decision, do we delete, period; or do we not delete, period?

As much as the situation is not a perfect one and we do not agree with the government's policies, obviously if it is a choice between grants and no grants, however they are handled, we will support grants to multicultural communities. So I would suggest that we have a vote, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

* (1540)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is unfortunate that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) probably was in the other committee and was not able to be here for the first part of my remarks, but I did indicate—and I can understand where the Multiculturalism critic is coming from in her comments in support of putting the funding back into the Manitoba Intercultural Council, but I have a little more difficulty understanding where the member for Thompson is coming from when he says that he would support moving the funding back. He does not support this government's policies and the decisions when, in fact, the decision that was made was a decision that was taken as a result of a task force that was implemented when the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was part of the government prior to 1988, when in 1987 they set up a task force on multiculturalism for the Province of Manitoba to go out and listen to the community and to get the community's input on certain questions that were developed through a green paper.

That task force was set up by the former administration, the New Democratic Party, under one of the member for Thompson's colleagues at that time, the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, to in fact listen to what the communities had to say.

He was a member of caucus at that time. Maybe he could shed a little bit of light on some of the discussion around this issue by the government of the day, that brought them to the conclusion that they needed to set up a task force on multiculturalism at the cost of around \$100,000—plus to the taxpayers of Manitoba, to in fact look at the issues of funding to ethnocultural organizations.

That task force that was set up—I will not repeat again the names of the people who were on the task force, but they were chosen by the New Democratic Party. It was chaired by Dr. Neil McDonald and several other prominent members of the community who in fact listened to the people of Manitoba, to those who were involved in multicultural organizations and in the community, and listened to their ideas on what should happen to the funding.

What happened between the time the task force started, of course, and the time they reported was that there was a change in government, but I felt that because the NDP government had put in place this review process of the Manitoba Intercultural Council through the task force, and that in fact the money had been expended, we should await the report. I

looked forward to the report coming to the new government. We dealt with the recommendations that came forward.

One of the recommendations that came from the NDP-appointed task force was that the funding should be removed from the Manitoba Intercultural Council and that there should be a multicultural grants commission set up to distribute the funding to the community.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have put all of this information on the record before, but I find it very passing strange that a member of the New Democratic Party, who sat around the caucus table, which obviously discussed these issues as any caucus does, supported at that time the recommendation to set up a task force to look at the operations of MIC, to look at the funding of multicultural organizations, can now sit here today and do a complete flip-flop and indicate that he would like to see the money reinstated to the Manitoba Intercultural Council, when the purpose of setting up the task force was in fact to examine that and to come forward with recommendations.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I said before, I can excuse the New Democratic Multiculturalism critic, because she was not sitting in that caucus at the time those decisions were made by that government, but I have great difficulty excusing the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who was, obviously, a part of that decision making process and must have known why his government made that decision.

He is sitting here today. As I said, he has done a complete flip-flop on what his party's position was when they were in government to what his party's position is now that they are in opposition. So I would encourage the member for Thompson to go back to his caucus, his new caucus, because there are a lot of new members, and there are probably a lot of members today that do not have the background information and the same understanding that the member for Thompson must have had when those decisions were made by his government to evaluate the funding mechanism and to ask a task force to make recommendations on what changes should or should not be made.

You know, I am really not quite sure where the New Democratic Party is coming from in support of the resolution that came forward, because they may not agree with the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council that has been set up by this government,

but the recommendations that would have come from the task force that was set up by his administration and his government would have been the same recommendations that came to me. So I do not know if the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants to provide some clarification on what his position was just some—1987, well, we have been in government I guess close to three years now. Gosh, it seems like forever. Maybe he would like to respond a little bit and just clarify and clarify, too, to the new colleagues that are part of his caucus now, why in fact his party when they were in government were thinking one way, and now when they are in opposition, are thinking another way.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is becoming a theatre of the absurd here. I just spoke indicating that we would not be supporting the Liberal resolution, and now the minister is trying to engage in debate. I do not know if she is trying to persuade me to go the other way, and I am not quite sure why we are not putting this matter to a vote. As I said, Estimates time is scarce, and what I see happening here is something of a government filibuster. This debate has gone on for a considerable period of time—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with the motion put forward by the honourable member for Inkster, which is that line 6.(k) be omitted and that line 6. be reduced to \$31,717,100. This is a debatable motion and will be relevant to that subject.

Mr. Ashton: I am debating the motion. I am referring to the comments made by the minister in debate. I am referring to the last several hours. That is relevant. I am not sure why we do not put this matter to a vote and move onto other areas. I want to stress again that we have a limited amount of Estimates time available, as opposition members in particular, because government members have a far greater opportunity to have input in terms of Estimates during the development process. We do have unlimited time on concurrence. We have not traditionally used that largely because, I think, there has been a recognition of the fact that there is a limited time.

What I am saying is, to the government, I am asking why they are filibustering this particular matter? The Liberals have put this resolution on the record. We have indicated our position. The government has indicated its position. The Liberals

have indicated their position. I indicated to that. Now the minister is debating with comments I had made in saying that we would essentially be voting the same way, for different reasons, but voting the same way on the motion.

* (1550)

So I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that we move on. I am quite willing to debate other areas in terms of multiculturalism generally and I, by the way, attended many of the MIC meetings. I was there and I know the concerns. I have contacts with people who still have the concerns, who are very concerned about some of the directions, and there are different views within the MIC. I know the minister would have to admit that in terms of the funding model that should be used and different views in terms of the government in regard to its changes in policies. I have indicated that, and I think the minister knows the concerns that have been expressed by members of the MIC and by opposition parties, but what we are debating here, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is a motion that would essentially delete an item. I realize the intent of the Liberals was not really to delete it.

We do not have a member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) in the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). At least I believe so. I believe he supports multicultural funding. Actually, I would be interested to see where the member for Rossmere is, because he might actually support this motion.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member to keep his comments relevant to the motion.

Mr. Ashton: I am debating the motion. I would ask, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if you could indicate how it is not relevant to talk about how people might vote on a motion. This is a very specific motion that would delete a section of Estimates, which is in order, and I am indicating—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that he was referring to an honourable member's comments who was not here, and I do not believe that would be relevant or proper at this time.

Mr. Ashton: If I might offer some advice, I can refer in debate to anything that is relevant, and comments that have been made by members in the Legislature certainly have been considered relevant since time immemorial in terms of the parliamentary system. In terms of the member for Rossmere's (Mr.

Neufeld) comments, I referenced the fact that he might indeed support this motion, given his statements, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and that I believe is totally relevant. We have a motion that would delete expenditures from the Multiculturalism section, and what I am suggesting is, the impact of the motion, if it was not the intent, would be to bring in something that the member for Rossmere has been proposing, which is essentially to cut the expenditures in terms of multicultural expenditure.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I really am puzzled as to why the government has been spending the last several hours of Estimates time discussing this. I indicated before that we are willing to put it to a question. I do not believe there is need for any further discussion or debate in terms—(interjection)—well, to the minister, we are not saying anything in terms of anyone not having the right to speak. They have spoken. Boy, have they spoken on this matter, and I am quite prepared to move the previous question to ensure at least that we do not get into subamendments and various other items. In fact, I will do that, and I realize there will be some continuing debate, but we are ready for the question, and I will move the previous question.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Mr. Edward Connery (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Chairman, you know, the member for Thompson says that it is the right of the opposition to speak in Estimates time and that we are just supposed to be here to vote. This is malarkey. The opposition members can put all kinds of things on the record and then we are just supposed to accept it, and I think that it is our right to be able to give our opinions and our feelings on what is happening in Estimates also.

An Honourable Member: You are doing that.

Mr. Connery: I have not spoken once in these Estimates. This is the first time I am speaking, and I think I have every right as every member of this Legislature, all 57 members, to have their feelings and their views put forward. Mr. Deputy Chairman, that is exactly what I am doing.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am very upset over the member for Inkster in naming and making comments in a reference to a member who is not here, namely the member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld). I think that is despicable to put comments down and attributing them to a member who is not

here, in a political way, and I think that the member maybe erred in his judgment in doing that. I think it is despicable to do that, not allowing that member to be here to defend himself and to put his views on the record in an appropriate way. I think—

An Honourable Member: He said it last night.

Mr. Connery: Now the member says, he said it last night, and he says the member was right across. Sometimes, maybe, he gets so sick and tired of some of the comments from members opposite and the way members opposite have put that honourable member down. I can tell you, I have sat with that member as long as he has been in this House and as a cabinet minister to know that he is as concerned with people, and appropriately so, without the silly politics being played, that he does what he thinks is right for the people and he speaks out. I will tell you, that member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) has the respect of people because they know what he is thinking and he says it very clearly—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would just like to ask the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)—it is under Rule 65 (14) where the motion for the previous question is moved in the Committee of Supply or in a section of Committee of Supply. The motion is not debatable. I would ask the honourable member if he could put that motion in writing to me, please, and then we will carry on from that point.

Mr. Ashton: My intent, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in moving the previous question, was not to cut off debate but was to test the will of the committee as to whether there was a desire to move the question. So I do not wish to cut off debate. I just wish to have a vote on it, and I will leave it at that.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Deputy Chairman, you know, as I was saying, I am very disappointed in the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), disappointed in his comments about the member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld), but disappointed in his playing politics with a very, very important issue of funding to the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have—and he also made some comments that are insinuations or clouded allegations about the minister and her motives. Once again, I have sat around the cabinet table and watched the honourable minister and her attempts to bring fairness and funding to the multicultural groups in Manitoba, and I can tell you I have nothing

but the utmost respect for the minister and her dealings—very fair, very honest, does a lot of consulting with groups. I think to put those sorts of feelings on the record are not what I think is right, and that is why I, as a member, am speaking out, to put the other side of what I feel are the facts.

I think the member for Inkster, in all sincerity from my point of view, is trying to do what is right. He is getting caught up in the emotion of the time.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, when we are looking at—he is making a resolution. First of all he puts forward a resolution to cut \$1,009,200 out of the budget. I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) recognizes or feels that this resolution would never be passed because we would vote definitely against it, because we believe in what the minister is doing and that what the minister is doing is right. It is in the best interest of the multicultural community. He thinks that this resolution would never pass. We now hear that the NDP are going to support our side and not support the resolution and I thank them for that. I thank them for that support.

What would happen —(interjection)— well, you know, there is some laughing, and I know we do this and I do it myself also, but this is a serious issue. What if, by some chance, there were some members away and this vote went into the House and there were not enough people to defeat this resolution? Has the member for Inkster seriously thought that through and then we would have —(interjection)— he says, yes. Then he means he would be quite happy to see this funding cut—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The honourable member for Portage has the floor at this time.

Mr. Connery: Now once again the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has not done his research. He thinks that he can cut a line and the government would then turn around and put it somewhere else. So the member for Inkster has to be a little more responsible. He has been caught before on irresponsible actions and has been embarrassed by it.

Now, this issue not only would have embarrassed the member for Inkster and the Liberal Party by having \$1,009,000 cut out of the budget; we would have cut the whole multicultural granting to the multicultural groups. There would have been two people, two employees.

The Liberal opposition in the Legislature has stood up and railed away about jobs being lost. What about the two people who are working in the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council for them? Two salaries. It is only two people I guess. So we can, you know, two are expendable. To those two people, that job is important.

We all want to be very cautious about what we do, but when we look at the other things—sure, Transportation, Communications, you now, those are not the big ones, but what about the grant assistance that we have of \$919,200 to multicultural groups. Is the member saying, by accident that money is cut, so what? So what—almost a million dollars to the multicultural community.

* (1600)

They have been railing away about the funding to the multicultural groups, and now are saying, we are prepared to cut another million dollars out of that budget to the multicultural groups. Now that could have happened, had for some reason somebody been sick, whatever, and members were not all here; with a two-seat majority in the Legislature and if the NDP had supported the motion, then that funding could have been cut.

I do not think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has really thought through deeply, because I do not think he is a vicious person. I really do not. I respect him as being a sincere person. I think he has erred. I think he has erred in not doing his research and he has erred in his desire for some political gain. The member for Inkster once again is going to be embarrassed because who knows what would have happened had it gone back into the House. Members are away, ministers could be away doing government work and not have been back.

So we could have seen by accident over a million dollars cut from the multicultural budget that could not have been put back in, in another line—would have been gone, the whole advisory council. The whole funding to that group would have been eliminated. I really would hope that the member in future would think through something terrible happening by accident.

I do not think for one minute he thinks that this would be cut, but he would put it forward looking great and then running to the multicultural groups and saying, see, we tried to do these things for you. Well, I do not know if the multicultural groups, for instance, would have been all that happy even with

it changed over, because I believe the minister has done the right thing.

The NDP put into place a committee to study the problems with the multicultural groups, with the Manitoba Intercultural Council. There was, as the minister has reiterated many times, some concerns. The NDP government, in '87, put in that committee to study it. They came back with recommendations, a lot of them that the minister has followed, recommendations put into by committee, put in place by the NDP government.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have had an opportunity to visit many of the cultural groups in this province. I have gone to Folklorama and seen most of the pavilions. I have also had the opportunity on behalf of the minister to bring greetings on behalf of the minister and the government of Manitoba. It is a pleasure to go to these various groups and to listen to them, talk with them and understand their culture. I have not counted them, but I am told there are 237 groups in Manitoba. They are all very proud of their origin and what they are trying to do to maintain their culture.

You know, I am Irish. I am very proud of my ancestry. I also have some English and Irish in me, and I want to go back to the British Isles to follow up - (interjection)- yes, as one member says, the Irish shows up in my temper. That may be so, but so be it. Maybe my shortness comes from my Gaelic side, I do not know.

When we see members playing political games with a very important facet of government, things that are important to individuals—and we see Manitoba becoming much greater a multicultural community, more groups, larger groups from other countries, and we welcome them here because every group adds something.

Some of my grandchildren have as many as nine different ethnic backgrounds in them, different nationalities—nine. I am very proud of that and that gives the diversity. This is what Manitoba is becoming. It is not as great any more where you are English or you are pure French or you are pure German. We see so many mixtures. We see the melting pot that Manitoba is. That is what is going to make the mosaic, the melting pot. It is what is going to make our community stronger, because we bring in these different ideas and these different thoughts. They all add to what we are doing and the different foods that we have.

At one time, as a youngster, there were not many different ethnic restaurants around, but now you can go anywhere and eat food from all these various cultures, and they are the pride that they have. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is saying, let us destroy the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. Let us destroy it knowing, or maybe not knowing, that the money could not be put back in again, so we have played a very serious game.

I would like to ask the minister, in that \$919,000 in Grant Assistance, what kind of a breakdown, what kind of grants—what do these people do with the various grants, because that is a significant amount of money?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, overall I guess 230-and-some grants were approved last year. Some of them were for operating for different cultural organizations. There are special project grants. If a community organization comes forward with a special project that they would like to do, they apply through the grants council and receive approval for those projects. There is also some capital money. If there was a community that wanted to improve or upgrade their facilities, there would be money available. There are all those different kinds of grants that are available through this line in the budget. There is a broad cross section of things that are done that do support community organizations.

Mr. Connery: Is this the only area they get operating funding from government? Are there other avenues of operating funding?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There still is a limited amount of money available through ethnocultural support programs within my department, but I would say that this is the major vehicle of funding for the multicultural community to receive grants.

Mr. Connery: For some of the smaller cultural groups, would the operating funding from the government under this particular line be a significant part of their operating funding?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we can, through this grant program, give up to 50 percent of the eligible expenses for a community, so some of the smaller communities would count on government for 50 percent of the funding to continue to operate.

Mr. Connery: The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in his resolution, and I would call it the resolution by accident, because if indeed by

accident this had gone through and this funding was cut, then some of the multicultural groups would have lost 50 percent of their operating funding, and I know in any organization when you lose half of your funding, this would decimate them, it would put—I do not know if they have any hired staff, if they are all volunteer people, but if groups would lose 50 percent of their funding for operating costs, that would be almost disastrous to a lot of them and would really reduce the effectiveness of the multicultural community in Winnipeg, in Manitoba.

You know in Portage la Prairie, we have, I am very proud of, Portage has a significant multicultural community, not as diverse as Winnipeg, but very significant, and those people are very proud of their ethnic backgrounds. We see them perform on stage, and we have even seen the Ukrainian Choir sing on the steps of the Legislature. Groups like that have come and performed. That is part of it.

You look at projects. Then, of course, the projects, I would imagine—would that be a significant part, or what is the funding in projects? Is there a government percentage of projects, or is it discretionary?

* (1610)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is up to 50 percent of project funding, so if a community wanted to, I guess, provide some cross-cultural training within their community, that kind of project could be funded if they apply to the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council.

Mr. Connery: Does any funding come out of here for Folklorama, or is that a separate funding process?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, there is no funding for Folklorama out of this. The Folk Arts Council is a special agreement group that is funded with a Lotteries agreement. I think this year they will be receiving a grant of \$400,000 for activities that are undertaken by the Folk Arts Council in promotion of Folklorama.

Mr. Connery: They do not receive Folklorama funding directly out of here, but with their operating expenses, I am sure a lot of that would go towards their planning for Folklorama and that sort of thing. It is possible that this resolution by accident could have some negative impacts on Folklorama. It is possible.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that probably there are many different aspects within

the community that have to be looked at, and the Folk Arts is one component of multiculturalism, but there also are many other very valuable activities that take place, whether it be through just an organization or through a cultural centre.

It is communication with the community, you know, helping those who are new immigrants and new Canadians who may have barriers to language learn more about our Manitoba culture or Canadian culture. There is adaptability, all of those kinds of things, and I think each community is very different and very unique.

You will find that the older, mainstream communities, those communities that immigrated in the first waves of immigration and settled a few generations ago and are second, third, fourth generation Manitobans have different needs from the new communities that have just recently immigrated. They do have problems, the possibility of language barriers, access to the job market, able to utilize the skills that they have obtained in their home country here and to get a job in the same profession or in the same field. There are all kinds of different issues that affect different communities, and I think some of the money that goes into support of operating a cultural centre brings that community together to discuss those issues of mutual concern and mutual needs. Some of the project funding might be to sponsor a conference that would bring members from other communities into their community, or to share that kind of information with their own community.

Of course, the capital is for upgrading and expansion of their cultural centre. There are all kinds of different activities that go on, and I think each community and each different culture looks at what the needs of the community are and the organizations that are developed within communities help to support and co-ordinate the activities that go on. As I said, their different cultures have different needs and the programs are planned and the centre functions based on the needs of the community and how they can best serve the needs of the broader community.

Mr. Connery: One wonders why I am asking these questions but the importance of what this resolution is and as to how—well the members opposite say, why are you asking questions, because we are talking about operating, we are talking about the multicultural community in Winnipeg and in—now

the NDP critic is saying they are supposed to be asking questions.

She was not here when I was explaining that we have rights as government members to put our views on the table as to what we think the multicultural community should be, and therefore it is our right.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, within the last year I went to a Greek Cypriot banquet where they had people from all across Canada. It was their annual meeting in Manitoba. Yes, they had entertainment, in fact, terrific entertainment. In the Greek community, of course, I have some personal connection with them because—I do not know if anyone remembers, maybe some of the younger members would not, but Gramma's fruit store right across from The Bay was a Greek firm and the Mercurys—we know some of the Mercurys were there, the grandchildren. The Mercury brothers had the greatest fruit, produce, chocolates and so forth—

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, that is right up your alley.

Mr. Connery: Right up. We grew vegetables, and I delivered vegetables to Gramma's fruit store. It was a great fruit store, so going there was an opportunity to revisit some of those people and really have a great opportunity. If some of this funding and operating money that allows them to organize these sorts of things where they brought in members from the Greek Cypriot community from all over Canada for their annual meeting—these things would not happen. That relationship between them would be gone.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I do have some other questions but before I do, I think I would allow other members to put their viewpoints on, and I thank you for the time. If the time permits, I would have a few more questions to ask. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just a few comments. I can understand. I know we all have special stories we can relate on where we have come from and where we have been in the past. I would like to indicate that I just attended a dinner in the Greek community. The member for Portage will be able to read this on the record, and the Mercurys were there.

I wanted to indicate and relate just a bit of my background, too. I grew up in the north end of Winnipeg and as a teenager I—and any of you who did grow up in the north end can relate to the Thunderbird Restaurant, the drive-in restaurant where I spent many hours with my friends. It was

run by a member of the Greek community whom I had not seen for many years, but was at the dinner I attended just a few weeks ago. We got caught up on what had happened to both of us in the ensuing years since those early teen-age days, I suppose I would say, some many years ago. I just wanted to put on the record, too, that another very good friend that I have made, and have developed a good relationship with, is one Mary Kelekis from Kelekis Restaurant on Main Street. In my youth I did not wander quite as far as Main Street, I was a little closer to McPhillips, and I guess that is why we went to the Thunderbird. I still go back from North Kildonan to the north end of Winnipeg for Kelekis' hot dogs and—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable members to try to remain relevant to the motion that is before us.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I certainly would not want to challenge your ruling and I will just continue on by closing and saying that we can all relate. We do realize and recognize the valuable contributions that all communities throughout the province of Manitoba make. I would like to indicate, too, when we are talking about the great community and relating some of my past experiences and a little bit about my background and my growing-up years, that, in fact, the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council does support the Greek community with funding. There is some relevance to the comments that I have just been putting on the record.

I want to share that with all members because I wanted you all to know a little more about some of the communities that I have had the opportunity to develop relationships with as being the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism in our province not only within Winnipeg, but throughout the province. Maybe at a later date I could share some more of that with all members who are here today.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. It had not been my intention to participate in this discussion this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Chairman, having been involved in the development of Estimates for presentation to the Legislature and knowing of the priorities that my colleague, the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), places on the matters that come under her jurisdiction. However, I was quite alarmed to learn that this motion was placed

before the members of this committee—alarmed, because of the consequences of such an amendment.

* (1620)

I do not like to take issue with something my colleague the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) has said, but he has painted the scenario of this matter somehow being a resolution by accident. As he spoke about that and about the seeming carelessness of the honourable member who raised this matter, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), it occurred to me that the more time that passes before the honourable member for Inkster comes to his senses and withdraws this motion, the longer that situation prevails, the less likely it is that this is an accident, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I believe that is a very, very serious comment to make. I make the comment in a very, very serious way, because I believe that if this were an accident the honourable member for Inkster would be the first person to want to correct that situation and to keep that accident from happening.

The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should realize by now what this reduction of \$1,009,200 from this item in the Appropriations of the Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship—he must realize the implications that would have for the multicultural community here in the province of Manitoba.

I know that the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) spoke of multiculturalism in his part of the province and I can certainly do the same thing. The West-Man Multicultural Council and their activities and the various groups that do business with that council will be affected by this. I mean, let us face it, last year there were some 230 grants made available by the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. This is a very, very serious matter.

Just taking this a step further, if the honourable member for Inkster does not see the danger in which he places multiculturalism, let me tell him that what he is putting in danger are the three major platforms of the multicultural policy that we have in Manitoba. He does a serious disservice and causes great harm to the principles of partnership and equality and pride which are the three fundamental principles underlying the multicultural policy in our province.

The honourable member, through this resolution, is making an attack at the freedom and opportunity to express and foster the cultural heritage of the

various multicultural communities which make up the very fabric of our province. He does great damage and assaults the freedom and the opportunity to participate in the broader life of society on the part of all people in our province. The honourable member carelessly delivers a serious blow to the responsibility of our aboriginal and our multicultural citizens. I refer here to our multicultural mosaic here in Manitoba. A blow is struck at the responsibility to abide by and contribute to the laws and aspirations that unite our society.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) asked the question, did the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) think about all of this when he put together this motion to omit line 6.(k) and reduce from the budget \$1,009,200? The honourable member from his seat says, yes, he did think these things through. You know, that is what tells me the scenario of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie about this being an accident may not really be the case here.

We may have a situation where the Liberal Party of Manitoba, led by the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) and represented here at this table today by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), is taking a position that runs contrary to the three fundamental principles underlying the multicultural policy of this province. That is a very, very serious matter, and I really wish the honourable member would think a second time or third or fourth time before he moves ahead with things like this.

A great Manitoban said that perhaps we should bite our tongues seven times before we speak. Maybe in the case of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) he should think seven times before he puts resolutions before committees of the Legislature. I mean, how much more has to be said around this table before the honourable member for Inkster realizes the seriousness of what he is attempting to do?

Is this the Liberal policy, that we should be cutting funding from the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council so that multicultural groups in this province have to go without? I thought it was the policy of the Liberal Party that we should be fostering multiculturalism in this province, fostering a strengthening of the fabric of the multicultural mosaic of our province. I guess I was wrong about that.

I am really very disappointed in the honourable member and in the party he represents, led by the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), who obviously has—all of the members of the caucus of the Liberal Party have seen fit to allow the honourable member for Inkster to carry on.

The honourable member for Inkster is not unlike the rest of us. He is not infallible. If he is, maybe he would like to tell us, but it seems to me, I am not infallible, and even the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), as much as others think otherwise, I believe he is not infallible. Human beings being what they are, I put the honourable Minister of Family Services beside the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and I say, now, who is less infallible, who is more infallible here? I say, the member for Inkster is just as capable of making a mistake as anybody else.

The strength of one's convictions lie in the ability to say to oneself and to one's colleagues, let us discuss this another time or let us withdraw this resolution. It is not that the honourable member has the power to add this \$1,009,200 somewhere else. That is not there for the honourable member.

An Honourable Member: Does the government?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asks from his seat, does the government? The government has placed before the members of this committee the proposed appropriations, the Estimates of the various departments. If the honourable member disagrees with those Estimates, he can say so and he can make his presence felt, which he is doing, I suggest, very carelessly and in a way that probably will come back to him on many, many occasions.

Each time, for example, that he wants to visit a multicultural event, each time he wants to be seen in the company of some group of Manitobans who are dedicated to the principles of multiculturalism, the honourable member for Inkster is going to be reminded of what happened today in the Legislature. They are going to be reminded in whose name stands this resolution that would move that line 6.(k) be omitted and that \$1,009,200 be taken away from multicultural groups in our province.

Officials of the minister were kind enough, because I did not happen to bring with me today this pamphlet, to provide me with the principles underlying our multicultural policy in Manitoba. It talks about pride, and the cultural diversity of Manitoba is a strength and a source of pride to

Manitobans. The honourable member's resolution flies in the face of that principle.

The policy also says that Manitobans, regardless of culture, religion or racial background have a right to equal access to opportunity, to participation in all aspects of the life of the community and to respect for their cultural values. Surely, I thought by now, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that we as members of the Legislature had reached the point where we agreed on this kind of thing. If that is true, and I still assume it is, why will the honourable member not do the right thing here and simply withdraw this resolution? I will certainly agree to that. I will grant my leave as a member of this place, and I believe others around this table will too.

* (1630)

I understand the NDP members see the folly in this kind of a move and are not prepared to support that type of amendment. I am sure I would feel awfully lonely standing out there alone supporting this kind of thing when it goes against stated Liberal Party policy in the past. If Liberal Party policy has changed so dramatically, why have we not heard something like that from the Leader of the Liberal Party at some well-attended public function, well attended by members of our multicultural community? Why is it that this policy has changed in the middle of the night, apparently with no notice to anyone that this is the direction the Liberal Party is going to be heading in from here on in?

The Liberal Party was represented on the Meech Lake Task Force, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and I was represented on that task force, too—a task force which presented to the Premier of Manitoba a unanimous view of our country and of our province. That task force's work included hearing from some 300 Manitobans about what they thought Manitoba was all about and, you know, from the Liberal Party itself the seed was planted for the so-called Canada clause.

The Liberal Party representation on the task force was extremely helpful, as was the representation by the other parties, but in this respect I say, the Liberal Party took a very principled position, a very strong position, when it came to multiculturalism. That was a position we were proud to take forward in our discussions in Ottawa, leading to what ultimately did not come to pass, but that was a position on what our country is all about.

The Liberal Party has a long tradition of playing an important role, I suggest, in matters like this, and

yet it is inexplicable to me how it is that the Liberal Party today can be represented here by their Multiculturalism critic, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), how they can be represented here making such a vicious assault on multiculturalism in Manitoba. It is inexplicable to me.

As one who was part of that Meech Lake Task Force; as one who is the product of five generations of Canadians of Irish, English, Welsh, German and U.S. descent, I would imagine I can line up beside the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) and talk in glowing terms about my heritage as a Canadian, too, just as I suggest most other people around this table can do, or every person around this table can do.

Here we are somehow denying the pride that we all feel in our multicultural heritage. I am frankly shocked that Liberal Party policy should change so suddenly and so inexplicably at a time when we are trying in very difficult times to make some dollars available to multicultural groups in our province. So I say to the honourable member that, you know, you can play out the scenario set out by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) and we can go to our graves, I suppose, wondering if it was an accident or if it was intended. It can be done that way or the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) can do the right thing.

I would prefer to go along with what the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) is saying and that this is a resolution by accident, but why do we want to take a chance with something so important as this? Why does the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) sit there so carelessly, knowing, hoping, I guess, but thinking that the Conservatives and New Democrats will bail him out and get him off this petard upon which he has hoisted himself?

I really think the politics of this is too blatant even for the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), who has shown a tendency in the past to play a little bit of politics here and there. You know, I think when it comes right down to it, he wants to do the right thing, just like the rest of us do. So why does he not see the error of this and just make a decision, confer with his colleagues if must, but make a decision to pull this from consideration.

This resolution does not deserve to be dignified by a vote. Surely the honourable member understands that he is on the wrong track. There

are other places to make political points. There are other opportunities to do that. I mean, we are here day in and day out, hopefully not providing him too many opportunities, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but sometimes in the affairs of democratic parliamentary democracy those opportunities do arise for opposition parties to make a point or two.

Why do it on the backs of our leaders and our multicultural communities across this province who are trying very hard through volunteer efforts and through what little monies the department can make available to them, trying very hard to promote the principles enunciated in the multiculturalism policy laid out by the minister. I fail to understand.

The honourable member has said a few things from his seat which really should not be repeated, because they are not, well, number one, they are not very nice; but number two, they show a callous disrespect for those people in our multicultural communities who have worked very hard over many long years to try to develop the strength of the mosaic that we have and enjoy in our country and our province.

I really do plead with the honourable member to do this. I mean, it can go the other way, but, as the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) says, what if. I mean are we that careless and foolish in legislative affairs that we play around with things that are important to us as Manitobans. I certainly hope not. I certainly hope he sees the error of his ways.

Surely the New Democrats in this place know better than this, and I am reminded again by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) speaking on behalf of the New Democratic Party in a very, very responsible way that they are not going to support this kind of nonsense, because basically that is what it comes down to, nonsense, parliamentary gamesmanship, and it has no place in this place, especially when we are considering multiculturalism.

The members of this place also have had occasion to take a few shots, may I say, at members like the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld), of course the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), the honourable member for Portage (Mr. Connery) and others over comments made or positions seemingly taken on various issues. You know, in the context of a debate on multiculturalism, none of those things have any place.

I know the honourable member has got himself out there on a limb and it is difficult for him. But you know he has been on limbs before. I have been on limbs before. Sometimes there is a gracious way to come off those limbs, and sometimes you just have to jump off. Here is a case where the member is so clearly wrong, so clearly offside, so clearly out of sync with the established policy of the Liberal Party. This position is going to be an embarrassment not only to his Leader and colleagues in caucus, but right across this country Liberals are going to have to say, oh, that member in Winnipeg must have had a bad day, or something went wrong, because that does not reflect the Liberal Party policy across this country, to deny the opportunity of multicultural groups, the opportunity to help strengthen that diversity which we all enjoy.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, as I said at the outset, I really did not want to get involved, but I was moved to do so by what I have been seeing here. I can hardly believe this is the place where I work every day, that this kind of thing would be going on. So I implore the honourable member to please come to his senses and please see the error of his ways. You know my mom always used to tell me that it is a bigger person who can admit it when they have made a mistake. I hope the honourable member will remember that when he gives this further consideration. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): I just wanted to pick up a phrase from the previous member who said: Why do we want to take a chance on something so important? I just want to tell the members here that I am a relatively new member of government, but I have had an opportunity to see firsthand, I guess you could say, the offspring of how this government has worked in partnership with one of the multicultural groups here in Winnipeg.

The group that I am referring to—and I hope my pronunciation does not make Dr. Qamar shudder, but the group that I am talking about is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association. This government helped fund that particular association to build a centre. That centre will not only—

An Honourable Member: Fort Garry.

Mrs. Render: Well, I am just talking about the one that I have had a direct association with. I was very privileged to be able to bring greetings on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the minister responsible, so that is the one I would like to make a few comments on this afternoon.

* (1640)

The association will greatly benefit the Muslim community. Not only will it be a centre for its culture, it will also be a place for social gathering and religion. Something else that I also realized, with the building of this particular centre, is that it was a place to build pride in the community so that the Muslim community could share its Islamic culture with all Manitobans. In fact, that evening that I was there, speaking on behalf of the government, it was very clear that the three fundamental principles of Manitoba's policy for a multicultural society—and I think they have been mentioned quite often in the course of this afternoon, but I will repeat them again because I think they are important. Pride, equality and partnership were very evident that evening with the gathering of people that were there.

In fact, I would just like to say a few words on that group, some of the things I talked about that evening. I talked about the ideal of the policy of multiculturalism. I talked about the fact that Manitoba is a multicultural society and that this government believes that a multicultural society is not a collection of many separate societies, divided by language or culture. Rather, Manitoba is a single society united by shared laws, aspirations and responsibilities, within which persons of various backgrounds have the freedom and the opportunity to express and foster their cultural heritage, as well as the freedom and opportunity to participate in the broader life of society.

Those kinds of thoughts were very evident that evening. I had the privilege of remaining after the opening ceremony to talk with a number of members of the Muslim community, and these kinds of things, as I say, were brought forward that evening to me.

A question that came up earlier today was the task force that had been struck by the previous administration. I was not around at that particular time, but obviously the task force had been struck with a purpose in mind, and this government did act upon some of the recommendations of that task force. I am wondering whether the minister could let me know when the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council was established. I believe, if I am correct, that was one of the recommendations of the task force. Like the other members of this government, I believe very strongly that the path that this government is pursuing is the path to continue to pursue. I am very ill at ease with the resolution, the motion, that the member opposite has put on board

because I feel, just in this particular example that I have shown, that this government has shown that it is marching down the right path.

Just a matter of curiosity, could the minister tell me approximately when the advisory council was established, and perhaps she might also want to just give a few ideas of some of the parameters that guide the advisory council?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I certainly do appreciate the comments that the member for St. Vital has put on the record this afternoon. If I might just go back to talking a little bit about the policy and say that it was probably one of the proudest moments of mine and our government when we introduced the multicultural policy last year. A lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of thought, a lot of consultation with the community before the final draft was put in place took place.

I was pleased, I wish all of you could have been here at the time when we introduced the policy and saw the Legislature full of those from the community who participated in the announcement. There were well over 500 people from throughout our Manitoba community who did show up for the unveiling of the policy.

I guess it is one thing that I can speak about with conviction when I go out to the community and talk about. As I am talking the multicultural ideal that you just repeated, I get really quite emotional and quite involved. As I look around the room and I am speaking, I see many heads nodding in approval. I think that we have a policy that is second to none across this country and in some ways like to think that we have taken a leadership with our policy, with the ideal and the principles that have been stated in it.

If I can just go back to the question now on the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council, it was set up in September of 1989, and not only was it a recommendation of the task force on multiculturalism that met with many different community organizations and individuals who brought forward the concerns that lead the task force to believe that a new grants commission of some sort should be set up, but also there was a Lotteries needs assessment that was done.

When we took over as government there were many studies that were going on. One of them was the task force study, another one was the Lotteries needs assessment that was established under the former administration and, in fact, made

recommendations to government on the distribution of Lotteries revenues. Within that Lotteries needs assessment report there was also a recommendation that we set up a different structure to fund the multicultural community with Lotteries dollars. In fact, there were two reports that made that recommendation to government.

When we announced the Lotteries needs assessment, we did announce, at that time, that we would be establishing the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council to distribute Lotteries revenues to the multicultural community.

I do have a pamphlet that I could share that indicates the criteria. I must say that the criteria that were put in place under the Manitoba Intercultural Council were followed by the Multicultural Grants Council, and that is why I guess I question really whether it matters to the community on who the people are who are involved in distributing the grants. As long as in fact the grants are being distributed to the community in an efficient and an effective manner in an unbiased way so that the majority of communities that do apply for grants, if they fall within the criteria, are afforded the opportunity to utilize some of those funds for the very worthwhile projects that are undertaken within the community.

So my concern would be that we ensure, as all members of the Legislature, that in fact the money is distributed in a manner in which the community can accept and that it does go to the very worthwhile causes that have been funded in the past, whether it be from the Manitoba Intercultural Council or whether it be through the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council.

As I have indicated earlier, last evening and earlier today, that in fact there has not been a major outcry from the community. As a matter of fact, I have not heard any complaints from the community on the process that has been followed by the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. I have asked both opposition parties, and if they do not want to share that kind of information publicly, if in fact they have concerns or they have had concerns related to them that indicate that the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council is not functioning in a proper manner, is not distributing the grants to the best of their ability in a very equitable and fair way to the community, I would like to know that because in fact I would be very concerned if that kind of thing was happening.

As I have said, to date, I have not had complaints from the community, and I would welcome any constructive criticism or any information being brought forward to me, because ultimately, I, as minister responsible, have to take ultimate responsibility for the way the allocations are made.

I read into the record earlier a list and a bit of background on all of the members who are on the grants council and the special qualities that they have. I am not saying they are the only people who could sit on this grants council. There are many, many members of the community who—and hopefully several of them will be afforded the opportunity over the next number of years to sit on that grants council and partake in the allocation and the distribution of monies to the communities that do request it.

* (1650)

So I am pleased. I think we are moving in the right direction. I think we have a policy that is second to none. I think we have a granting body that is doing the right things for the community, working with the community, and I have indicated earlier that we believe we are on the right path, that we are going to continue, as a government, along that path. I suppose in the end it will be the community that will decide in fact whether we, as a government, have been fair in the way we have treated the community, and they will ultimately make that decision in the next election by either accepting or rejecting us as a government for the decisions that we have made.

Mrs. Render: I know that there are other members who would like to speak also. I just wanted to confirm, in other words, in your opinion, in the minister's opinion, there really are no grounds for the motion that has been put then, that you have not received great cries of outrage from the community, that things are satisfactory.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I will have to say that and confirm that. I guess the great cries have basically come from the two opposition parties. The community, itself, appears to be happy with the process that is being followed by the grants council, and you know, as I have indicated, because the opposition seem to have such great concerns, I would love them to bring forward any information that they might have that might indicate that the people who are sitting on the grants council, and the way the allocations are being made, are in fact not to the benefit of the community.

Mrs. Rosemary Vodrey (Fort Garry): I would like to start by saying to the minister that I did have the privilege of being here on the day that the multicultural policy was announced, and it was a wonderful evening. The Legislature was full of people who were excited at that time.

In view of that evening, I have to say that I am extremely surprised at the resolution put forward by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and that I would like to speak against that resolution which in fact would remove \$1,009,300 from the budget and would in effect eliminate the ability of the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council to do its work. This advisory grants council provides a mechanism to provide grants and funding to the multicultural community.

At the moment, we know that approximately 237 groups have received funding through this mechanism, groups which represent in the range of 30 or more languages. This motion has the effect of harming that advisory council and harming our multicultural policy in Manitoba. That policy, which underlines three main principles, those of partnership, pride and equality, is essential in Manitoba today, and they are very essential in helping the multicultural groups in Manitoba put forward issues of importance both within their own cultural groups and to the people of Manitoba.

I want to tell you very briefly about some of the groups that I have had the pleasure of visiting with, and this may tell you why I think that this Grants Advisory Council is so important. The first one is the Manitoba Caribbean association, and I believe I was present at that meeting with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It was interesting on that evening that he also had many very positive remarks to make. Now, I was representing the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and also the Premier (Mr. Filmon) on that evening, and I think that the member for Inkster and the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), from the New Democratic Party, also made remarks on that evening in support of this particular organization.

I want to tell you that one of the things that was of real interest to each of us on that evening was the group and how the group involved the young people of Manitoba in their culture. The youth was strongly involved in the cultural activities and with the adults, and it was really a wonderful evening. I was very happy to have known a number of those young

people and a number of the people who are active in the association.

I also had the privilege of representing the Premier at the Scandinavian Centre and, on that evening, had the opportunity to enjoy some cultural activities, particularly some of the music from that particular organization, the language, the costuming, the literacy. I enjoyed visiting each separate room in the Scandinavian Centre, which had books in the language of the Scandinavian countries and showed how that particular group was making a great effort to keep alive literacy within their own language.

I also had the privilege of attending with the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association's opening, and I would like to say that the president of that association lives in my constituency. I was very proud to be there and very proud to have an association with him.

I also had the opportunity to attend and speak on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon), a multicultural birthing seminar -(interjection)- birthing seminar. One of the things that the minister has said is that multiculturalism extends to all parts of our lives and that it is very important that we are sensitive to issues from people all across Manitoba representing all kinds of backgrounds. I am happy to say that that seminar took place at Victoria Hospital, which is also in the Fort Garry constituency, but covered -(interjection)- One of the members talks about three children being born there, and it is in fact a very sensitive and very good hospital. I was pleased to take part in that seminar as well.

I want to also take a moment to comment on the fact that my area in Fort Garry has quite a large multicultural population, and I know that the people who live in Fort Garry take an active part within their organizations and an active part in the community as a whole. The University of Manitoba is also in my constituency. The University of Manitoba has students from all over the world and that is to the credit of our university in Manitoba.

I know I only have a couple of minutes left. There is another member who would also like to speak, so I will just end here by saying that I am extremely surprised at this motion. I would hope that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) would reconsider and perhaps withdraw this motion. I would like to speak strongly in favour of our multicultural policy in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am somewhat surprised at the response that I have had at the table in the last two and half hours. I must admit from the onset, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, either the members who have commented here this afternoon did not hear my opening remarks and have decided to skirt around the real issue or in fact the government has been filibustering and wasting taxpayers dollars.

The member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) points to the resolution, and I suggest to the member for Portage la Prairie that he should have heard my remarks regarding the resolution, regarding what the Liberal Party policy is.

I did want to, before we adjourn at five o'clock, read in so that those members who did not take the time to read the resolution or to hear what the Liberal Party policy was or were here prior to myself introducing in the fall and in the subsequent remarks, so that members would be better aware of exactly what the Liberal Party policy is and then in the future that they have second thoughts about filibustering their own Estimates, if in fact that is what they were doing.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, once again for those members, that the MIC is a broad community-based organization providing a voice to over 400 cultural groups throughout the province; that the government of Manitoba already has significant input into the operation of MIC through appointments to the community groups' multiculturalism and the diverse ethnic background are integral components of Manitoba's heritage and future; that the government of Manitoba has the authority to audit the books of MIC annually; and, finally, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) to consider dissolving the Manitoba Grants Advisory Council and reinstating the funding to the multicultural groups to MIC.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, had the—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The time is now 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

SUPPLY—EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Madam Chairwoman (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Would the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. We are on page 38, item 3. Financial Support - Schools. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Item 3. Financial Support - Schools 3.(a) School Grants and Other Assistance.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Madam Chairperson, during Question Period, the minister indicated that he would simplify the statements provided for us yesterday in the Chamber in order that I could "understand" them better. I am looking at the document entitled, Categorical Block Equalization and Guaranteed Support, a document that was tabled last night. I believe it is page 23 on the ministerial documents. I believe, if the minister will review the figure at the bottom of the page where it has the totals, change 1990-91 to 1991-92, the total change province-wide is .6 percent of 1 percent. I am wondering if the minister can reconcile that figure together with the statement of the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) in the House earlier that I had these figures wrong.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Acting Minister of Education): Madam Chair, this is base support. Let me indicate to the opposition critic that, when the minister made the announcement, he was very straightforward. As a matter of fact, it was one of the issues that those of us at Treasury Board insisted be part of the release and that there be some emphasis as separation, separating the operating or the base support as to the total increase under the vote.

We very clearly stated at that time that on average the operating support to school divisions in the province would be somewhere around three-quarters of 1 percent. So there is no great revelation here, Madam Chair. We were very mindful of exactly what commitment we did provide, and if the member wants to again review the press release put out when we announced the grant supports, he will see very clearly that it is in keeping with the detail as provided by the minister last night.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the press release in the first paragraph indicates that provincial support to public schools will increase 2 percent, and the minister did indicate that there was a variation on that, and indeed that is true. On page 2 of the press release it says, operating grants to school divisions will increase an average of about 1 percent. Nonetheless, several months later we see

that the increase is one-half of 1 percent, contrary to statements that we have heard over and over again in this House. I wonder if the minister might comment on that.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Chair, I am a little bit upset with the member, because I thought we had spent enough time last night on the handouts that were given out to make the questioning a little easier for the member opposite that he would have taken some time to study the facts and ensure that his question was accurate.

When he placed the question in Question Period today, it was obvious that he has either missed the point completely about the information that was tabled or has chosen to disregard the truth in the statement.

Madam Chair, the information that he refers to is the base support that was given. When we made the press release and the announcement of 2.1 percent and indicating that the operations grant to school divisions would be 1 percent, that included the base plus the categorical, and the member for Kildonan chose to ignore the fact that the 1 percent was made up of both base and categorical. So I wonder what the value is of tabling information when the member chooses not to use it in a truthful and factual way.

Mr. Chomlak: I am terribly sorry that the minister is so upset and has chosen to take the matter personally, but even if I were to use the 2 percent figure as used by the minister in his press release, even if I were to compare that to every single province in this country—Nova Scotia, 4.8 percent; New Brunswick, 4.5; Ontario, 7.9; Saskatchewan, 3.5; Alberta, 3.5; British Columbia, 4.6—even if I were to use the minister's inflated figures, we would still be eight out of 10.

Secondly, last night the minister agreed in Estimates with me that in fact we were 13th in terms of total. The minister indicated that in his statement, and we will check in Hansard today. The minister's recollection of events somewhat varies from mine, and I am sorry that the minister has chosen to politicize the issue, when in fact we put the facts on the record and the minister concurred with those facts. I do not know if the minister wants to respond, because I would like to turn to another line of questioning.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, once again, if the member were to spend a little time, do a little research and establish the facts, he would know that budget over budget we are, in terms of capital in operating—the support this year in the Department of Education and Training is 3.4 percent. Now, that compares very favourably with what has happened elsewhere in the country, but once again the member believes that the only solution to the challenges in education is to simply dump more and more money. He does not have any regard for who have to pay the bills and in terms of what the priorities should be.

That is regrettable, because in terms of the fiscal reality of this province, we have done what we deem is possible in terms of supporting education. Indeed, Madam Chair, if you ask most of the residents, most of the citizens of this province, whether or not the funding levels to education were adequate in terms of the fiscal reality, they would tell you, yes, this province cannot afford any more because we cannot afford to pay any more taxes.

The taxes we are paying are probably as high as we can afford. Those taxes were imposed upon us by the former regime, and that was the NDP administration of this province that drove this province into a regrettable debt of some \$11 billions of dollars which Manitobans now have to pay for, and indeed our children and grandchildren will be paying for because of the gross mismanagement of that administration.

I am not prepared to stand here today and take any kind of abuse from a member who represents a party that drove this province into the kind of debt that we are facing before us today.

* (1440)

Mr. Chomlak: It is regrettable that the minister cannot deal with the facts. It is regrettable that the minister was not with me on Friday afternoon when I went door knocking in my constituency, and constituent by constituent said, what has this government done to education? Why have they cut funding? Why can my friends not go to university because they cannot pay the tuition? This minister is totally removed from the reality of the situation, and property taxes are the highest in history in this province because of this government's offloading onto the ratepayers of this province.

I would like to deal with the Cartwright situation since it really is a funding issue fundamentally. I understand that the minister is having two

departmental officials attend at the Turtle Mountain School Division to do some kind of cost assessment or analysis of the Cartwright School, and I am wondering if the minister can outline for us what the parameters of that particular assessment are.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, let the record be corrected. The member for Kildonan just indicated that it was this government that has imposed the taxes on taxpayers. He is not even aware of the fact that for four straight budgets we have not increased taxes to Manitobans. Indeed we have decreased taxes to Manitobans, so let him take note of that.

With regard to the Cartwright situation, when I met with the Cartwright School Board last Thursday evening, I indicated to them that as a department we would welcome the opportunity to give them any assistance that we could to assist them in resolving the situation that they face. Indeed, we would provide staff resources to them at their convenience to ensure that every possible measure can be taken to provide answers to the community of Cartwright so that the community of Cartwright would understand why it is that the board has made the decision it has. I encouraged the board to consult and to share with the community of Cartwright the reasons that the decision was taken.

I also indicated to the members of the board that it was important that the board, not only share the information with the residents of Cartwright, but allow the opportunity for the residents from Cartwright to express their views and to respond to the information that the board had to present to the residents of Cartwright. In that way, the matter might be resolved.

Madam Chair, there is a stalemate between the school board and the residents of Cartwright. Indeed it is the board's decision to close the Grades 10, 11 and 12 programs at Cartwright. It is not a closure of a school, it is a transfer of programs from one school to another. However, the board has the responsibility to make that decision. Given the fact that they have that responsibility, it is also important to note that they have a responsibility to the taxpayers who elect them, and indeed they must share that information with taxpayers so that the residents of that community will know for what reasons those programs are being curtailed in that division.

Staff from my department are simply acting on the request of the school division to provide them with

the assistance and the expertise that the department may have.

Mr. Chomlak: Could the minister just clarify what the staff in the Department of Education are precisely being charged to do with respect to the Cartwright situation, who they are reporting to and what the parameters are for their assistance?

Mr. Derkach: The staff from my department report to me. In terms of the tasks that they have been requested to do by the school division, they have been in contact with the staff from my department. Staff from my department have been asked to review the calculations and the cost savings with regard to the decision that was made, to review the calculations of expenditures, to review the support that the school division is receiving, and they have been asked to prepare a report to me with regard to their findings and to the analyses that they will conduct on behalf of the board.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate, is that only for the Cartwright school itself, or is that for the total school division?

Mr. Derkach: The board has requested that the staff from my department look at two things, one being the overall cost savings within the school division based on the decision that was made, and the impact of the cost savings as it regards to the Cartwright situation.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Chairperson, I have a number of questions I want to ask about the Cartwright school as well. One of the reasons why the parents are confused is because the minister himself, just a very few minutes ago, admitted they were closing the Grades 10, 11 and 12 program. He used the word "close." Trustees, when they are being interviewed, one specifically on CBC, admitted they do not use the word "closure," because they could not get away with it. I want to know how the minister thinks the spirit of his guidelines, let alone the letter of the guidelines, are being fulfilled when trustees admit, even on radio, that they are in essence closing the school?

Mr. Derkach: I guess the Leader of the third party can indeed have her own opinion and can carry it as long as she likes, but the reality is that we have checked with our legal counsel to ensure that in fact the letter of the law is adhered to, and indeed closure—and I do not care if you want to use the term "closing programs or closing grades." When

we talk about the closure of a school, there is reference to closing, locking up the building and not allowing any other activity to take place in it with regard to education. That means the closure of a school. In that case, the division has to follow the guidelines that have been laid out.

In terms of transferring students from one school to another, be it a group of students in one class, an entire class, or a group of classes, as long as it does not curtail the educational activities within that school, it does not constitute a school closure. Now it does not matter what my opinion on the matter is, Madam Chair. What is important is, that is the legal advice, the legal opinion, with regard to the whole definition of closure of a school and transfer of classes from one location to another.

Even if I wanted, based on my own opinion, to interfere, it would be illegal for me to do so. I think we all have to respect the law and understand what the law says. Indeed, I have a great deal of sentiment and feeling for the community of Cartwright in what they are going through, because this is not a strange situation to me. I have lived through it as a chair of a board, whereby I have seen a community have its school closed and have had to deal with that situation, so I understand very clearly what the community of Cartwright is going through. Let me assure the member that it is the responsibility of the school board to make that decision, and if the community does not agree with that decision, then it is up to the community, up to its school board representatives to continue to petition and to lobby the school board so that they clearly have to present the evidence that has led to that decision.

Mrs. Carstairs: I too have consulted with legal counsel, and it is very clear that intention is also part of the law. The judgment made on the law will involve the intention of those who drafted the original agreement. Now it is clear that the people who drafted the original guidelines did so because they did not want, particularly, small communities to lose their schools without thorough evaluation, without a rationale, academic and financial, for why the school was to be closed. Now, clearly, there has been no such rationale presented to the people of the community of Cartwright. They have been presented with no academic reasons for why this school closure is going to benefit their children academically. They have been given no explanation as to why in fact it is going to make a

substantial reduction in the costs of the Turtle Mountain School Division.

* (1450)

In that none of these arguments have been presented to the community, in that the spirit of the guidelines, which is equally enforceable by law, has not been abided, will the minister undertake to go back to legal council and to ask that legal council if there was a clear intention at the time of the drafting of those guidelines and regulations to ensure that such a situation as is happening in Cartwright will not happen?

Mr. Derkach: Once again, Madam Chair, it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Second Opposition chooses to use her opinion and misconstrue what in fact the facts or the reality is. First of all, it is not a regulation, it is not a law. The guidelines that are in place are simply those, guidelines, and indeed they are guidelines for the closure of a school, they have nothing to do with the transfer of classes, and we can argue this point forever and a day.

Madam Chair, let me assure the member that I have been in touch with the school board. I have been in touch with the parents, upon their request. I have met with our staff to discuss the situation. Our staff have been in touch with the superintendent of that school division, and indeed now I am happy to see that we are going to be sending some of our staff out to do some analysis on the costs and on the overall support the school division is getting.

Let me assure the member that I have made it very clear to the board that it is important for them to share the information with the community of Cartwright, because this is not simply a closure of a school in a particular community. The community sees it as the death of their community, because indeed it is taking a very important element out of that community.

Even so, Madam Chair, it does not mean that I can impose my will on a community just because, as the situation is as it is, indeed as Minister of Education if I were to do that I would be interfering in each and every community where there were transfer of classes or closure of classes throughout the province. At that point in time we would have to take into consideration whether there was any value in having legally elected representatives who have a certain amount of autonomy, who have responsibilities and who have accountability to their

taxpayers and to their ratepayers, whether there was any point in having those around.

Madam Chair, I have to emphasize again the importance of allowing the democratic process to function, and indeed we will monitor the situation, because if the jeopardy of education quality is going to be prevalent in that community, then indeed that will give me some serious and great concern. We are going to continue to stay in touch with the superintendent in that school division, with the principal in that school division, and indeed with the school board and the community to ensure that students are not going to suffer unduly as a result of this action.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairman, I wish the minister would listen to his own words. He just finished saying, not only the closure of the schools, but the potential death of a community. He is talking about the closure of this school. When can he understand that if he talks about the closure, if trustees talk about the closure, then they expect closure guidelines to be used, and yet he talks about closure, they talk about closure, the parents certainly talk about closure, but he will not enforce the guidelines for closure.

How can we use these words, as the minister is using them today, and then wipe our hands of the guidelines and say, sorry, I mean, we do not think they narrowly fit the definition of these guidelines? I ask the minister again, will he review his own guidelines and the spirit of the guidelines to ascertain if he does not consider this to be a legitimate closure of schools?

Let me compare it. I asked some questions last year, of the minister, of St. Avila School in Fort Garry. Their situation was that children were being transferred in and children were being transferred out. I know there is a court action in this case, but it was clear to me at least that this was not a violation of the guidelines, that because the school was still functioning, the classrooms were all functioning, this was in fact a movement of children of one language stream to another language stream within different school divisions.

This is an entirely different situation. There will not be a Grade 10 class functioning in this school. There will not be a Grade 11 class functioning in this school. There will not be a Grade 12 class functioning in this school. There will in essence be no senior high school in Cartwright. Will the minister commit to looking at the guidelines once again?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, let us go back a little bit. If I have used the term "closure," I would like to correct that for the record, because indeed it is not a closure. It is simply a transfer of students from one institution to another.

We have reviewed the guidelines not only once. It is not the Leader of the third party who is going to alert us to the fact that we should review the guidelines, because indeed staff from my department together with legal counsel have reviewed the guidelines time and time again.

Madam Chair, the member, herself, brought up a situation in terms of the transfer of students from one school to another in St. Avila. Indeed there is a court action with regard to that particular situation.

Madam Chair, there are many varieties of transfers of classes throughout the province. In some cases it is a transfer of special needs classes. That means there are no special needs classes any more in a particular school. Does that constitute the closure of the school? According to what my honourable friend just said, I guess we would have to assume that would be a closure as well.

Madam Chair, there are times when we have Grade 9 classes or Grades 7, 8 and 9 classes in a school where the Grades 10, 11 and 12 classes have been taken out of the school because the school becomes a junior high school. Does that mean that is a closure of a school? No, it does not mean it is a closure of a school. It means certain programs are not going to be offered in that school any longer. Indeed in terms of the letter of the law it is not the closure of the school.

Madam Chair, in this particular issue, we have to ensure that we look at it from that point of view as well, so we are consistent in the approach that we use. Indeed in this situation, it is the removal, it is the transfer of classes for Grades 10, 11 and 12 from one school to another. As I have said, once again, the guidelines are just those. They are guidelines. They are not enforceable by law, because indeed they are simply guidelines that school divisions could follow.

If some school division would choose not to follow those guidelines there is nothing we can do to force them to follow those guidelines. Indeed we would encourage them and try to prod them in that direction, but they are only guidelines.

Madam Chair, we are going out to the public of Manitoba with a consultation paper on legislation, something the member of the third party criticized

as well. Let me tell you that in this booklet there is Article No. 3 which is going to ask for input from the communities, which speaks about the powers and responsibilities of the boards. It also talks about the powers of the Minister of Education and Training, and indeed, this is a time when we may in fact have some meaningful discussion and input from parents, whom I have advocated right from the beginning of the time that I entered the portfolio, that they must have a say in education, and I have echoed that same message to boards throughout the province.

So I am hopeful that we will have many parents coming forth to make their views known on this article, but it is not going to resolve the matter for the students in the Cartwright situation. We will continue to work with the school division and the parents of that community, and we will continue to monitor the situation as far as the students are concerned to ensure that students are not going to lose out in terms of their educational opportunities this year.

* (1500)

Mrs. Carstairs: He says the parents must have a say, but of course when I asked him about the construction of the committee, he admitted that there was not a parent on the board, at least not a parent who had no educational background and experience.

Yesterday when the minister tabled a series of documents in the Chamber, I took specifically a look at the Turtle Mountain School Division, and I took a look at the Turtle Mountain School Division because one of the arguments being used by the trustees of that division is that they have to close this school because they were faced with a \$1 million shortfall from the Department of Education. Yet when I look specifically at the grants to Turtle Mountain School, I see an increase in special needs, an increase in transportation grant, an increase in categorical block, equalization and guaranteed support, as well as total support dollars for special needs.

Can the minister tell the House what will be the entire grant going to the Turtle Mountain School Division, and what percentage increase does that represent from '90-91 to '91-92?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, in terms of the provincial support that has been allocated to Turtle Mountain School Division, in 1990-91 budget the total provincial support was \$5,319,186, the budget

for 1991-92 is at \$5,447,993, an increase in terms of the overall support of \$128,807, and in percentage terms that translates to an increase of 2.4 percent in an overall sense.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, would that include the special needs funding, and would it also include the \$85,000 special subsidy for transportation that I understand Turtle Mountain will be getting this year because they are over the 7 percent?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, we are just checking the specific amount that the division received for the special transportation grant. The special transportation grant is not included in this percentage figure that I have indicated to the member of 2.4 percent, because the grant was made afterward. The member is correct, it is \$85,000 in total that the division received it as a one-time transportation grant. In terms of their special needs, the special needs is part of the categorical program and it was included in the 2.4 percent increase.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, I am obviously missing something. I do not know what it is, so I will just give it to the minister here. According to the figures that he gave me last night, the '90-91 categorical block equalization was \$5,107,021 and the special needs was \$373,590, but that adds up to \$5,480,611. He told me what they got was \$5,319,186. What grant are they getting that I am not aware of?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the special needs grant is part of the categorical grant. For 1991-92 budget that amounts to \$975,039. In terms of the base that amounts to \$4,191,840 for a total of \$5,166,879—pardon me?

Mrs. Carstairs: It is '91-92, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Derkach: That is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: They will receive—let us get it simple—\$5.16 million from categorical block equalization and guaranteed support, that will include their special needs component of \$388,800, but it will not include their transportation subsidy which would be \$85,000 above and beyond that.

Mr. Derkach: That is correct.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister, and I can understand why he may not be able to explain it, tell me why the division would think they would be having a shortfall of some \$1 million when their entire budget seems to be about \$5.3 million?

Mr. Derkach: I do not know what figures the division was using to give that information to the member, but this is as per the budget that was set and received by the department and in terms of the provincial support that was given to the school division. Now all I can indicate is I had mentioned that a 2.4 percent, for example, was the total increase, but that 2.4 percent I might indicate, did include the \$85,000.

Mrs. Carstairs: Did include?

Mr. Derkach: Did include the \$85,000. That includes the overall support that is given to that school division. In terms of their shortfall of a million dollars, I am not sure where that figure originates, and I would certainly be pleased if the member has some indication if she would share that with us.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairman, that was the impression left certainly at the school board meeting in which they said that it was necessary to close a series of schools, including the Margaret school and the Cartwright school, because they had to find a million dollars and they attributed this to a cutback in funding from the province. Now it is true that there is less of a percentage coming from the province than in previous years, but it certainly would not amount to the kind of funding that the school division has used as an explanation for why it was necessary for them to close schools.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, when I met with the school board last Thursday evening, I had asked some of those types of questions in terms of the exact savings that were achieved as a result of the closure of the school and as a result of the closure of the Margaret school. Indeed there were some discrepancies in terms of the figures that were available and agreement on the figures. There was some discrepancy amongst the school board itself, the members of the school board in terms of what they agreed on as far as the calculations were concerned.

* (1510)

I think it is not only timely but indeed appropriate that staff from the department have been invited to assist the school board in perhaps reconciling their statements so that there is some analysis done on whether or not the figures that they have are accurate and indeed, I guess, to put the whole picture in perspective so that it can be shared perhaps, and that will be up to the school board, of course, with the community of Cartwright.

In terms of the analysis, we have always said that if a school division finds itself in extreme difficulty over and beyond what others find themselves in, we would welcome sitting down with that school board and discussing their financial situation. That request has not come from Turtle Mountain to this point in time, and indeed we will know better what their situation is once the analysis on their financial situation has been done by the department staff.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister got to the nub of one of my earlier questions when he said that his staff was now going to go assist the school division, the school board in reconciling its numbers and its figure. I ask the minister, is that not ministerial involvement, and is that not ministerial involvement in the proper form in terms of assisting school divisions in coming to grips with these kinds of problems?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, when I met with the school board on Thursday evening, I indicated that our staff would be prepared to assist them in any way that school board saw that they required that assistance, and we would not interfere. As a matter of fact, we would await their invitation for that assistance.

The school board has been reluctant to approach the department because of that very fear of interference by the minister and by the department in matters which are within the jurisdiction of the school board. After our meeting on Thursday night, I think that we alleviated some of that fear and indicated to them very clearly that the decision, the final decision, would still be that of the school boards. However, we as a department were there to assist them to ensure that they had the accurate information, to ensure them that they had the information that they could share with the community that was going to be affected. We encourage them to share that information with the people from the Cartwright area.

Mr. Chomlak: Just for my own understanding, can the minister identify who that staff will be, who will be proceeding to meet with the board and will be looking through the financial statements and determining which financial information will be shared with the citizens of that community or not? What will the staff be doing?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I have gone through that once, and I will go through that again for the edification of the member. I have indicated very clearly that the members from the staff of the

department are not there to interfere and to share anything with anyone. Indeed, they are there to assist the school division staff, not the school board. As a corporate body, I guess they will, but in terms of assisting the school division, they are assisting the staff in terms of the request that has been made by the school board. My understanding is that there are several areas that they want to have our staff review. We will comply with their request and assist them in that regard.

In terms of sharing this information with the public at large, or with the community, that will not be done. That is a decision that is in the total realm of the school board.

Mr. Chomlak: As I understand it, the school board has requested certain things of the minister. Can the minister outline specifically what has been requested of the minister?

Mr. Derkach: I will refer the member to Hansard, because I have done that on two occasions now. Indeed, I have indicated very clearly what the staff from the department have been requested to do, so I ask the member tomorrow, when Hansard is available, to review Hansard. I have done it on two occasions now.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate whether this request was verbally or in writing?

Mr. Derkach: It does not matter whether it was made in writing or by telephone or verbally. The request has come into the department. As many requests do, the request, I believe, came in by telephone and will be followed up in writing.

Mr. Chomlak: Will the minister undertake to table the correspondence that is going to follow with respect to the school division?

Mr. Derkach: No, Madam Chair, that is for internal purposes.

Mr. Chomlak: I am sorry, Madam Chairperson, I missed the minister's response.

Mr. Derkach: My response was no, that the assistance that was provided by the staff was of an internal nature, and the correspondence that is going to be received is of an internal nature as well. If the member wishes to proceed with the request to the school board for that correspondence, I am sure he is entitled to do that.

Mr. Chomlak: I am requesting of the minister to table correspondence between his department and the school board with respect to what his officials

will be undertaking to do at Turtle Mountain School Division. That is all I am asking.

Madam Chairperson, with respect to the guidelines, we have heard numerous discussions, and we have heard the minister's and the Leader of the Liberal Party's opinion of the legalities of the guidelines or the nonlegalities of the guidelines and how they apply. In essence, we have a situation where guidelines have been put in place to prevent precisely the kind of situation that now exists. I mean, that is the reality of the situation, and I will not belabour that point.

My question to the minister is: Has the minister considered or will the minister consider ensuring that the guidelines are turned into regulation?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, we do not turn guidelines into regulations because of one particular incident, especially when that incident does not even impact on the guidelines directly.

To this point in time, every school division that has closed a school has followed the guidelines as prescribed. I think it is more important to note that this is a discussion that quite rightfully should take place in the whole process of consultation on matters that relate to The Public Schools Act. Indeed, I welcome the opportunity for residents of this province to be able to address the issue within the consultations that are going to be taking place conducted by Mr. Roy White.

I know that the Leader of the third party indicated that there is not even a parent on that team. Well, indeed the people on that committee are parents. As a matter of fact, one of them is not an educator so therefore has an understanding from a layperson's point of view as well.

We welcome the opportunity for individuals from the province to have input into this document, and indeed it is important that this issue become part of that overall discussion.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I take it that, despite the fact the minister indicated that, at the earliest, legislation can be expected as a result of this process in 1993, if between now and then seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 20 school divisions transfer rather than close the particular school in question, the minister will take no action.

* (1520)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, this is not a new phenomenon. Indeed those kinds of transfers have been occurring for the last 20 years around the

province. I can tell you that, in terms of the few school divisions that I was very familiar with in rural Manitoba where these kinds of transfers did occur, those were done without these types of guidelines being taken into account.

Madam Chair, what the member is alluding to is the fact that we should not trust school trustees in the way they carry out their responsibilities. I think the school trustees have a responsibility to the people who put them in place as school trustees and have to be answerable to those individuals. They have to adhere to The Public Schools Act as it is written and to the guidelines that are set down to ensure that there is some consistency in the way things are administered throughout the province.

We are not going to impose any further restrictions on school boards in terms of how they should deal with transfers of students from one jurisdiction to another.

Mr. Chomlak: I am wondering—the minister indicated that he would not be prepared to impose restrictions. There are guidelines in effect. The minister is saying he does not want to take those guidelines to regulations. Where does he see his role in this entire process?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I see my role as Minister of Education and Training precisely as I have conducted myself over the past while, and that is to ensure that the school division does adhere to The Public Schools Act, to ensure that our staff are made available for consultation, for advice, for analysis and to ensure that the quality of education for the students is indeed such that students will be able to complete their year's work without fear of failure because of the fact that there is a dispute between the school board and the community.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, yesterday the minister indicated he would table for us today in the House statistical information regarding pupil-teacher ratios. I am wondering if the minister has that information today.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I do not have that information, but if the member has a specific question on a particular division with regard to the pupil-teacher ratio, I would be pleased to provide that for him as soon as I have it available.

Mr. Chomlak: Do I take it from the minister's response that he will be providing us with a division-by-division breakdown of student-teacher ratios?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I do not have that specific type of information available today, but indeed we will obtain that information. I will be prepared to read it into the record tomorrow when the member wishes to ask the question.

Mr. Chomlak: I am wondering, at the same time, if the minister will also table the statistics from other provinces that he utilized in his announcement on January 22 when he indicated that the pupil-teacher ratio in Manitoba was amongst the lowest in the country.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, there was a great deal of information that was gathered and was used in determining what level of support we could afford and we could give to school divisions. It did not sort of depend on one piece of information from one province or another. Indeed, if the member has specific questions, we would try to get that information, or I will try to explain that particular issue.

In terms of him asking for us to table all the information that was used to arrive at an announcement, Madam Chair, I would say that that simply cannot be accommodated at this time.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I do not understand why the minister is failing to provide that kind of information. In his announcement, in his printed remarks on January 22, he stated, and I quote, with pupil-teacher ratios in Manitoba second lowest in the nation, et cetera, et cetera. He used those statements as one of the major justifications for the funding announcement made on January 22, and I would like to see the information upon which that is based.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I would direct the member for Kildonan to the StatsCan reports where he can gain that same type of information that was used in formulating that kind of statement.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, can the minister indicate if StatsCan information was the information upon which he based his statement and what date he based that statement on in terms of StatsCan material?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, we do our research in terms of reviewing a variety of reports that come to us from a variety of sources. Indeed, I have indicated that the StatsCan reports are the publications that we used in terms of arriving at some of the figures that were used in some of the comments that were made. I just simply refer the

Member for Kildonan to review the StatsCan reports in the relevant areas, and I am sure that he will find that information. It is up to him to do his own research in that regard.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I cannot accept that response from the minister. The fact remains, on January 22, when he made his announcement, he made a statement publicly, and he has made it since on many occasions, that pupil-teacher ratios are the second lowest in the country. Can the minister indicate on what specific information those figures were arrived at?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, as I indicated, that information came out of the StatsCan report. Indeed, to assist the member, we will research it and get the exact publication for him so that it will ease the pain in his doing his own research.

* (1530)

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I appreciate that the minister will provide that information. It is not a question of research. I have enough research in my hands at this moment. I just want to ensure that the minister's statements are indeed accurate and reflect his research in asking these questions.

Can the minister provide us with a division-by-division breakdown of the local levy increases in the province?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, can I ask the member to repeat his question, please?

Mr. Chomlak: I wonder if the minister can provide members on this side of the House with a division-by-division breakdown of the local division property tax levy?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the Member for Kildonan asked for the mill rates for the school divisions throughout the province, and I would like to read them into the record at this point in time.

Special levy mill rates as they apply to each of the divisions are as follows: Winnipeg No. 1 for 1991, 20.1 mills; for St. James-Assiniboia, 12.1 mills; Assiniboine South, 16.1 mills; St. Boniface, 14.3 mills; Fort Garry School Division, 16.1 mills; St. Vital, 16.3 mills; Norwood, 15.1 mills; River East, 15.6 mills; Seven Oaks, 18.4 mills; Lord Selkirk, 10.9 mills; Transcona-Springfield, 15.8 mills; Agassiz School Division, 10.5 mills; Seine River, 14.5 mills; Hanover, 10.9 mills; Boundary, 15.1 mills.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomlak: Just by way of perhaps easing the procedure, I am wondering if the minister would not be prepared to table that document rather than read it into the record.

Madam Chairman: It is not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Red River School Division, 13.4 mills; Rhineland School Division, 11.7 mills; No. 19 Morris-Macdonald School Division, 10.6 mills; Whitehorse Plains, 11.8 mills; Interlake, 10.7 mills; Evergreen, 11.1 mills; Lakeshore, 11.1 mills; Portage la Prairie School Division, 11.9 mills; Midland School Division, 12.6 mills; Garden Valley School Division, 13 mills; Pembina Valley School Division, 16.2 mills; Mountain School Division, 16.6 mills; Tiger Hills School Division, 16.7 mills; Pine Creek, 11.3 mills; Beautiful Plains, 12.1 mills; Turtle River, 12.9 mills; Dauphin-Ochre School Division, 12.9 mills; Duck Mountain, 20.8 mills; Swan Valley, 15.4 mills; Intermountain, 12.4 mills; Pelly Trail, 15.4 mills; Birdtail River, 13.1 mills; Rolling River, 14.8 mills; Brandon School Division, 11.3 mills; Fort La Bosse, 13.8 mills; Souris Valley, 13.7 mills; Antler River, 11.2 mills; Turtle Mountain, 16.4 mills; Kelsey, 13.1 mills; Flin Flon, 30.1 mills; Western, 14.5 mills; Frontier, 12.6 mills; Churchill School District, 21.3 mills; Snow Lake, 48.6 mills; Lynn Lake, 19.9 mills; Mystery Lake, 26.2 mills; Sprague Consolidated, 15.4 mills; and Leaf Rapids, 20.5 mills.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister table the actual dollar amount attached to each of those figures and, if possible, the increase from last year, the percentage increase from last year?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the special levy amounts in terms of dollars and percentage change are as follows: Winnipeg, 1990-91, \$74,587,988, a percentage change of 12 percent; St. James-Assiniboia, \$16,431,373, 5.9 percent; Assiniboine South \$12,403,783, 9.7 percent; St. Boniface at \$8,263,208, 13.1 percent; Fort Garry at \$14,998,502, 7.6 percent; St. Vital at \$12,936,293, a percentage change of 7.9 percent; Norwood \$2,567,678, 2.5 percent; River East \$16,311,585, 8.6 percent; Seven Oaks \$13,442,741, 8.6 percent; Lord Selkirk \$4,963,138, 9.8 percent; Transcona-Springfield \$10,102,132, 27.1 percent; Agassiz \$3,023,718, 9.8 percent; Seine River is at \$4,094,258, 11.3 percent; Hanover School Division

\$3,185,390, 12.3 percent; Boundary School Division \$1,180,149, 6.7 percent; Rhineland \$1,306,920, 10.9 percent; Morris-MacDonald School Division \$1,913,000, 11.2 percent; White Horse Plain School Division \$1,283,992, 10 percent; Interlake School Division at \$2,820,000, 8.5 percent; Evergreen \$2,622,517 at 6 percent; Lakeshore \$1,059,602 at 19.2 percent; Portage La Prairie School Division at \$4,325,761, 4.7 percent; Midland \$2,092,243, 7.4 percent; Garden Valley \$2,266,253, 8.5 percent; Pembina Valley School Division \$1,305,010, 4.7 percent; Mountain School Division \$1,375,091, 6.4 percent; Tiger Hills School Division \$1,894,853, 19.4 percent; Pine Creek School Division \$1,390,000, 8.6 percent; Beautiful Plains at \$1,981,140, 15.9 percent; Turtle River School Division at \$966,674, -.8 percent; Dauphin-Ochre at \$2,206,363, 10.2 percent; Duck Mountain School Division \$814,151, 5.1 percent; Swan Valley School Division \$2,349,782, 6.9 percent; Intermountain School Division \$1,448,120, 10.1 percent; Pelly Trail School Division is at \$1,624,159, 9.2 percent; Birdtail River School Division is at \$1,954,224, 6.7 percent; Rolling River School Division is at \$3,064,617, 7.1 percent; Brandon School Division is at \$8,207,000, 12.4 percent; Fort La Bosse School Division is \$2,963,372, 4.5 percent; Souris Valley School Division is at \$1,682,442, 13 percent; Antler River is at \$1,596,683, 4.9 percent; Turtle Mountain School Division is at \$2,236,757, 13.9 percent; Kelsey School Division is at \$1,654,569, 5 percent; Flin Flon School Division is at \$2,113,222, 6 percent; Western is at \$621,356, -4.5 percent; Frontier School Division is at \$375,000, which is really zero; Churchill School Division—hold it, I am sorry. Let us get the line straight here. Yes, I will go back to Western School Division, Madam Chair. Western School Division is at \$1,673,481 which is 11.9 percent. Then we go to Frontier School Division is at \$621,356 which is a decrease of 4.5 percent; Churchill School District is at \$375,000 which is zero; Snow Lake is at \$648,010, 4.1 percent; Lynn Lake is \$130,307, -10.4 percent; Mystery Lake is at \$3,299,446, which is 10 percent; Sprague Consolidated is at \$147,083, 3 percent and Leaf Rapids is at \$750,477, 3.7 percent.

Mr. Chomlak: I can compliment the minister. He reads very well into the record. Can the minister give me the total?

Mr. Derkach: The total, Madam Chair, is \$269,985,208 which represents a change of 10.1 percent.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you. Can the minister give me the total of the previous document that he read into the record?

* (1540)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, it must be noted that this is the average, and the average total would be 15.5 percent. The percentage change between '90 and '91 is 8.9 percent.

Mrs. Carstairs: Could the minister give us the student enrollment figure as of September 30, 1990? The Annual Report has it for '89, but we do not have the total enrollment figure as of September 30, 1990.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the total enrollment in 1990 was 196,558 students. It is estimated to be 196,980 students for 1991.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, but I assume that is some 400 student increase as of September of '91 that we are anticipating. Can the minister tell us what effect that will have on per pupil-teacher ratio when he is estimating that there will be 212 fewer teachers and, in fact, 312 teachers were laid off as of the 31st of March according to The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, as of 1990 the pupil-teacher ratio was 14.4. Given the estimate that I have just read to the member, the pupil-teacher ratio would be estimated at 14.6 to 1.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, in the document that the minister tabled yesterday when he talked about employed teachers being, for September 30, 1991, some 12,850, can he tell us if that is the estimate of full time classroom teachers or if that includes principals, vice-principals, library teachers, guidance counsellors? If that is the case, can he actually give us the number of classroom teachers?

Mr. Derkach: No, Madam Chair, the classroom teachers we would not necessarily have but, indeed, the number that I have given has included teachers who have teaching certificates and are working within the school setting. Yes, that would include Special Needs teachers, guidance counsellors, as well as administrators.

Mrs. Carstairs: So that there is in fact no breakdown even in terms of percentage of what this 12,850 would represent in terms of the number of

teachers in classrooms which, of course, would reflect in actual terms on a pupil-teacher ratio.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I do not have that detailed information available, but indeed it should be noted that when we look at pupil-teacher ratios in Manitoba and compare that with other jurisdictions, there is a consistent approach in terms of the criteria that is followed to look at those numbers. For that reason, we use the teachers who are working within the school system so that our comparisons are consistent.

At this point in time, I would like to table the pupil-teacher ratios for public schools, 1989. I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was asking for that information. The source of this is Statistics Canada, Education, Culture and Tourism Division. I should read the note here which expresses the fact that enrollments are public full-time equivalents pre-Grade 1 divided by two, I guess. That means that the kindergartens are only half-time.

Indeed, it shows the full-timing equivalents of teachers within the various jurisdictions—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and so on. Indeed, it shows that Quebec is first at 15.3, and in second place, we are tied with Ontario at 15.5.

Mrs. Carstairs: That directly contradicts what the minister himself said just a very few minutes ago, in which he said it was 14.4 and will be increasing to 14.6. In fact, the actual numbers as I can see it according to the projections which he has given me for September of '91, both for teachers and for pupils, it would come out at 15.3. Yet he has just declared it to be 15.5. Why do we seem to have three different figures being presented to us at this particular point in time?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, first of all, there is a bit of a difference because the figures I read were the latest of Statistics Canada which are 1988-89. The figure that I presented on the Manitoba situation is the estimated figure for 1991, so there is a difference there. There is also a bit of a difficulty in terms of collecting equivalent data throughout the provinces. Indeed the, I guess, material or the criteria that Statistics Canada uses may be a little different than what ours is.

I think what is important is that there is a consistency throughout the provinces, and it appears that in Manitoba the pupil-teacher ratios have, in fact, been dropping below that.

* (1550)

Mrs. Carstairs: According to the information which is in the minister's documents and the documents he tabled with me, and it is just a simple calculation, but if you take the figure that he gave me for 1990 which is 196,558 students, and you divide it by the number of teachers, which he has also given me, which is 13,062, you, in fact, do not come up with the minister's figure of 14.6; you come up with a figure of 15.

If you take 196,980, which is the projected figure for September and you divide that among his projected teacher figure, which is 12,850, you see it has grown to 15.3. In fact, even using the minister's figures, and I have no difficulty using the minister's figures, we see that there is an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio from 15 to 15.3.

Mr. Derkach: I guess, Madam Chair, it shows the danger of using figures when you do not ask the complete question and then use the same figures that the department uses.

Madam Chair, what the Leader of the third party is indicating is that the department staff here are not calculating it accurately and are perhaps hiding figures. That is not the case, because what you would be using to calculate the pupil-teacher ratio is the full-time equivalent students within the province. That is different, because kindergarten is considered as half time.

So, indeed, you would not be taking the 196,558 students in 1990. You would be using the full-time equivalent figure which is 187,962 students to come up with a ratio, as has been calculated by the department. I have to indicate that I have not done the mathematics myself on this, but it does work out to about 14.4 percent. I just had the staff recalculate that and apparently it comes out quite accurately.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I would like to go back to the other question.

Can the minister tell me why his projection is somewhat inconsistent with the numbers now at the Manitoba Teachers' Society? He is seeing a reduction of some 212 teachers, and they are seeing a reduction of some 312 teachers. Judging by last year's teachers that were laid off and subsequently rehired, not all of the 31 were rehired. So one can presume that is not going to happen this year either.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, once again it is the way that, I guess, you use figures and the basis that you would use in order to calculate the reductions.

In the calculations that the department does, we use the school division budget, and we use the full-time equivalent teachers, if you like, to indicate the numbers that will be reduced.

I am not sure, but I believe that the Teachers' Society would use just the raw numbers. If it happened to be that two half-time teachers, for example, were let go, for our purposes that would mean one full-time equivalent. Perhaps for the MTS figures that means two individuals that would be let go, so there could be a difference in that regard.

I would have to indicate that our calculations are based on the budgets that we receive from school divisions, and we do that on the basis of full-time equivalent teachers. So that is really where our statistics come from.

I might indicate in responding, Madam Chair, that although we have one of the lower pupil-teacher ratios in Canada as a province, this is I think a credit to the system, because it means that we have more teachers working with students than they do have in other jurisdictions. For the educational process, this cannot but help in the whole process.

Indeed, when we have scarce resources, we will have to make some very difficult decisions in terms of where we spend our money, and because we ask school divisions to set their priorities, they will be either asking teachers to take fewer dollars for themselves or they will be reducing staff.

This is not an easy time, and indeed we do not relish the fact that there are teachers being unemployed or being released from their positions. I would like to see every teacher in this province retained for the purposes of providing an educational program for the students that we are supposed to serve. However, given the fiscal situation in this province, it means that we will have to make some difficult decisions and so will school divisions.

I am not criticizing the fact that we are where we are in terms of the pupil-teacher ratios because indeed this cannot help but enhance the educational quality to the students within the jurisdiction of this province.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, but indeed the minister has bragged, and rightfully so, that we have a good Special Needs Education Program in the province of Manitoba. He also knows that that makes very, very heavy use of teachers, particularly

resource teachers, and that is one of the reasons why I asked if there was in fact a breakdown.

There have been some changes in policy with respect to the Special Needs Education, particularly at Low Incidence I. Can the minister elaborate in more detail because, whether it was his intention or not, that seems to be being interpreted by a number of school divisions as meaning that resource teachers can be replaced by teacher aids with respect to the instruction of Low Incidence I children?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Madam Chair, we did address this topic yesterday, but for clarification to the member, I will go over it again.

Mrs. Carstairs: I was not here when you did it.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, I know and I respect the fact that the member was not able to ask her question yesterday. Indeed we have allowed for some flexibility within the Level I area. We have done that to allow school divisions to utilize the resources that they have at their disposal in the most effective and efficient manner.

A couple of years ago, the guidelines were changed for Level I funding so that it would take some of the administrivia out of the process and allow school divisions to allocate their dollars more precisely to programming. That is all that we are attempting to do at this time.

I think school divisions throughout this province have matured to the point where they have adequate professional staff within their jurisdictions to be able to determine the proper type of programming for the students within their jurisdictions. For that reason, we have indicated that we will allow for some flexibility in the way that school divisions address Level I, Special Needs programming.

Having said that, I will assure the member that staff within my department will indeed be monitoring the situation through the year to ensure that the quality of education that is being delivered to students with special needs does not deteriorate. Staff from CCDB and from the rest of the department will be in constant touch with school divisions throughout the province and will be monitoring the situation carefully.

If in fact we find that at the end of the school year there is a deterioration of programming in that area we may have to look at reinstating the old policy, but because we have also set out some guidelines

for Special Needs Education it does allow us to monitor the situation more carefully, because each school and every school division have to submit a plan for Special Needs Education within their jurisdictions according to the special needs guidelines. Therefore, it makes the monitoring process somewhat easier for the department, and it also establishes a more consistent approach to how special needs programming is delivered throughout the province.

* (1600)

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I think the minister should be aware, if he is not aware already, because I have received calls from I suppose 10 to 12 resource teachers who have been told that they will be returning to the regular classroom. They will no longer be used as resource staff, because their school divisions interpret the change in funding from the Minister of Education to mean that it is no longer necessary to provide resource teachers in order to obtain the funding from the Department of Education as a result of the change in policy which ostensibly is to allow some flexibility.

Now, can the minister tell the House if he has had the same kind of contacts and if he is monitoring that aspect of it, because I would like to think that flexibility should not lead to inferior programming? If teacher aides are going to be replaced with resource teachers then indeed it will be inferior programming.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I guess the bottom line is that we are trusting school divisions who have now special ed co-ordinators who are professionals in place, superintendents, principals. We are trusting that they can make the decisions that are necessary for their jurisdictions, and we are allowing for that flexibility in the way that the funds are used. Indeed, we will be monitoring, through our admin finance area, to ensure that those funds are being spent in the Level I area, but it is up to the school division I think, and appropriately so, to decide what is the best use of those resources within that school division.

Yes, indeed, those who have a vested interest in the area, such as the resource teachers who have been working in the area, may indeed have some concerns about it. We will monitor to see that the programming levels are indeed adequate and sufficient, but we feel very strongly that school divisions, given the quality of people that school divisions have today in terms of the expertise and

the professionals, they are indeed capable of making those types of decisions. It is just another step in giving school divisions more autonomy over the programming within their jurisdictions.

In terms of special needs, we took that step in allowing—instead of the school divisions negotiating with the department for every penny that is spent on a student in this Level I area, we went to a block grant, if you like, to school divisions based on their population, and now we are taking another step in terms of allowing school divisions to make some administrative decisions about how programs should be delivered, but as I said, we will monitor these programs carefully to ensure that quality is not jeopardized.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, let us be realistic. The reason why school divisions are making the kinds of decisions that they are making with regard to special needs is that the government has provided them with that flexibility, while at the same time curtailing their funding.

If one looks at Winnipeg School Division No. 1, in just three years they have gone from 29.2 percent of their funding coming from the province, down to 26 percent; St. James-Assiniboia 56.1 down to 58.4; Assiniboine South down from 38.5 to 28.7. They are being forced to make the decisions with respect to special needs because the government, first of all, is providing inadequate funding and, secondly, is giving them this so-called flexibility.

Now, I would like to know exactly what is in the minister's regulations that would clearly give the message to a school division that it is all right, quite acceptable, to replace a professionally trained resource teacher with a career experience with special needs with a teacher aide?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the responsibility for delivering the educational programming is within the jurisdiction of the school division. Indeed, they have the responsibility to ensure that they have adequate staff in place to deliver the services that are required.

Madam Chair, I, as minister, or the department is not going to interfere in establishing how many superintendents and assistant superintendents a school division should have but, indeed, it is up to that school division to make that determination in the same way it is up to the school division to ensure that quality education is being delivered to special needs students. In the Level I area, we have allowed for that flexibility to allow school divisions to make those decisions.

As I have indicated, we will continue to monitor through our CCDB branch, through our staff within the administration branch, to ensure that, first of all, the dollars that are allocated for special needs are spent in the special needs area and to ensure that the quality of education for Level I students is enhanced or, perhaps, maintained at the same level that we had previous to the change of the policy.

Madam Chair, I might indicate that when you have a province like Manitoba that has not the richest resources in Canada, having one of the finest special needs programming in Canada, indeed, that says something for the quality of education that we have in this province.

Yes, I would like to be able to afford to give school divisions more for special needs students. I would like to invest more money in post-secondary education. I would like to invest more money in public school education. The reality is that we have a very serious fiscal situation facing us today. If we are going to maintain programs in the future, two, three, five and 10 years down the line, then we are going to have to be very careful about the decisions that we make to ensure that the essential programs are protected and to ensure that programs are going to be available in the future.

When the revenues of this province return to normal levels, or to above what they are today, I am sure that we will be given every opportunity to share that wealth with school divisions and with the students who need it in this province.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, that is a cop-out. The whole reply was a cop-out. The minister begins by saying the delivery of the programming is up to the school divisions, and then he makes the delivery of the programming absolutely impossible for those school divisions by not providing adequate sums of dollars. Then in order to appease his own conscience, he changes the guidelines so that they can, in fact, offer inferior programming, and then he says, is it not wonderful that we have the best program in the nation?

Well, we are not going to have the best program in the nation because of the deterioration that is going to occur when you allow qualified resource people to be replaced by teacher aides, and we are not going to continue to have the kind of effective mainstreaming that we have had when the government, every single year, cops out on its contribution to special needs funding, and that is what they have done consistently since this minister

came to his portfolio. Every single year, the percentage of the actual cost for special needs has decreased.

Now how does the minister resolve in his own mind how we can maintain quality programming with a decrease in the percentage contributed by the provincial government, particularly when we have deteriorating regulations going hand in hand with the deteriorating funding?

Mr. Derkach: It is a well-known fact that the Leader of the Second Opposition does not have a very responsible attitude when it comes to fiscal responsibility in this province. Madam Chair, she has a Brink's truck mentality—

Point of Order

Mrs. Carstairs: On a point of order, the minister has come dangerously close to imputing motives, and I would suggest that he curtail his unnecessary verbiage.

Madam Chairman: The honourable Leader of the second opposition party does not have a point of order, but I would remind the honourable Minister of Education and Training to use discretion in the choice of his words.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I respect your wish and indeed the useless verbiage that has been put on the record has been put on the record by the Leader of the third party. The Leader of the third party, I have never heard her say anything different than keep dumping more money. More money will save everything, and on every issue that she speaks, it is a matter of throwing dollars at the situation, and in that way she feels that she can cure everyone's ills, and cure every situation in the world and become the appealing kind of individual that Manitobans are going to love.

Well, I have to indicate that Manitobans are looking for responsible government, a government that takes its responsibilities seriously, and indeed it is time to examine the priorities that we have in all of our departments. In the Department of Education and Training, we have given due consideration to all of the areas that we have responsibility for.

* (1610)

Madam Chair, I would like to remind the Leader of the third party (Mrs. Carstairs) that increases to Special Needs were given last year. The increases

in Level II went from 66 to 71 hundred per student, and the Level III area went from 13,000 to 15,800 per student, in addition to the regular increases that have been passed along to the school divisions.

School Divisions have also been receiving inflation rate increases to their funding for three budget years. This year, Madam Chair, because of the fiscal situation in the province and the enormous debt that this province has and the deficit that we are facing, we have had to make to some very difficult decisions.

We have also called in school divisions to set their priorities carefully in terms of how they deliver programming. Madam Chair, I have not heard one single complaint from school divisions or superintendents about the flexibility given them through the Special Needs funding area. I have talked to school divisions around the province. To this point in time, I have not heard one concern expressed by the leadership of the school divisions. That means the school boards themselves or the superintendents who are the chief executive officers of the school divisions.

Madam Chair, let the Leader of the third party not put on the record that there is a danger of the Special Needs programming being in jeopardy in this province because that is simply not the case. As I indicated, we, for the first time in the province, now have guidelines for Special Needs Education which has not been present before. It was not put in place by the former administration, it was put in place by this minister and this administration. Madam Chair, we are moving towards quality education in this province. Indeed, we do have quality education but it needs to be fine tuned and improved in some areas. We are steadily moving in that direction.

We are going to set our priorities. We are going to set them very carefully, and we will ensure that those priorities will be followed up by action policies.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, earlier in this Estimates process, I suggested to the minister that instead of his personal staff getting a 3.5 percent increase, he should look to some of his other figures in his budget for where he has cut. According to his own figures in 1989-90, the province was contributing 46.9 percent overall to the cost of Special Needs funding—as of '90-91, 44.8 percent; as of '91-92, 43.6 percent.

The problem is that the education costs have been offloaded to the municipalities, to the school divisions throughout the province of Manitoba. If

there is a maintenance of the quality of education, it will have nothing to do with the administration of this minister and everything to do with the fact that the property taxpayers are paying through the nose on a tax levy which is inequitable. They would like to go to the public of this province and say they have not increased taxes, but they have increased taxes. They have increased taxes substantially simply by offloading to the school divisions and, therefore, to the municipalities.

I want to know from the minister how quality programming can be maintained according to his own guidelines when he and his department have opted out of their responsibility to adequately fund. Unless, of course, he expects the school divisions to pick up the slack and, therefore, the property taxpayers of the province.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, when we look at budget over budget, we have increased funding to the public schools at 3.4 percent.

We had to set some priorities. We have called upon school divisions to set priorities as well to ensure that they chose carefully the programs that are essential and the money that they spend on programs.

We heard this same rhetoric when we supported schools at 4.6 percent, at the level of inflation. We hear it when we support them at 3.4 percent, and I am sure we will hear it continuously from the opposition.

Madam Chair, one of the problems that we have encountered is the funding approach that has been used over years, which in some school divisions has meant that low-spending school divisions continually get less, while high-spending school divisions continually get more. We have boxed ourselves into an area where we have to adjust those kinds of expenditures in a proper manner. That is why we are moving towards a new Ed Finance model, to ensure that there is more equitable distribution of the resources that we have.

Madam Chair, we have made our allocations and funding to ensure that essential programs can be protected, can be maintained and to ensure that our priorities are set clear. We have also called upon school divisions to set their priorities carefully, to ensure that the most essential programs are protected and to ensure that the programs that they offer within their communities are those that the communities want and need. It is up to the school board in that community to decide on the level of

taxation that they are going to levy to maintain those programs.

Madam Chair, we have done all we can in a year when we have diminishing revenues for the province, when the revenues for this province are basically flat, less than 1 percent, at a time when expenditures are in excess of 3 percent. Our deficit, and I do not need to remind the member the level of our deficit, we cannot continue to keep reaching into taxpayers pockets, because we are the highest taxed province in this country. That does no one any good.

Indeed, we have indicated very clearly that our priority departments are Health, Education and Family Services, and these three departments have received the lion's share of revenue or of support from the Treasury. Madam Chair, there is not much more that I can say except that we will continue to maintain the essential and important programs to ensure that the quality of education in this province continues to be of high calibre.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chair, I feel compelled to respond somewhat to the minister's statement with respect to the funding. There is no question the minister provided us with figures. He read them into the record, that the average special levy increase across the province is at least 10 percent. That is a direct offload onto every taxpayer, every single man, woman and child in this particular province.

Not only are the taxes increasing, but the programs are being cut and teachers are being let go, all of this at the same time. So we are not even talking about a tax increase alone. We are talking about a tax increase and a deterioration in programs. The minister's own figures indicate that, particularly when you look at the special needs area.

I am curious. The minister has given us a figure of 3.4 percent increase budget over budget. Where does that figure come from?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, as I indicated previously, the year-over-year appropriation budget to budget, for education, public and private schools, is 3.4 percent. When we talk about the offloading and we talk about the costs, once again I have to reiterate the fact that now both the Liberals and the NDPs continue to call for massive sums of money to be dumped into programs, to be gouged out of taxpayers' pockets, at a time when the taxpayer is stretched as far as the taxpayer can be stretched.

I have indicated time and time again that we have had to make some difficult choices, that we have had to set some priorities at a time when the revenues to this province are flat, at a time when the deficit is eating 48 cents out of every tax dollar of this province. That is not a laughing matter; that is a serious situation. Based on that reality, we have had to make some very difficult choices.

I indicate that that debt was not created by this government. It is the debt that is being paid for that has been left by the former administration, and it is a debt that is going to be paid for, for a long time. Unfortunately, this year the revenues, because of the recession, are at zero. Our agricultural economy is under extreme stress.

We cannot go back to those people who do not have the dollars to spend on the essentials and ask them for more dollars because we cannot set our priorities. Madam Chair, we have had to set our priorities. We have had to set them very carefully. We have asked that every school division do the same, not necessarily pass that shortfall on to the taxpayer, but indeed they have a responsibility to set their priorities and set their programs in that fashion.

* (1620)

Yes, we have also called upon the Manitoba teachers to dampen their expectation from the public purse because this is a time, in a recession, when we have to ask ourselves whether or not we are going to take more out of the system or whether we are going to perhaps dampen our expectations and allow for the services and the staff levels to be maintained at their current levels. Those are all choices we all have to make given the situation that we face. It is not one that is easy; it is not one that any of us relishes to make, but it is necessary if we are going to continue to survive and provide high-level programs in the future for the children of this province.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, how can I put it? The minister is wrong, 100 percent wrong and inaccurate. He puts in place special education guidelines in 1989—admirable. He does not provide the proper funding. What does he expect Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to do, with respect to special needs funding, when he funds it at 26 percent of the operating budget? Do they expect it to manufacture it from the air, or are they going to have to either do one of two things, cut programs or raise taxes?

The unfortunate thing that has happened in this province is that school divisions have been forced to cut programs and raise taxes at least on an average of 10 percent across this province. That is where the difficulty lies with the minister's logic.

The minister has often accused us and has accused all the parties of wanting to only spend money and spend money, and the minister talks about his difficult choices. I would like to talk about some of the choices the minister has made.

The minister chose—and I quote, he has used the word: he is giving \$7 million a year to private companies to force them to train. I would like to be given money to be forced to do something. He has decided to give additional funding to the tune of \$10 million a year ultimately with respect to private schools. They have chosen to give tax breaks to corporations by virtue of the education and health levy. He has chosen to hire an official, a Ph.D. official, in his own department whose salary could probably fund two special needs teachers in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Yes, there are choices, but I am saying the minister has made the wrong choices in a whole series of areas. Guidelines mean nothing, Mr. Minister, and you have said that about the guidelines in terms of school closures. Guidelines mean nothing if they are not funded, and I have said it before, it amounts to unfunded rhetoric on the part of the minister.

How does the minister justify funding Winnipeg School Division No. 1 Special Needs at 26 percent in 1991-92, and how does he expect them to adhere to those guidelines without tax increases?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, that member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) puts some rhetoric on the record. I would like to read back his government's record in terms of how they supported education when they were in government, and now he screams about the level of support that this government has provided for education.

It is true that we have had to set some priorities. We have set them carefully. We have established the guidelines for special needs. His party could not do that. They did not have the ability, they did not have the know-how to establish those guidelines. They did not have the will to do that.

Let us go back to 1985, we do not have to go back any further than that, and look at the percentage change in terms of support to school divisions. I

might include in this—well, I do not have to, I guess—I do not have to look at the CPI, but let us just look at the support that was given to school divisions.

In 1985-86, when the revenues to this province were running at around 6 percent or 7 percent or perhaps higher, the government of the day supported school divisions by 2 percent, 2 percent, Madam Chair, when revenues to the province were in excess of 6 percent. The following year, 1986-87, 1.7 percent.

What has our record been? Let us look at it: 1987-88, when we took over government, 9.2 percent; 1988-89, 7.8 percent; 1989-90, 7.2 percent; 1990-91, 7.7 percent, far above the level of CPI within this province. Let not the member stand up in his place and criticize the level of support that we have given to school divisions by comparison to what his government did when they were in office because it was a shame when his government was in office in terms of how they did not support education in this province.

Although he may wish to stand up on his little soap box and scream about the level of support to education today, all I ask him to do is do his research and look at the levels of support that were offered to education when his party was in government in this province and then perhaps he will appreciate what is really happening in the area of education today.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for those comments. Those comments will be cold comfort when you go to the taxpayers in the inner city of Winnipeg or when you talk to the parents who have trouble getting special needs funding.

That is going to make one heck of a difference, Madam Chairperson, to the parents in the city of Winnipeg who are forced to take that money out of their pockets. It is going to make a real lot of difference to tell them what the NDP did. That illustrates the problem—(interjection)—if the minister would let me complete it, in the mentality of this particular minister and the backward-looking vision of this particular regime.

Instead of pointing forward and trying to determine where they want to go, when they get criticized, they hold up in the air—I could quote and I have done it before. I suppose I could play the game too and quote back the minister's statements. It does not affect the situation today. We are talking about 1991, Madam Chairperson. We are talking about the situation in Manitoba as it exists today.

This government has been given a responsibility, a mandate and is not fulfilling it or living up to it at all.

I have a specific question about the documentation that was provided yesterday by the minister, for clarification purposes. I am somewhat confused by what the minister indicated. With respect to this documentation that says categorical block equalization and guaranteed support, do those figures include special needs support or not? I was under the impression yesterday they did not, but from the comments of the minister today, I am under the impression that they do include the special needs support.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, to the first part of the member's comments, might I indicate, let the record speak for itself because, seriously, when you look at the levels of support that the former administration afforded education and compare them to the funding levels that this administration is affording education, we stand head and shoulders above what the former administration did in every respect.

Yes, Madam Chair, there are new realities, there are new pressures, but indeed we have a fiscal reality before us that just will not go away. Indeed, it is going to demand all of our efforts to ensure that we handle it in an appropriate way.

Madam Chair, to his question with regard to the grant structure, indeed it did include special needs in terms of the categorical aspect.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, with respect to the special needs as a percentage of allowable expenditures, sheet 40 that the minister had provided us with yesterday, I note that seven school divisions are not at the rate of 50 percent funding of special needs. I am wondering when the minister can indicate those school divisions will achieve that total?

* (1630)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I think I have been over that ground before, but I will reiterate that this is all as a result of the funding approach that has been used since 1984. Indeed, we have indicated that there is a need to change the funding formula, and all of this is going to be taken into consideration in the development of the new funding approach for schools, and special needs is a part of the funding approach that is going to be changed for schools once the new funding formula is announced.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, am I correct in assuming that it is government policy that they will

try to achieve a level of 50 percent funding of special needs?

Mr. Derkach: I have never indicated, Madam Chair, that is what we are striving for. Indeed, we will be looking at the overall funding to school divisions. I cannot, at this point in time, predict whether it is going to be at the level of 50 percent or something somewhat less or higher than that. It is too premature to suppose any figure at this time.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister points often to the government's increases to Level II and Level III funding. I wonder if the minister can actually give me figures as to what the numbers are for Level II and Level III individuals in the province in terms of totals?

Mr. Derkach: Level II funding, Madam Chair, on a per pupil basis, went from \$6,600 to \$7,100 per student. Level III funding went from \$13,200 per student to \$15,800 per student.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, can the minister indicate how many Level II and Level III students there are in the province?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the total Level II pupils in the province, the estimated number for 1991 is 1,280.5. In the Level III category, the estimate for 1990-91 is 233.5 students.

Mr. Chomlak: I am wondering if the minister has a division-by-division breakdown of those figures. If he does so, could he table it?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I do not have the figures in the proper format here, but I will obtain them for the member for tomorrow.

Mr. Chomlak: I thank the minister for that undertaking.

I would like to explore the divergence, in terms of figures, between some divisions and other divisions as it relates to special needs funding. We have made note of the fact the Winnipeg School Division's special needs funding as a percentage of its allowable expenditures is only 26 percent whereas other divisions—for example, Antler River is funded at 71.5 percent. I am wondering if the minister can outline for me some reasons as to why this substantial difference in funding levels exists?

Mr. Derkach: Well, Madam Chair, once again, the types of programs that divisions deliver and offer will depend on the richness of the program, if you like. The reason that Winnipeg No. 1 costs are so high is indeed a result of the fact that they do have a very

elaborate program for special needs within that division. It is as a result of that that you have that type of figure, if you like, so, I am not critical of the fact that they have that type of a program. Indeed it is their choice, and it is their priority in terms of how they spend their division's dollars, but the reality is that they do have a fairly elaborate program for special needs.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I think this gets at the nub of what I see as a major problem. Does the minister, by virtue of that statement, mean to say that the special needs child in Antler River is not entitled to the same "elaborate program" as the child in Winnipeg School Division No. 1?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I am not saying anything of the kind. First of all, let us remember that special needs programming can become very elaborate, or it can become what we might consider basic. A child in Antler River School Division or in any school division across this province, who has special needs, needs to have those special needs addressed. We have identified an amount of dollars on a per student basis that we are prepared to spend on special needs programming. This has been established over a course of time in terms of the type of programming that might be essential for that child.

Now, every school division in this province can beef up, if you like, or can improve upon the programming by spending some of the special levy that they can raise within their own jurisdictions and setting priorities in terms of programs within their jurisdictions, so I have no way of judging whether the needs of a child in Antler River are the same as they are of a specific child in Winnipeg 1. Indeed, the essentials that are provided through the funding that we have through the department would indicate that there is enough funding there to provide special needs programming for each child that needs it.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, does it not strike the minister as odd that one school division has its special needs at 26 percent and another school division at 70 percent or 80 percent or 85 percent? Does that not indicate to the minister some divergence in terms of programming?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I have always advocated that the amount of money that is spent on a particular program does not necessarily say anything specific about the quality of that program. I have indicated that the amount of money that we are expending on special needs would provide

special needs programming for children within the province.

It is up to the school divisions to then examine their priorities in terms of the types of programs they want to deliver to the students within their jurisdiction. Indeed, that is why the school board members are elected by the community because they will have to reflect the wishes of the community in terms of the programs that they set. Those are the choices that school divisions have.

* (1640)

We do set some minimum standards across this province in terms of what we would like to see offered as an essential education. It does not mean that some school divisions can offer more elaborate programs based on the revenues that they have the possibility to gain through the special levies. Indeed, if you were to compare some of the choices of programs within the urban setting and then you were to venture out into rural Manitoba and take a look at some of the choices that are available there, I am afraid you would find a fairly large discrepancy in the types of regular programming, never mind the special needs programming.

Let us just talk about the regular programs. You will find the availability of courses within some of our small, rural schools are just not there. It is just not possible to provide them, yet within some of our larger urban schools the choices are available because of the larger population, because of the richer school division perhaps and being able to offer the choices that they do. So school divisions have some responsibility in terms of the amount of money that they spend on all types of programs, not just Special Needs, but on all types of programs.

As a department we have a responsibility to ensure that we support the basic programs, the essential programs, and indeed we support them at the level at which the programming can be respectable and can still meet the basic needs of that child who is within that program.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, does the minister not see a part of his role in the role of the department to provide some sort of equity between programs in various parts of the province?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, if you take a look at the formula that was in place which was instituted in 1984 by the then administration, that was based on school divisions receiving money based on their supportable expenditures, which meant the more

you spent, the more you got. We can see why we have the problem with equity in this province. That is the reason that we have something called equalization as well, because some divisions cannot raise the money to support the programs that they require.

As I indicated to the member earlier, there will be an equalization component in the new formula. So let me make it very clear that the formula, the course that we were embarked on previously, was a disaster, that indeed the divisions that were spending more were having more to spend. Divisions that were watching their budgets were getting poorer and were able to provide less. That is why we had such an inequitable situation in this province. We have tried to correct it.

This year we were not even able to utilize that GSE formula to any extent because it provided such a discrepancy. Therefore, we have had to, in a transition year, use something that was completely different that kind of addressed each divisions needs based on what that division required.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister made reference to certain minimum standards that the department ensures are co-ordinated throughout the province. What minimum standards does the ministry co-ordinate with respect to Special Needs?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I guess we could spend a great deal of time talking about the specific programs within each of the levels, whether its Levels I, II, or III, but I would ask the member to defer that kind of questioning when we get into the PDSS area and we talk about the Special Needs programs.

Mrs. Carstairs: It seems to me that it has been about three years since we changed the rules with respect to Low Incidence funding, when it had to be a supported expense. Now of course it is considered basically a percentage of the student body that would warrant a block grant from the province.

Can the minister tell the House if there has been any evaluation done of that and whether it is working to the disadvantage of school divisions like Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and Frontier School Division, who clearly have far more than the normal ratio of Low Incidence I students?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, it is correct that change in the approach to funding Special Needs, a Level I Special Needs, was done about three years

ago, and it was done to take money from the administrative function in terms of negotiating each and every case in the Level I area and to allow school divisions to access the money and deliver programs as they best saw fit for the needs of the students within their jurisdictions.

When you talk about the funding issue, and we will not get into the program side, but the funding side, I think it is important to note that we are undergoing a major review of funding all education from kindergarten to Grade 12 which would mean that we will address the Special Needs funding through that mechanism. We are not going to be reviewing the effectiveness of funding Level I and try to change that in the interim. Instead it will be addressed through the Ed Finance model and indeed the advisory committee is doing their work on that model at the present time.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, but the minister has put on the record the fact that the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has a very rich program with respect to Special Needs, and that is why, and that is their priority, the minister says, and that is why they have to look to their own budget in coming up with some almost 74 percent of the funding for the special needs children.

Can the minister tell the House the percentage of the children in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 who have been identified as requiring Special Needs funding, and would he compare that, for example, with a school division like St. James-Assiniboia?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, first of all I think it should be noted that I did not say that they were an expensive program. I said they were an elaborate program, one that Winnipeg School Division has seen fit to support and has seen fit to develop, and I do not criticize Winnipeg No. 1 for doing that. That is something that is within the responsibility of that school division.

In terms of the support the department gives to Winnipeg No. 1, I might indicate that there are special grants that go to Winnipeg No. 1. There is a \$2 million grant that is made available to Winnipeg No. 1 in recognition of the fact that they do have special needs students and a greater share of special needs students than perhaps other school divisions have. So the department has made that recognition, that acknowledgement of the fact that Winnipeg No. 1 programs are somewhat more elaborate than other school divisions.

I might indicate that other school divisions do not receive these special grant monies. There has been a special allocation given to Winnipeg No. 1 for the purpose of recognizing the programs that they have and also the needs that they have in that school division.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, when I use the word "rich," and I used rich instead of expensive, I meant rich in form of programming, but the minister did not answer the question. The question was: What is the percentage of children who have been identified in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 as requiring Special Needs Education, whether it is Level I, Level II or Level III, and how does that percentage compare with a school division like St. James-Assiniboia?

The minister and his staff know where I am coming from in this area, because we have an extremely high native component of our Winnipeg School Division, and all the studies that have identified aboriginal students have identified them as having anywhere from 5 percent to a 20 percent special needs problem as they enter school.

What percentages have the Department of Education identified, by division? I would like those two divisions in particular, because there is generally the recognition that St. James-Assiniboia, which gets 54.5 percent of its allowable expenditures, and Winnipeg No. 1, which gets 26.0 percent—how are they indeed dealing with an entirely different population mix in its student body?

* (1650)

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, combining the Level II and Level III students in each of the two divisions, Winnipeg No. 1 would have a total of 306 or 1 percent of the student population, and St. James-Assiniboia in the Levels II and III category would have 147 or 1.5 percent of the total population.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, I do not know whether the minister deliberately avoided the question here, but there is, in fact, direct supportable expenditure for Level II and Level III which is by far more substantial than what is available at Level I. It is Level I which has the greatest number of students in it. There is no question about that.

What are the Level I figures for Winnipeg and for St. James-Assiniboia? I see the minister nodding his head. Perhaps the answer is that they do not have those numbers because, of course, they have

gone to a formula. Has there been any evaluation, because ever since they changed the formula, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has been getting a reduced percentage from the provincial government?

The minister may have forgotten but I, in fact, raised serious concerns that I had at the moment when he changed the funding formula. The concerns I raised at that time were that I was concerned that divisions like Frontier and Winnipeg School Division No. 1 would end up getting fewer and fewer and fewer dollars met for the support of their Incidence I children. Does the minister not know what effect his change of formula has in fact had on the delivery of dollars to the school divisions which have the highest incidence of Low Incidence I?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, the question that the member asks now is specifically targeted at Level I. Perhaps she did not get the answer that she was expecting in Levels II and III, so now she wants to know the answer with regard to Level I.

It is true that the department does not keep statistics for Level I, because Level I formula has changed to where we do not monitor and we do not spend money on the administrative side of it, whereby we have to justify every single student in the Level I category. Rather, we have allowed school divisions to use their resources. In some cases, Level I students may have very minor deficiencies in terms of their disabilities and can be handled and mainstreamed in a most appropriate fashion. In some instances, a little more requirement is demanded because of the learning disabilities that those students have.

The Level I support is based on the number of eligible units and the grant per eligible pupil as determined by a schedule. The schedule is such: if the enrollment is greater than 1,600, the number of eligible units is determined by dividing that number by 160, and it is calculated to the nearest one-tenth. The grant per eligible student in that case would be \$20. If it is 1,600 or less but greater than 1,200, the number of eligible units is 10 and the grant is still at \$20. It goes down on a schedule of that nature to where if there are less than 100 students within a given school, the grant per eligible pupil would be \$200.

Madam Chair, that is a grant that has been worked out by the department. Indeed, it may not meet the absolute needs of every school division, but it is a

way of addressing the needs of Level I students in the most effective way. I would not say this is the most effective way of addressing those needs, but that whole area of special needs funding is part of the Ed Finance review. The advisory committee and staff are examining the adequacy of the funding levels, not only Level I, but in Levels II and III as well. So once the new funding formula is arrived at, perhaps we will have a more accurate reflection of serving the needs of the students who are there.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, when the government changed the funding formula for Low Incidence I, I pointed out that Alberta, at exactly the same time, was reverting. They had tried the formula that the government was trying and found that there were school divisions that, quite frankly, were disadvantaged as a result of that formula. I pointed that out to the minister.

I am surprised that they have not monitored it because I would think that a simple phone call to Winnipeg School Division No. 1 could, indeed, explain that the Low Incidence rate is proportionately much higher than in most other school divisions in the province of Manitoba, with perhaps the exception of the Frontier School Division.

Can the minister tell us why then, if he believes that the contribution to Winnipeg School Division No. 1, in terms of their overall expenditures, has been declining as it declined for several years for Frontier, although this year it went up slightly, it is not directly attributable to the number of children they have identified as Low Incidence and for whom they are providing programming?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, once again, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has been receiving special grants from the department in recognition of the fact that they do have special needs students. This year alone Winnipeg School Division will receive a grant of \$2 million to address the special needs students within that division. I must also indicate that the programs that Winnipeg No. 1 have are somewhat elaborate and that means that they will be spending more money on those programs than other divisions by comparison.

Thirdly, I have indicated also that this whole area of special needs funding is under review with the review of all funding to schools. Indeed, not only will the financial side of it be examined but, indeed, the program side of it will be examined, as well, to ensure that there is a consistent approach in the way

that we address funding and programs to special needs students, once that funding announcement is going to be made at the end of the summer.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chair, since the minister consistently talks about the elaborate programming of Winnipeg No. 1, would he now like to describe the elaborate programming that is going on in Winnipeg No. 1 which means that they have to spend almost 75 percent of their tax dollars to support special needs children?

Mr. Derkach: Once again, Madam Chair, as I indicated, Winnipeg School Division, just like any other school division in the province, has to set their priorities in the terms of the kinds of programs that they deliver to students throughout the division.

In addition to that, Madam Chair, I have to indicate that Winnipeg School Division No. 1 also receives 87 percent of the inner-city grants. They receive 45 percent of the Compensatory grant. They receive 44 percent of the ELDNS grant and they receive 42 percent of the ESL grants, so Winnipeg No. 1 does have the opportunity to tap into a lot of these other programs as well. Besides that, as I have indicated, Winnipeg No. 1 does receive \$2 million in consideration of the fact that they do have a large population of special needs students.

* (1700)

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

Committee Report

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions and directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 32—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. John's (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), Bill 32, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Mount Carmel Clinic, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 22—The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr), Bill 22, The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Régie de l'énergie du Manitoba, standing in the name of the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

Bill 23—Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 23, The Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil interculturel du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

Bill 24—The Business Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Boniface, Bill 24, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who has two minutes remaining.

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

Bill 25—The Environment Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), Bill 25, The Environment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur L'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

Bill 26—The Environment Amendment Act (3)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), Bill 26, The Environment Amendment Act (3); Loi no 3 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James, who has 12 minutes remaining.

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with Bill 16? No. Number 17? No. Are we proceeding with Bill 27? No.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9—Postal Rate Increases

Mr. Speaker: Resolution of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), Resolution 9, Postal Rate Increases.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk),

WHEREAS the federal government has increased postal rates for community newspapers by as much as 800 percent; and

WHEREAS this puts the future of many community newspapers of this province in jeopardy; and

WHEREAS, as an example, the Stonewall Argus, an Interlake weekly paper is expecting an 840 percent increase in mailing costs so that it is now more expensive to mail this paper than the cost of production and publication; and

WHEREAS in order to survive some newspapers in the Interlake and throughout Manitoba have had to switch to putting their papers in distribution boxes and stop mailing to individuals; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Co-operator, to cite another example, will have its mailing costs increased from \$150,000 to over \$750,000; and

WHEREAS community newspapers provide a vital service binding together rural communities and reflecting their concerns and interests; and

WHEREAS the more than 40 community and farm weekly newspapers with a circulation of over 200,000 are all under great pressure because of the postal rate increase.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the federal minister responsible for Canada Post to consider rolling back these postal increases on newspapers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly call on the federal minister responsible for Canada Post to consider halting the closures of rural post offices.

Motion presented.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today on this resolution. There are more than 40 community and farm weekly newspapers in Manitoba today. For example, in the Interlake area which I represent we have the Interlake Spectator, Stonewall Argus, along with nearby papers, the Selkirk Enterprise and the Selkirk Journal, part of my honourable colleague's constituency.

Also, Mr. Speaker, just lately, within this past year, we have had another local newspaper, a small newspaper, the Interlake Leader, attempting to get its feet off the ground and supply the people within the Interlake with an abundance of community service and information. These community newspapers may not seem like a very big deal to people from Winnipeg. The people from Winnipeg are used to reading the Winnipeg Free Press, Winnipeg Sun and perhaps Globe and Mail from Toronto, but the community newspapers are as, if not more, important than the larger newspapers which I have just mentioned in Winnipeg.

Community newspapers are a major source of local news, news that the city newspapers do not cover but which is very relevant to the communities surrounding them. For example, people can read about issues which were discussed at the last town

council meeting, local news that is not covered in the large urban dailies, or they can watch the local sports team and its progress at the regional competition level.

In addition, it was these same small local papers that brought to residents' attention the disastrous effects of the recent Conservative budget on rural communities. The people who were laid off in Natural Resources, Highways and many other departments are not just numbers to rural Manitoba. They are individuals who have families in their communities. The schools that are being closed in rural communities, along with the post offices and grain elevators, are devastating rural communities in Manitoba. They may not be on the front pages of Winnipeg papers, but to rural Manitobans they are important.

Another important factor is the connection with the old hometown that these community weeklies provide. Because of the severe job cuts in the budget and this government's obvious lack of concern for rural communities, there will be many people leaving their home towns to find jobs elsewhere. The only link that they will have with their community is the local newspaper.

These community weeklies offer a high quality of journalism. Just the other day I was reading the Interlake Spectator and was impressed by the reporting. Agricultural Region No More—that, Mr. Speaker, was the headline to an excellent story on the cut of the Interlake as a separate agricultural region and the resulting of three lost jobs. Another well-written story, 4-H Wounded by Budget Cuts, tells of the government taking the budget knife to a rural sacred cow.

* (1710)

There is more. Arts Programs Hit in Interlake, Rural Jobs on Hold, and Bad News from the Municipalities—these stories underline just how much these communities need the weekly papers, and just how much they are reeling from the effects of a majority Conservative government in Ottawa and in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of the federal Tories that Manitoba now stands to lose our community newspapers. Massive postal rate increases are threatening to reduce the papers' frequency by 800 percent, reduce their circulation or close them down entirely. The Stonewall Argus, for an example, faces an 840 percent postal rate increase. I ask: Where will the Stonewall Argus be able to pay for

the 840 percent postal rate increase? They will have to go to their subscribers and increase their subscriptions. They will have to increase their advertising. They will have to do away with perhaps weekly, and go to monthly issues instead of weekly issues.

The Manitoba Co-operator itself is going to pay over 500 percent more. This important rural paper, farm paper, community paper, where is it going to receive its money to pay for the 500 percent increase? Again, it is going to have to go to the advertisers. It is going to have to go to the subscribers. These enormous increases have been postponed until June 1991. That is why it is so important to have this resolution passed quickly while there still is time to act. It would be a tragedy, Mr. Speaker, to lose even one of these newspapers.

If the rate increases go into effect in June, I am sure we will lose several by the end of the year, a tragedy in rural Manitoba for the people and for the papers that are involved at the present time. Furthermore, many rural post offices have been closed in the last year, and now we find out that the Brandon post office is expected to close down on May 27. Despite the fact that rural Manitobans have lobbied hard to save their local post offices, the Conservative government continues to shut them down. It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that this government for three years has refused to take a stand in favour of Rural Dignity, the leading organization in the fight to keep rural post offices.

The revelation of my colleague, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that this government was shipping mail to the United States, just shows how little this government understands the importance of rural newspapers and post offices.

The rural newspapers, in effect, do supply an enormous amount of community information, community communications. Small businesses are able to advertise. Communities are able to advertise the fact of whether they are having dinners, whether they are having functions for their families, birth announcements.

These community newspapers are important, and living in rural Manitoba for seven to eight years, I realize the importance of the rural newspaper. Not getting the Free Press or the Winnipeg Sun on an often basis, we all depended on the rural newspapers to tell and to get the news of what was happening in our communities from 10 or 15 or 20 miles away, what was happening there, what was

happening in the schools there, what was happening in the local businesses, what was happening for sales, what was happening for auctions.

These increases are a shame and a sham on the rural municipality newspapers. In effect, once these newspapers start dropping like flies, the post offices are also going to be affected to the point where they are not going to be able to keep their doors open. As advertising costs increase, post offices themselves will close and offer less service.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read you a comment made by one of the community newspapers, the Opasquia Times, and it mentions the fact of the reprieve until June. "Reprieve—postponement or cancellation of a punishment, especially of the death sentence, temporary relief from danger, postponement of trouble." That is the way the Oxford dictionary defines a word that is popular these days with editors and publishers of weekly newspapers. That killer rate increase which was going to be levied on them March 1 has been postponed, but only briefly.

Briefly, I say, Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues and the members of this House—rural Manitobans are wondering just what future the communities have with a majority government in Ottawa and, in this province, rural Manitoba is facing cut after cut. They talk sustainable development and then cut Natural Resources, cut Parks, cut Forestry, cut Highways and cut Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, rural Manitobans read, and what they read in their weekly newspapers are farm auctions and closures and families moving away. It makes them worry about the future of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: As we all do.

Mr. Cliff Evans: If I may continue, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members from this side -(interjection)- Well, I guess I can continue on the reflection of the cuts that this provincial government has incurred on rural Manitoba, in my area alone of the job losses and natural resources, jobs that are being lost.

The people in the Interlake and around Ashern, Riverton and Arborg, basically get their information, the exact information of what has happened, from their local newspaper, not from the Winnipeg Free Press or not from the Winnipeg Sun where it is generalized. They get the exact amounts. They get who is going. They get where it is going, why it is going. These increases that are going to be

imposed by the federal Tories, again, are going to just destroy this information, this communication to the people.

Mr. Speaker, I had the misfortune of being in Riverton this afternoon for a sad, sad event. I was talking to some of my constituents who said, you know, we have been looking in the Free Press to see what kind of news on the cuts at Hecla. The cuts here and the cuts there are affecting Riverton. I was told that, well, we did read about it in the Interlake Leader and the Spectator. They are asking me, why do the major papers not put this information out in more terms? I tell them, and I told them today as I spoke to them today.

I spoke to the editor of the Interlake Leader yesterday. She is afraid, Mr. Speaker. She is afraid—she has been in operation for a year, she has been struggling—that she is not going to be able to operate. She operates out of just her own little office. She has one reporter who goes out with her to get information. They work hard.

Of all these newspapers in rural Manitoba, for their operating cost, to help with the increases, they are going to have to cut somewhere. They will have to cut stock. They might have to cut newsprint. They might have to cut jobs, jobs again, but the other side loves to hear that, loves to hear about the fact of job cutting, especially in rural Manitoba.

So we in rural Manitoba and in the Interlake are concerned. We are concerned about this increase. Either it is increase or it is cut, increase or cut. There is no substantial thought about what should be done.

* (1720)

Mr. Speaker, in my resolution, I have asked this Assembly also to call on the federal minister to consider halting the closure of the rural post offices. Everything is going to go down the line—job cuts, reporter cuts. People are going to be again looking for work, looking for communication, looking for information and not being able to have any.

I close, Mr. Speaker, with the fact that it is an important part of our rural communities. It is an important part of rural Manitoba to maintain these local community papers and post offices. I urge this Assembly to call on the federal ministers responsible for Canada Post to roll back the cuts, the increases, and to consider halting all the closures in rural Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. -(interjection)-

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, if the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) could speak as well from his feet as he does his seat, he would make an excellent contribution to this place. Too bad he would not, at some point, stand and be counted when it comes to issues like this.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this resolution by the member for Interlake. I say in general principle, as it comes to supporting rural Manitoba and the support systems to rural Manitoba, I have no difficulty with at all.

Let me further say, the record and the past traditions of the New Democratic Party—

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Oh, come on. Let us get together on this.

Mr. Downey: Well, the member for Dauphin all at once gets very sensitive just because I start to point out his traditional habits of the past and his record.

Mr. Speaker, one would want to, first of all, examine the numbers which have been placed before us in this resolution. I do not know where the member for Interlake had his research done or who did his research for him to provide the kind of information that he has presented to the Assembly today. Not that I am overly anxious to question in detail the numbers, but one would want to make sure we are talking in factual terms. Again, I do not disagree with the thrust of trying to maintain reasonable cost to provide the services to rural communities through the newspaper industry.

Let me say, I do put that in question, and I think it will need a little more work to further justify the figures of which he has placed before us.

The resolution, itself, I think is one which is, in its presentation, again based somewhat on a political motivation which the member for Interlake clearly demonstrated in his attack -(interjection)- Let me just try to put it into perspective. He clearly turned it into a politically motivated resolution when he started to slam the current government of the day, as it relates to jobs, to the reducing of some services and the accusations—and I call them accusations—of an attack on rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, a fine way to get support in this Assembly, to come in and kick or try to degrade the government on decisions and actions that we are taking, not particularly because we were anxious to do it, but because the former administration had placed this government in such a financial

straitjacket with the costs of doing business, with the costs of interest we have to pay on the debt that was incurred by the previous administration in the building of such things as the bridge north of Selkirk for some \$30 million without a road to either end of it, with the \$27 million that was frittered away in the sands of Saudi Arabia—\$27 million.

Those are the reasons that tough and difficult decisions have to be made as it relates to not just rural Manitoba, but difficult decisions as it relates to all Manitoba. The member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans), in his request for support for this resolution, I believe is a little bit irresponsible. In fact, not only a little bit irresponsible, I think a considerable amount of irresponsible attitude was shown by the member for Interlake when he, in fact, criticized the current government. Then he stands in his place and says, oh, we would like support for this resolution.

I would have thought that there would have been a different approach made to the requesting of support, as I said, in a general thrust to ask the federal government to ask the Canada Post Corporation, which is the proper procedural way to go about it, to ask them to reconsider the charges that have been placed on rural newspapers. I think that would be the appropriate way to do it, but there is a manner in which it should be done. I think that the member for Interlake over his short stay that he will be in the Legislature should maybe consider a different attitude as to getting support for important resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I have talked to the newspapers, and they have put forward what I would consider a very responsible lobby and a very responsible position on this whole issue, somewhat more responsible than what the member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) is doing and his approach to this whole question.

I did not see the rural newspapers come out and slam the current provincial government as it relates to this issue. Yes, I have seen them reporting as to their concerns about some of the decisions that are made, but not basically the kind of political posturing that was taken by the member for the Interlake. I think it is important again to cite some of the importance of the communications within rural Manitoba and trying to maintain the services at a reasonable cost.

You can cite, and the member did cite, all kinds of services that are provided by weekly and that type

of newspaper. I guess what we have to come to grips with as a country and as a society is where do the revenues come from to provide the services that are expected in our rural communities?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot at this particular time provide an opinion as to the efficiencies of operations. I think it would be incumbent upon an individual who were to bring forward such a resolution, to lay before this Assembly opportunities for the Canada Post Corporation to introduce efficiencies.

I would be interested to know what the position of the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) is as it comes to wage settlements within the Canada Post Corporation. I am surprised that he has not put any position forward as it comes to the actual operating costs of Canada Post. He has not talked about any wage increases over the past few years or future years. Does he expect individuals there to have their wages frozen? Is that what he is now proposing? He is proposing a major rollback.

The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) I hope would speak to this, as well. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who is so cocky in here—he is an expert when he is in opposition.

* (1730)

Mr. Speaker, what is the position of the New Democratic Party when it comes to the wage settlements with Canada Post? He is asking Canada Post to rollback, and I do not have any trouble with the thrust of it, the costs of delivering rural newspapers. -(interjection)-

How many hundred million profit did they make? Well, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), and I am quite aware of where you are from, has the opportunity to stand and put his position forward. Is he going to be requesting that Canada Post, in the rolling back of the costs of rural newspaper delivery, is he going to ask, as well, Canada Post Corporation employees take a zero increase in their wages or, in fact, is he going to propose that they have a rollback in their salaries? -(interjection)- Well, the member says, why should the employees take a rollback? I am suggesting not only employees, but the total cost of doing business.

Is he prepared to see a more efficient operation run so the costs can be lowered to the consumers or the users of the service, not unlike the actions that this government has tried to put forward in the operations and the administration of public affairs

within the province of Manitoba, that you have to come to grips with the overexpenditures of past activities of people who have felt, for some reason, that you could spend your way out of debt.

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) is getting a frown on his face when he said, oh, save us. Well, that is partly what this budget exercise is all about, to save the province, to save us from fiscal and financial chaos and disaster that we were headed on under the New Democratic Party.

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): It is just that you frowned me off.

Mr. Downey: I frowned him off. Well, I was going to use another expression, but I will not.

Those are the kinds of—I would suggest to the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), a little more rounded approach to this whole quick-fix solution that he is proposing as it relates to the cost of postal services. I am not defending in any way, I can make it very clear, the massive increases that our rural newspapers have had to face, but why did he not come forward with some alternative proposals as to what other costs could be reduced as it relates to Canada Post?

I would hope that a member of the New Democratic Party would say that they are prepared to advocate the employees within the Canada postal system. Oh, they are trying to brush this off because they do not like to talk in these terms but, the question is, are they prepared to advocate at least a reduction of, or a freezing of the people's wages who are working for Canada Post? Are they prepared to do that? I think that one has to take a balanced approach to the advice that is given. I think it is only fair and proper that when you are putting forward a solution that you not just take one particular, easy, political, short-term, fixed solution, as being proposed by the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), but you give a more rounded and complete solution to the problem.

Let me just say for this great saviour of rural Manitoba, who is proposing to be a saviour for rural Manitoba, the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that I would like him to take a look at the record of the New Democratic Party. When they made the decision some several years ago that they were going to reduce the RCMP coverage for some of the communities in rural Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: I do not know the relevance here.

Mr. Downey: Well, I can tell you that rural RCMP get their rural newspapers, and it costs money to send them their rural newspapers. So there is relevancy. The member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) is shaking in the affirmative. When I have his support, then I feel I am on the right road.

I would like him to stand in his place and to justify and to further support other ways in which the costs of doing business by Canada Post would, in fact, allow for the reduction of the costs to be provided for the delivery of rural newspapers. As I said, I think it is incumbent upon a responsible opposition to do just that and, if they are not a responsible opposition, then the public would perceive them simply as that. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party is an eight-second clip, something to get the attention of the public for eight seconds—

An Honourable Member: How about the newspapers?

Mr. Downey: Well, eight-second clips go into newspapers, too. That is really what his attempt is, to get a one-liner, to get on to the next subject.

I can tell you the exercise that this government is going through. I believe with the support of the provincial government to rural Manitoba, with what we have currently tried to do with our rural agricultural programs, some of the initiatives through rural development bonds that are in the process of being developed, that we will, in fact, enhance and see some activities take place that will give an opportunity for rural Manitoba to start to regenerate and rebuild itself. But the first thing that had to be done was to take some of the high costs of doing business, try and lower the cost of taxation on those individuals in rural Manitoba, as we have tried to do on all the people of Manitoba, and not continue to dig them into debt. Not to continue to dig them into debt, as the New Democratic Party was continuing to do. That is not a responsible way to go.

I believe the rural newspapers will benefit from this government's policies. The removal of the payroll tax, you know that again we have the New Democratic Party standing here so pious and so righteous, so righteous as to their approach to taxation policies and costs. Rural newspapers were hit just as hard by the former administration in the payroll tax in forcing them to pay for every employee that they had working for them. So do not let the members of the New Democratic Party stand there and say that they are great supporters of rural

newspapers or rural businesses of any kind, because they imposed the payroll tax on every newspaper outlet in this country, a tax on jobs, a tax on those people who are trying to create employment in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, let them come forward with a complete picture and a complete story as to this whole issue. I have to say that I am surprised that the member did not give a little more complete position and responsible solutions to the problem.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a few words on this particular topic, because something that all of us support is our community newspapers. We have a good reason to be somewhat concerned.

As the postal rates continue to increase, we find many community newspapers in a situation in which the cost of production or, I should say, the cost of mailing is exceeding the cost of production. That causes a great deal of concern to many members of this Chamber, no doubt, because these community newspapers benefit the communities in the sense that through these papers we are better able to find out what is going on around us.

It provides an opportunity for people to get their opinions and messages across through letters of concern in terms of letters to the editor. It provides avenues for the government of the day to be able to get their message across to the people, Mr. Speaker. It also provides an opportunity for those of us in opposition to get our message out to the communities. That is something that we have to underline when we take a look at the increase of postal rates and the direct impact it is going to have on the production of these newspapers.

We find more and more community newspapers are going down, because it is very competitive out there. We have to pay very close attention in terms of what we can do to ensure the long-term viability of these newspapers because, as I say, the long-term viability of these papers are in our best interest, because it is only through these papers that we are able to get the messages out.

A week does not go by when I do not receive some type of a community paper inside my mailbox, and I do page through them. I might not necessarily read every line, but I do page through them to see

what is going on in outside communities, in particular, communities outside the city of Winnipeg.

At one point I was a subscriber to the Minnedosa paper, wanting to keep an interest in terms of what is happening out in Minnedosa, Mr. Speaker. These community newspapers provide not only to the people who live within the communities that they are reporting on, they also provide information to members of this Chamber, to people who live in the city, people who used to live in the community.

* (1740)

Mr. Speaker, there are many people that used to live in rural Manitoba whose only source of contact or ability to be able to catch up on what is going on inside their communities is in fact to subscribe to one of these papers. If we continue to allow the postage rate to increase in the fashion that it has, some 800 percent over a short period of time, the community papers will start to disappear. If they start to disappear, I believe all Manitobans will lose, because they are such a valuable thing.

That is why I am somewhat surprised with the Deputy Premier's (Mr. Downey) remarks in response to the resolution when he stood up and said—I hope you will correct me if I am wrong—but basically said that this resolution is not too bad of a resolution if the member just was not so darn political in introducing it.

Mr. Downey: No, I said more than that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the Deputy Premier says he said a bit more than that, but the gist I believe, Mr. Speaker, was that the resolution itself is not too bad of a resolution, but the comments that the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) put on the record, he had taken offence to those comments, and that is the reason why. I could be proven wrong. Maybe we will let it come to a vote during private members' hour.

If that is the reason, because he personally felt offended that the member for Interlake said some things that he should not have said in order to get the resolution passed, maybe he did not give enough personal credit to the government. Maybe he did not say that the current government knows how to deal with their federal counterparts in an effective way and that is why we brought forward this resolution and we look forward to strong action on behalf of this government. Maybe if the member for Interlake would have said that, the Deputy Premier then would have said: My goodness, this is a

resolution that deserves the swift passage from this Chamber because he is giving us credit.

Mr. Speaker, one of the nicest things that came out of the member's speech was in fact at the end when he did not move an amendment to the resolution.

An Honourable Member: No?

Mr. Lamoureux: No, he did not move an amendment to the resolution, and that is somewhat pleasing in the sense that in the past what we have seen on resolutions that are brought forward, we have amendments being moved at every level.

An Honourable Member: Only when they were impartial. When I saw your last amendment I got very nervous.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, some things I will not touch now and I will reserve my comments for that one on tomorrow, or I should say Thursday.

We have to call into question the principles of the Deputy Premier and the reason or the rationale that he is using for not allowing this resolution to a vote.

He will stand in his place and say we have speakers that want to put their remarks on the record -(interjection)- from his seat he says, absolutely. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have passed resolutions in this Chamber before, and not every member has been able to speak.

If that is the only concern the Deputy Premier has, well, I would be receptive, the Liberal Party I am sure would be very receptive to allowing leave so that every member that wanted to speak on the resolution could speak on the resolution. I am even sure the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) would allow something of that nature, Mr. Speaker, if the government really and truly wanted to pass the resolution.

Rather, what I believe is that the Deputy Premier read through the resolution and in the back of his mind said, well, you know, this is something that we can live with. After all it is not impacting negatively on us. It is impacting somewhat negatively on our federal counterparts.

We have seen how negative they have been on their federal counterparts. They do not have any hesitation on slamming their federal cousins in Ottawa even though when come election time they are the first ones to put up the signs, the first ones to go out and seek political contributions on behalf of the federal Tories. Mr. Speaker, this resolution is no more out of what I would suggest is the norm on

this government taking their federal counterparts to task.

If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, then why will they not pass the resolution? Is it because they just do not want to pass private members' resolutions? Is it because they do not feel what private members bring to this Chamber are legitimate concerns of the province? We went through private members' hour today. Did the government comment on any of the bills? How long have they had those bills standing in their name? What are the government's intentions on private members' hour, Mr. Speaker?

I feel, I am of the opinion that when it comes to resolutions of this nature, when it comes to private members' bills, the real intent of this government is to talk about the hour, filibuster—we have seen how well they can filibuster, trust me on that one, Mr. Speaker—so that the resolutions do not pass.

This resolution that deals with the community newspapers is a resolution that most people in this Chamber—I am not too sure about the government side—could concur with, because really what it is asking is for the government to ask the federal government, our national government, to be a bit more responsible in the setting of the postage rates. That is, I do not believe, irresponsible. I think that is a resolution that does deserve some merit.

The Deputy Premier should not have been as fast to jump to the conclusion that this is not a resolution that his government can support, especially using the criteria or basing that opinion on a few words by the member for Interlake. Sure, the Deputy Premier said that he basically supports it.

Mr. Speaker, I know I would grant leave to hear what aspects he does not support of it or why in fact the Deputy Premier would vote against the resolution or what parts are bad. This is one of those resolutions that an amendment was not moved, so I would suggest that in fact they concur that the postal services is a problem in terms of how much they are charging, and if it is a concern, because they did not move an amendment, then they should allow it to come to a vote so that we know where what members stand on this issue.

As I say, the community newspapers are very important, and we should not underestimate the need for these papers because it is the primary vehicle for many Manitobans to find out what is going on inside their own communities. If we continue to have the increase in the postal rate as we have seen in the past couple of years, there is a

justified fear that many of these community newspapers will no longer be able to survive. Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out previously, the cost of mailing these community newspapers is starting for most, and already exceeded for many, the cost of producing these publications.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to suggest to the government is that we do allow it to come to a vote. I think it would be an appropriate gesture from the government. We are willing to allow it to come to a vote. My light is flashing. I have two minutes. Well, not wanting to filibuster, I am going to sit down and trust that the government will allow it to come to a vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Turtle Mountain has the floor.

* (1750)

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. I must say I was very pleased to see this motion brought to the House this afternoon by the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), and then immediately disappointed because he used the opportunity not to speak to something that is extremely important to the rural newspapers in Manitoba, but to take the opportunity to pick holes in something that the government has been doing that most people in rural Manitoba support.

I certainly agree with the member for Inkster's comments that this case would have been much, much stronger if he had not digressed into using an opportunity to criticize the government instead of speaking to the very important aspects of this motion, as he might have done. Unfortunately, the member for Inkster disappointed me as well, Mr. Speaker, because he suggested that we should not be allowed to speak to this very important resolution.

He suggested that the members of the House should not be allowed to speak out and explain the real need for the consideration of the rural newspapers. I believe that is in total contrast to what those rural newspapers stand for. Those weekly newspapers stand for freedom of speech and the opportunity for each and every one of us to put our thoughts on record and to debate an issue fully, and not just to try and ram it through and not give everyone an opportunity to speak to the

resolution, so I was disappointed as well in the member for Inkster that he would suggest that we should not fully and freely discuss this very important resolution.

I believe that I am well qualified to speak on the need for consideration for mailing costs for our rural weekly newspapers, because in the constituency of Turtle Mountain, which I have the pleasure and honour to represent, we have eight weekly newspapers, and I would be surprised if there are many constituencies in Manitoba that can lay claim to having eight weekly newspapers. I am very much aware of the need for consideration for the increased costs in mailing that are being proposed.

As the member for Interlake pointed out, these rural weekly newspapers serve an excellent purpose and they serve the communities in which they are published. There are so many interesting things in a rural weekly newspaper, Mr. Speaker. One of the columns that many people look at when they first get the paper every week is Looking Backwards, because they look back five years, sometimes 10 years, some of them go back as far as 90 years. It is an excellent record of the history of the community in which that newspaper is published, because, as I say, some of those weekly newspapers go back for almost 100 years. There is a weekly issue of the births and deaths and what were the news stories of the week and what was important to that community in that week, as I say, an excellent record of the histories of the communities that they represent.

These weekly newspapers are also an opportunity for local talent to develop, and many of the publications in Manitoba, the local people have an opportunity to write stories, some do cartoons, and many, of course, report the local news from their own small communities. That is one of the most important features of the rural weekly newspapers, the several columns that say different news from the different areas around the particular town where that newspaper is published. It gives many people in the area an opportunity to write for a newspaper and to develop some skills and even a hobby in that regard.

The eight newspapers that I mentioned earlier in Turtle Mountain, and I would be pleased to read the names into the record. Actually, starting on the east side, we have the Pilot Mound Sentinel Courier. Then we have the Cartwright newspaper, the Killarney Guide, the Boissevain Recorder, the Baldur Gazette, and then in Souris, a town of only

1,500 or 1,600 people, we have two weekly newspapers, the Souris Plaindealer and the Souris Valley Echo.

There is an excellent example of the kind of competition that we can develop in rural areas sometimes where we have, even in a small community that serves only a small area, enough business for two weekly newspapers to be viable. It provides an interesting contrast and the different approaches they use to reporting the local news and even occasionally an editorial comment that creates some discussion and some interest in the community. I think it is worth noting how important the weekly newspapers are to Manitoba, and in a town like Souris, there is room for even two of those newspapers.

One of the things, of course, that the weekly newspapers do is, again, provide the analysis of how various events affect that particular area. I can remember very well a number of stories in the eight weekly newspapers that I spoke of a little while ago on the decentralization initiative of this government and how well it was received in the rural areas of Manitoba. In almost every case, they illustrated or commented on the commitment that the Conservative government had to rural Manitoba, and they welcomed that kind of a commitment and that kind of an initiative to support the people in rural Manitoba.

Then, of course, there were also other stories like the removal of the provincial education tax levy on farm land. That was an extremely important story in rural Manitoba and, I am sure, was covered by almost every weekly newspaper in Manitoba, because it was very important to the farmers, who make up a good part of the readership of those newspapers, that this provincial government had recognized the exceptional load that they were taking with educational tax when they removed the provincial levy on farm land a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the kinds of stories—and I believe the member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) did touch on this—that the local newspapers can put their own angle on so that their readers can interpret how these kinds of things affect their own area.

The honourable member for Interlake also mentioned rural post offices and that is also a subject that needs considerable debate and examination and an opportunity for all members to speak. I think it is worthwhile, noting that in many

cases in rural areas the post offices are part of another business. They are part of a small grocery store, they are part of a restaurant or a coffee shop. In some cases, a liquor outlet is located in the same business. Instead of trying to run it as a separate unit that is probably losing money, they have become part of the community where folks can come and get their mail, have a cup of coffee, buy some groceries, whatever.

These are the kinds of innovative approaches we need in rural Manitoba where, instead of trying to rely on some level of government to provide a total service completely separate from everything else, we integrate it into all the other opportunities that there are in the community. In the area of post offices, we need to take a careful look at that as well.

Certainly, coming back to the resolution, and I digressed there simply because the mover of the resolution mentioned post offices. Coming back to the resolution, we all certainly agree that the

imposition on rural weekly newspapers by increased mailing costs will be difficult to bear. They are going to have to take very careful looks at different ways in which they can continue to deliver the very, very important service to the people of rural Manitoba, and also the people across the country.

As we all know, folks do from time to time leave rural areas, and move to other parts of the country. They like to have contact with their roots, with the area from which they came and have lived in pretty well all their lives, perhaps, if they have retired to other parts of the country.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose) will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Tuesday, May 7, 1991

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