



Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 6, 1992

The House met at 1:30 a.m.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): It is my duty to inform the House of the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker, and therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay) to take the Chair.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I beg to present the petition of Jennifer Dubiensi, Debbie Clement, Carol Pawluk and others requesting the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) call upon the Parliament of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to prevent the release of individuals where there is a substantial likelihood of further family violence.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Maureen Neudorf, Fredricka Czaplá, Doreen Szor and others requesting the government show its strong commitment to dealing with child abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse Campaign.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I beg to present the petition of Dawn Thompson, Royden L. Walsh, Paul Robillard and others requesting the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) call upon the Parliament of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to prevent the release of individuals where there is substantial likelihood of further family violence.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I beg to present the petition of Patricia Harder, John Sinclair, Steven Gabriel and others requesting that the government show its strong commitment to aboriginal self-government by considering reversing its position on the AJI by supporting the recommendations within its jurisdiction and implementing a separate and parallel justice system.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I beg to present the petition of Charles Toop, Alison Stanwick, Cornelia Vandenberg and others requesting the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) call upon the Parliament of Canada to amend the Criminal Code

to prevent the release of individuals where there is substantial likelihood of further family violence.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

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

THAT locally controlled public housing with elected and appointed board members encourages democratic and accountable decision making; and

Many housing authority boards included tenants on the board of directors; and

Volunteers serving on boards made worthwhile contributions to local housing authorities by serving their tenants, their community and in saving taxpayers' money; and

With no consultation, the provincial government fired 600 volunteer board members, abolished 98 local housing authorities, laid off staff and centralized purchasing and administration;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) consider reinstating local housing authorities with volunteer boards.

* * *

* (1335)

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned residents of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS there has been increased provincial involvement in matters of immigration settlement, English as a Second Language programs, and other immigration matters; and

WHEREAS the Department of External Affairs has made a decision to discontinue the practice of processing applications of domestic workers under rules that would give them the right to apply for permanent status under the Foreign Domestic Program; and

WHEREAS this decision will have a negative impact upon both employers and domestics; and

WHEREAS domestic workers perform a valuable child care service in today's labour market, especially in two-income families;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly urge the provincial government to contact the federal Minister of Employment and Immigration and request in the strongest possible terms that the Foreign Domestic Program be fully reinstated immediately and that the government be requested to report to the Legislature with regard to progress being made in regard to this issue.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): I would like to table, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Annual Report of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1991.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister responsible for Sport): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a ministerial statement.

It is with great pleasure that I rise before the members today and, on behalf of the province and citizens of Manitoba, extend congratulations to Connie Laliberte and her Fort Rouge rink of Laurie Allen, Cathy Gauthier, Janet Arnott and Arlene MacLeod on finishing in third place at the world championships held in Garnish-Partenkirchen, Germany, and as well to Vic Peters and his rink of Dan Carey, Chris Neufeld, Don Rudd and John Loxton from the Granite Curling Club, who also finished in third place at the world championships.

I am certain those who followed the progress of each of the rinks throughout the week would agree that the Manitoba teams represented our province and country extremely well at the world championships. By finishing in third place, they proved that they both should be recognized as among the best rinks in the world. Manitoba certainly has much to be proud of with the

performance of their rinks at the world championships as well as winning the national titles in curling.

I would ask all members to join me in extending congratulations to the Laliberte and Peters rinks on their excellent performances throughout the year. Their exciting play has been a pleasure to watch.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with great pleasure that we on our side extend our congratulations to Vic Peters and his rink, Connie Laliberte and her rink for their fine performance at the recent world curling championships.

We had the pleasure of watching them over the past week with great anticipation for their performance throughout the week, and I am sure, along with the rest of Manitoba and Canada, we are disappointed and at the same time very proud that our two rinks were able to represent our country and our province to the extent of their great finish. We here in this side offer our sincerest congratulations to them.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would simply like to join with the others in this House in congratulating Connie and Vic. I had an opportunity to be part of their sendoff at the Fort Rouge Club. I know people have watched each rock with great interest and are saddened that they did not come back in first place, but are thrilled that they were able to make third and are looking forward to welcoming them back.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Deputy Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon, President Rod McRae and other members of the St. Andrews Society of Winnipeg representing the McRae Clan, Douglas Clan, MacIntosh Clan, MacFarland Clan, MacGregor Clan, Fraser Clan, Ross Clan and MacPherson Clan.

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

Additionally, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's loge to my left, where we have with us this afternoon the former member for Radisson .

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities Bed Closures

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Madam Deputy Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) made a lot of campaign promises about health care, promises which are ringing hollow in light of the real Conservative agenda on health care reform.

I refer the House back to April of 1988, specifically Tuesday, April 28, 1988. The Premier said, a Tory government would not close any hospital beds until a thorough review of the health care system is completed. Later, the Minister of Health tried to clarify that commitment by saying that there would be no bed closures for budgetary reasons. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have received a number of letters recently and calls from patients of several different hospitals about being kept in emergency room hallways on a stretcher for periods of five days and even up to 10 days.

We want to know from the Premier why his government is breaking an election promise, why this Premier is compromising patient care by ordering Winnipeg hospitals to empty 440 beds and to cut \$27 million from their budgets by the year 1994, without the benefit of a comprehensive review and without the benefit of public and professional input.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to this afternoon's debate in Estimates, because I know that you will not allow me the opportunity for a full answer to a rather long preamble, et cetera.

I know my honourable friend is wanting to discuss health care, the provision of services, the funding of the system. My honourable friend wants to discuss it in terms of system-wide change and reform, which from time to time, Madam Deputy Speaker, even members of the New Democratic Party have acknowledged is going to happen. Even from time to time, although not publicly, my honourable friends in the New Democratic Party acknowledge that the system will change and change significantly away from institutional care to community-based care, such as is happening from time to time when my honourable friends in private have the honesty to discuss the rather significant and radical changes happening in provinces currently governed by their political soul mates.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me deal with the issue that my honourable friend wants to talk about in terms of a plan and understanding of the system and where the system can change to meet a number of agendas that Canadians have put before all of our elected representatives, whether it be in Manitoba, whether it be in Saskatchewan, whether it be in Ontario, whether it be in New Brunswick.

What we are doing in Manitoba is working through the most extensive public consultation process ever launched in the history of the province of Manitoba beginning in 1988 with the Health Advisory Network, which structured committees which met with the public to seek their opinions; beginning with two discussion papers on mental health reform to move the system from institution to community-based care—more consultation around that area of health service delivery than ever before in the history of the province of Manitoba; the creation of the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, with now publicly released discussion documents so that Manitobans can understand what their system is doing for them.

I look forward to furthering my answer later on this afternoon, but certainly this afternoon, in Estimates where I know I will hear from the wisdom of my honourable friend as to how the system should change.

Misericordia Hospital Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am asking the Premier today because of that kind of answer persistently and consistently from the Minister of Health. We are not getting clear answers. The public is getting concerned, and the Premier made this election promise.

I would like to ask the Premier, since the minister in this House stated that hospitals would be getting in the neighbourhood of 4 percent to 5 percent increases in their budgets, yet hospitals are telling us a different story, will the Premier confirm that the Misericordia Hospital is receiving the same funding as it received last year resulting in a zero percent increase? Will he give us a breakdown, finally, of the exact increase for each hospital so that health care, consumers and patients can be assured that they will continue to receive quality health care services in their community?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, I know my honourable

friend wants to always describe increase in funding as cutbacks. That is sort of the new nuance of language that New Democrats in opposition use. New Democrats in opposition call a \$100-plus million dollars of increased funding to health care in this year's budget, a cutback from opposition in Manitoba, but in Ontario—and incidentally, that represents a 5.7 percent increase. Now, \$53 million of that goes to fund our hospitals, not \$53 million less, as is happening in Saskatchewan, but \$53 million more. That transmits into a full half of the increase that we are providing in health care to fund the system, \$53 million out of over \$100 million going to our hospital system. Now in the newspeak of New Democrats from opposition, that is a cutback.

* (1345)

The budgetary process that the hospitals are going through is as it has been for years. They make requests of government. We cannot accede to the dollars they ask for. Therefore, they are provided funding at a level which the taxpayers of Manitoba will allow. The same process that was in place when my honourable friend was in government is in place today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with a little patience from my honourable friend, we can deal with that issue when we get to the hospital line with full detail, full discussion and full suggestion as to how to do things better as the New Democrats would no doubt wish to do.

Health Care Facilities Bed Closures

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Madam Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are not saying hospitals are getting zero percent increase. It is the hospitals that are saying they are getting zero percent increase. We are not spreading gloom and doom, it is hospitals saying we have to get through these difficult days.

We have been trying for days to find out what is the exact nature of the government-directed bed and budget reduction for each hospital in the province of Manitoba. I have a simple, straightforward question for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today, who made an election promise not to cut any beds without a comprehensive review.

What is the policy of this government on bed closures in our hospitals?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, with all due respect to my honourable friend, my honourable friend knows full well that there were no bed closures during our first term of government, 1988-1990, for budgetary purposes. My honourable friend knows that. My honourable friend cannot accept that because during the time when she was around government, they ordered the closure of 120-plus beds for budgetary reasons.

Also at that time when my honourable friend sat in that Treasury Board—not Treasury Board but in cabinet, there was a policy put in place by the New Democratic Party under Howard Pawley. It said, there shall be no deficits in the hospital budgets.

The first piece of advice that the Deputy Minister, Mr. Reg Edwards, gave me in May of 1988, when I was sworn in as Minister of Health and had my first briefing meeting, his first question was, do you intend to change the no-deficit policy put in place by the previous government. My answer was, no.

My answer is consistent today, but not according to my honourable friend from the New Democrats who when in Brandon are demanding now that we cover deficits to break the policy that they put in place in 1987.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the kind of classic hypocrisy and flip-flop that New Democrats practise from opposition and claim they can solve all the problems, but in government unilaterally cut beds, reduce budgets, et cetera, a two-faced approach to health care policy that Manitobans are wise to.

Brandon General Hospital Funding

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last Thursday, over 500 very angry and frustrated people attended the first ever public meeting in Brandon to protest cutbacks in service at the Brandon General Hospital and the layoffs of nearly 30 licensed practical nurses.

Meanwhile, a petition has been signed by over 5,000 people in Westman, representing over 84 communities in southwestern Manitoba, expressing serious concern over the closing of the existing palliative care ward and the gynecological ward.

A straightforward question, Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of over 5,000 citizens and taxpayers of southwestern Manitoba, I would ask

this Minister of Health if he will provide and ensure additional sufficient funding for Brandon General Hospital so that the level of services such as the palliative care ward is not diminished or downgraded in any way.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not think my honourable friend the member for Brandon East would have the audacity to ask such a question, because what my honourable friend is asking this government to do is to reverse the New Democratic Party policy, put in place when he was in cabinet under Howard Pawley, of no deficits at Brandon General Hospital or any other hospital. That was a policy put in place by the New Democrats. Now from opposition, my honourable friend the New Democrat from Brandon East, is saying, oh, reverse that; cover deficits.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to read from a January 1987 letter from the Honourable Len Evans, senior cabinet minister in Brandon and Westman area. First paragraph: I would like to point out that when we subtract the 31 closed beds, closed by the NDP—in parentheses: mine added, the number of beds available at Brandon Cornwallis residence is 253, which is still considerably higher than the 200 beds needed to meet MHSC guidelines.

* (1350)

The second paragraph of this letter, Madam Deputy Speaker: You should understand that the decision to close beds at Brandon General Hospital was made by the Board of Directors of the hospital because of a large deficit.

My honourable friend, when he was in government, forced them to close beds because of a deficit and now in opposition says we should give them the money—what hypocrisy.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I have a supplementary question, but I had hoped that I would have received the answers for—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Brandon East to put his question now.

Mr. Leonard Evans: On behalf of these people I am asking, 5,000-plus people from Westman which includes just about every constituency that is represented on that side, will the minister review the operation of the Brandon General Hospital and determine whether those specific cutbacks in

services are appropriate? That is, does the minister believe that the Brandon General Hospital administration—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Deputy Speaker, what I am going to do to those 5,000 petitioners, should I receive the petition, is send them the letter sent to them in 1987 by the Honourable Len Evans, because it actually deals with the issue, not honestly but at least openly.

The second thing I want to do to my honourable friend, for my honourable friend—I do not do things to him—I want to read an answer from a Health minister, a colleague of mine across Canada. This Health minister says the policy established as of 1989 is that deficits will not be funded. We continue to put in place and support that policy. You know who is saying that, Madam Deputy Speaker?—the New Democratic Health minister in Ontario, because she understands health care. The same understanding that my honourable friend, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) spoke of so eloquently in his letter of 1987.

My honourable friend has selective amnesia when he is in opposition. He goes underground when they cut beds—back in his days around cabinet responsibility—and then comes out of the bushes now saying we should cover deficits. Is that a reversal of the policy because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the policy stands: no deficits to be funded by government in the hospitals of Manitoba.

Labour Adjustment Strategy

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): A minister of broken promises—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the honourable member for Brandon East have a final supplementary question?

Mr. Leonard Evans: I have another very serious question and I hope we will get some answers, because they have not for those 5,000 people yet. We are still waiting for an answer. On behalf of the workers, will the minister and this government commit some funds to allow the laid off nurses to take training for other health care occupations?

There is an industrial adjustment committee looking at alternative employment for the affected nurses, but there are not enough funds—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope my honourable friend shows up in Estimates this afternoon because I have a lot more information for him.

In 1987-88, the last year my honourable friend was around cabinet, the revenues of the province of Manitoba grew by 19.2 percent. Do you know what they gave Brandon General Hospital as an increase that year—5 percent, when the inflation rate was 4.2 percent. Do you know what we did last year? Our revenues were growing by 2.5 percent, inflation was 5.1 percent and we gave 7.6 percent more money to the Brandon General Hospital.

Within that budget—[interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to recommend rabies shots for the member for Brandon East.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, one would be tempted to respond, especially from that minister, in kind, but one should recognize that is not parliamentary. Quite frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are growing increasingly frustrated by the fact that this minister will not give answers, instead totally avoids the legitimate question being asked by the member for Brandon on behalf of 5,000 residents in southwestern Manitoba. He ought not to make those kinds of comments—

* (1355)

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

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have looked at the list of unparliamentary words and certainly the word referenced by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is not on that list.

I would ask you to bring the opposition House leader to order because under the guise of a point of order, he himself engaged in a tirade on the Minister of Health, and I would say that certainly is out of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson did not have a point of order.

However, I would remind all honourable members to address each other courteously in the House.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am neither a medical doctor nor a veterinarian. I apologize to my honourable friend the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

North American Free Trade Agreement Water Sales

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for Trade.

In reviewing the draft agreement for the North American free trade agreement that is being proposed, I discovered in Article 1401, a provision that is not in the bracketed text but is in the already-agreed-to portions of the agreement that suggest that we will allow the transportation of materials other than energy that require transportation by pipeline.

I would like to know from the minister whether or not in his meetings in Ottawa there were any discussions about the previously existing prohibitions on the sale of water south of the border and whether or not this agreement, which apparently has the agreement of all three parties, violates those sections of the FTA.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, at the last Trade ministers' meeting in Ottawa we were provided, at the conclusion of that meeting, with the draft text. So we have not had a meeting subsequent to receiving the draft text.

As I have indicated in this House on a couple of occasions, we are in the process of completing a detailed review of the text to do an all-encompassing response to several concerns that have come to light as a result of reviewing the draft text that we currently have a copy of. Certainly, the honourable member raises one further point that merits part of that review.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister has had a couple of weeks now and had officials working on it for a couple of weeks. I wonder if he can tell us whether or not their review confirms that there is an intention to ship water south of the border.

Mr. Stefanson: No, it does not, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have a draft initial response to the federal minister that I am sending today outlining several concerns that are extremely apparent in the draft text, also reiterating the six conditions that this government has put in place to any potential agreement; but the the answer to that question is, no.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wonder, given the concerns that Canadians had about the shipment of water south, if the minister would consider adding a seventh term to his conditions that just guarantees that there will be no sale of Canadian water south of the border.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have already conveyed our position, and certainly one of them, the first one as a matter of fact, is no opening up and no changes to the current Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. So implicitly, to a certain extent, it is covered under there, but I think more importantly as any issues, even though we feel they are covered under that particular term, we are still doing the review and focusing on them in terms of our detailed response, so that it is not only that it is covered under that clause but that the specifics are also addressed.

Social Assistance Common Law Regulation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, on March 26, I asked the Minister of Family Services to eliminate the discriminatory practice of transferring women on student social assistance to city social assistance, but not men. The minister acted as if he was unaware of the problem, yet later he told the media that he had known of the problem for 10 days.

Given that the minister has now known of the problem for almost three weeks, has he taken steps to eliminate this discriminatory practice against women?

Hon. Harold Gillieshammer (Minister of Family Services): Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue that was raised by the member a couple of weeks back was one that we had become aware of in recent times, and the issue is currently before the department.

* (1400)

Mr. Martindale: Will the minister take action to stop the same discriminatory practice from adversely affecting disabled women who are also transferred

to city welfare and lose their \$60 per month disability supplement if they enter a relationship with a man who is deemed employable? Why are women being penalized when men are not? What is the minister going to do about this?

Mr. Gillieshammer: Madam Deputy Speaker, the rules and regulations that govern the social allowances within the province both at the provincial level and the municipal level are under review. We have recently, as the member knows, brought forward a new program that has been in place now for a matter of a few months. The department is reviewing the manner in which the new program is being taken up by the people who are eligible for it, and if there are glitches in the program we will address those.

Discrimination

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can the minister ensure the House that no other group of women on social assistance, in addition to students and the disabled, are similarly being discriminated against? If so, will he quickly put an end to this practice and all other practices which discriminate against women on social assistance?

Hon. Harold Gillieshammer (Minister of Family Services): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have already indicated to the member that issue is before the department, and we are reviewing it at this time.

Borden Company Ltd. Labour Adjustment Strategy

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. On Friday, the minister said that he was not aware of the situation facing the workers at Catelli pasta plant in my riding. This despite the fact that my colleague informed the House over two weeks ago that the plant was another victim of free trade and would be closed.

What action has this minister now taken to help the 32 more Manitobans who are losing their jobs due to the free trade deal?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to correct the honourable member on two comments he made. One, I never indicated that I was not aware of the situation, in fact, I have addressed the issue briefly in here and also through the media on at least two separate occasions. Also, there was no indication from the company and no indication

whatsoever that their decision has anything to do with the Canada-U.S. free trade.

In terms of the issue itself, the day that we were informed of the announcement, I spoke to officials from Borden Catelli to see if there was an opportunity for them to reconsider their decision, not unlike what happened with at least one other company here in our province. They indicated there was not. I directed my department to look at all options available from potential co-ops to employee ownership, to see if there are any other potential purchasers out there.

It was reported in the media on Friday that there might be a group or an individual interested in acquiring the plant. As of that date, they had not approached my department. I questioned the reporter who raised that point whether or not he could provide me with the names of those individuals. He unfortunately was unable to. I suggested to him that if they are legitimate and genuinely interested in purchasing that plant, that they make contact either with me directly as soon as possible or with my department.

Free Trade Agreement Labour Adjustment Strategy

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Deputy Speaker, why does this minister continue to pretend that the trade deal is good for this province, when in the inner city we see plant after plants being shut down and the assets removed and shipped to Montreal as in the case of the Paulins Interbake or to other provinces or the United States?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Question?

Mr. Hickes: That is my question.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am a little confused by the suggestion that while we do not like to lose any operations to other parts of Canada, clearly they are remaining within Canada and not going to the United States.

I have answered that question on various occasions from the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and indicated that in virtually every instance, there is no evidence when there is a change made in our province to indicate that it is the Canada-U.S. free trade deal. In fact, what analysis has been done by organizations such as the Royal Bank and the Conference Board of Western Canada indications

are that while it is not significant, the Canada-U.S. free trade deal has a slight benefit to all of Canada.

Clearly the more important issue is whenever an unfortunate situation faces Manitoba, that is one of the first questions we ask and one of the first things we look into, to attempt to document the kinds of suggestions that come from across the way. In virtually every instance, there is no indication that it is the Canada-U.S. free trade deal.

When we were doing the consultations on the North America free trade, we asked every organization that very question, and once again there was no evidence to confirm what the honourable member is suggesting.

Impact Food Processing Industry

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Deputy Speaker, considering the mounting losses of food processing in this province, can the minister tell the House what surveys his department has undertaken as to the effects of these closures, and also in the other sector such as trucking and rail transportation?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at sectors such as the manufacturing sector, we look at employment levels that again Manitoba jobs in the manufacturing sector are remaining unchanged, which puts Manitoba at approximately fourth amongst all provinces, whereas the rest of Canada is experiencing drops of some 4.7 percent.

So in the employment sector, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are holding our own in the manufacturing areas. In fact, the projections in terms of capital investment, which I am sure the honourable member will be pleased to hear, in manufacturing in Manitoba is projected to have the highest growth rate in all of Canada in 1992—some 31.2 percent; whereas the national average is expected to drop by 4.2 percent. That is certainly good news for the manufacturing sector in our province.

ACRE

Pesticide Container Disposal

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Environment. The problem of managing the farm chemical container waste problem was given to the Association for a Clean Rural Environment. In the past few years ACRE has failed to adopt a system

that adequately collects and disposes of the waste products and has itself violated—[interjection] Patience is a virtue—environment laws. Currently ACRE has large bags of pesticide containers stored around the province which it is unable to dispose of.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Environment. Will the minister assure the House that he will not change the classification of the chemically contaminated waste in the bags to nonhazardous so it can be transported out of the province for disposal?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Deputy Speaker, first of all, the member is incorrect in his preamble. The cleanup and collection of the pesticide containers that occurred over the last two years in this province is light-years ahead, as my colleague says, compared to where we were under the previous administration.

Secondly, I want to assure the member that the metal containers that have been collected by ACRE will be going for disposal and recycling, as will the plastic. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the member's concern about adjusting of what is classified as hazardous waste will not in any way be required in order to deal with the material at this point.

Environment Act Violation

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Deputy Speaker, can the minister tell the House why ACRE has not been charged for its violation of environmental law last year?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the member would want to accept the fact that there has to be a violation that is considered to be capable of being prosecuted in court. Any information that we have today does not suggest that we would be able to successfully prosecute in court.

Just to put a little information on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me point out that the amount of material that was presumed to have been spilled at the occurrence that he is referring to is equal to about one cup of solution that would be a less harmful solution than what is sprayed on the agricultural fields on a regular basis.

Review

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Deputy Speaker, given that ACRE has failed to abide by or

live up to its mandate, when will this government review its support for an organization that is not doing its job and develop a collection and disposal system that will work?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Unfortunately, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not think the honourable member understands the source of the funding or the concepts behind the ACRE organization. It is funded entirely by the industry that provided a voluntary check-off from within its own organization in order to fund the collection and removal of the materials. They have put funds toward rural municipal waste disposal grounds to upgrade their facilities so that when they collect the containers they will, in fact, be held in an area that is responsible and environmentally sound. They have provided and are holding in reserve a very large amount of cash in order to provide for the disposal of this material, which will be done very shortly.

North American Free Trade Agreement Supply Management

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Madam Deputy Speaker, we have, on this side of the House, opposed the principle and the fundamental concept of the North American free trade agreement based on what happened to Canada under free trade and the other harmful impacts that this will have on Canada. Meanwhile, this government continues to give its support to this agreement, afraid to admit that the Premier was wrong when he said that he would support the free trade negotiations with Mexico during the last election.

*(1410)

I want to try to get some clarification from this Minister of Agriculture. Does this Minister of Agriculture agree with and support the federal government's sell-out on supply management by accepting tariffication as they have done in the agreement in their proposals and subsequent tariff reduction as the basis for its position in the negotiations, Clause 3 page 5 of the that proposed agreement?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of free trade agreements or arrangements or discussions that have gone on, whether they are bilateral or trilateral or whether they are multilateral, they have involved a very basic principle of the standpoint of Canada.

First, in a free trade agreement the supply-management boards were not on the table. It was not part of the agreement. Secondly, the MTN discussions, the marketing boards, we have objected to the position of the Dunkel text, which called for tariffication. The member said we accepted tariffication. No, we have not accepted tariffication.

Those basic principles continue in any trade discussion we are involved in. We believe in the principle in this country and we believe in the right of our ability to run that system in our country. We do not accept tariffication for that program in this country.

North American Free Trade Agreement Sanitary Standards

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Madam Deputy Speaker, the federal government does—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Will the honourable member please put his question now?

Mr. Plohman: In other areas of the agreement, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is reference to sanitary standards. Does the minister concur with the federal position that Canada will accept the lower sanitary standards that do exist in Mexico and the United States in many areas, or will he instruct the federal government that Manitoba's position will not be consistent with that and will not tolerate the lower sanitary standards that are being proposed as acceptable by the federal government in this agreement?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Deputy Speaker, in response to a similar question from the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) a little over a week ago, I indicated that we would not accept any lower standards, that we cannot support any special consideration for Mexico in the application of rules in the area of sanitation.

In addition, in response to my honourable friend the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), again, we have verified our position which we have taken under GATT in terms of support, Canada supply management system, and we have reconfirmed that with the federal government in terms of any negotiations under the Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement.

North American Free Trade Agreement Supply Management

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Madam Deputy Speaker, based on that answer and the minister's stated support for supply management, will this Minister of Agriculture be now recommending rejection of this agreement based on the fact that the federal government is accepting tariffication as the basis for its proposal in the agreement, not the Mexico—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, the question has been put.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Deputy Speaker, on many trade funds discussions continue, and we want to stay at the table, advancing the principles we believe in. We will stay at the table advancing those principles for the good of the industry of agriculture and all export opportunities that we have around the world. We will continue to negotiate those points at the table. We will not walk away from the table as that member would suggest that we should.

Judicial System Public Defender System

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. I recognize that the minister is negotiating on a number of fronts regarding the delivery of judicial services in the province. However, it appears that the province is embarking on some significant changes regarding legal aid delivery and the delivery of prosecutorial services around the province. I do not know if these actions are mere tactics because of negotiations or actually government policy.

Can the minister specifically advise this House whether the province is in the process of establishing a public defender type system which would change the delivery of legal aid as we know it?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Deputy Speaker, the government is not proposing a public defender system. We are attempting to fund the system we presently have. In fact, this year we are adding \$1.3 million to the legal aid budget, an increase of 11.7 percent over the government's contribution to the plan from last year. We have had to do that to make up for shortfalls in funding from the law foundation

and shortfalls that have resulted from a capping by the federal government in 1989. Now more recently, we have received word that the federal government is going to remove that capping, but the amount that is going to add to our budget is extremely small in relation to the whole budget.

The honourable member is concerned about going to a public defender system. There are pros and cons for a public defender system. They have, basically, that kind of system operating in Saskatchewan, but that is not presently our wish. We do hope though that people like the honourable member and the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), will use their powers of persuasion to ask lawyers, for example in the North, to continue to provide services to their disadvantaged clients.

Two-Tiered System

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Deputy Speaker, can the minister advise specifically the House whether the province is in the process of establishing a two-tiered prosecution system utilizing junior attorneys in some areas and senior Crown attorneys in other areas?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The honourable member is asking a question which relates to a couple of news articles, the source of which is unnamed people. I am not going to respond to unnamed people except to say that there are discussions at the collective bargaining table and that is where they should be had, those discussions. I am not going to help or hinder collective bargaining discussions by discussing them in the House or in the public.

I can say one thing though, because of discussions that are going on, there are some stories floating around that somehow the government is backing away from justice services and that is not the truth. The truth is that we intend to improve justice services, especially in the North and in remote aboriginal communities.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Deputy Speaker, can the minister confirm whether or not there is any overall plan or strategy in the department for either the public defender system or for the establishment of a two-tiered prosecutory system? Can he just confirm yes or no whether in fact that is the case?

Mr. McCrae: Well, the honourable member is supposed to ascertain the correctness of the facts that he brings to the House, but he wants to float a rumour in here. I do not think that is a very good

thing to do. It is not helpful in the public administration of the people's business.

I will confirm this, that I look forward to improvements in the justice system in the days, months and years ahead.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Deputy Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. McAlpine: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today and say a few words on Tartan Day.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you for recognizing the clans that were in the Speaker's Gallery. One clan that was not represented there today that is represented in this House is the McAlpine clan and standing right here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our Premier (Mr. Filmon) has proclaimed April 6, 1992, as Tartan Day in Manitoba in recognition of this province's great Scottish heritage. I am pleased to see all members in the House wearing the tartans provided in recognition of this day.

Madam Deputy Speaker, starting with the Selkirk settlers' modest beginnings in the Red River Colony, Scots have been a constant and significant part of this province's development. They fought the barriers of distance, climate and immense hardship in their efforts to build futures of promise for themselves, their children and their children's children.

Through courage and determination, they succeeded. In the process, they brought with them the rich culture and traditions of bonny Scotland. The sheer distance from their homeland and familiar way of life made it necessary for them to bring and maintain those parts of their culture they had so dear.

* (1420)

We see, Madam Deputy Speaker, evidence of this determination in the community names around our province—Kildonan, Selkirk, McGregor, McDonald and hundreds of other names reflect both the Scottish influence in general, as well as that of specific individuals in building our province.

Manitobans have long been aware of this rich highland legacy, and this is represented by the fact that we are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of formal registration of Manitoba's own official tartan in Scotland.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would note that we are not unique in having a strong Scottish cultural heritage. Many countries around the world also boast a strong Scottish contingent in their midst.

What does make us unique is our tremendously positive emphasis on the multiculturalism which encourages our many different cultures.

Scottish-Manitobans and Scottish-Canadians are not only proud of their heritage but are also eager to share its exciting and colourful aspects with others in a multicultural community. Every year, the various groups and organizations within the Scottish community present us with a wide range of activities and opportunities for partaking of their heritage and appreciating its many elements.

At every level—social, economic and cultural—we have benefited from the contributions and participation of Manitobans of Scottish descent. They have followed proudly in the footsteps of those first settlers to enrich, develop and better the communities of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am delighted that today, April 6, has been proclaimed Tartan Day in Manitoba and ask the members of the House and all Manitobans to observe Tartan Day as a time to recognize and to appreciate Manitoba's Scottish heritage. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave has been granted.

Mr. Martindale: It is pleasure on behalf of my caucus to join in paying tribute to the first Tartan Day, April 6, 1992. Not only is it a pleasure on behalf of my caucus, but also because I am a member of the Fraser Clan; in fact, my middle name

is Fraser, named after my great-grandfather John James Anderson Fraser.

The Scots and their descendants have, as the member said, played an important role in the history of Manitoba.

We normally think of the first settlers, the Selkirk settlers, who came to Manitoba in 1812. However, Scots were in Manitoba long before that. The Highlanders were the backbone of the fur trade from 1700 onward. In fact they were the labour force; they were the voyageurs, who played such an important role in the fur trade in the history of Manitoba.

Many of their descendants became well-known names and people in the history of Winnipeg and Manitoba, for example, John Norquay and Alexander Ross. Alexander Ross was the first postmaster, and these were descendants of original Scottish fur traders.

In addition, Scots played an important role as labourers in the CPR shops. Many of them went on to become leaders of the unionized movement in Manitoba and in Winnipeg and indeed were leaders of the 1919 strike. Many early Scots were teachers in the teaching profession in Winnipeg.

The contribution of Scots has extended to all areas of public life and professions in Manitoba and have given this province a great many things of which all Scots can be proud. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask for leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with pleasure that I join with the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) to put a few words on the record on behalf of the Liberal Party.

You know, just prior to Question Period, I heard out in the foyer the bagpipes playing. Of course, there are many different things that signify the Scots, if you will, and the tartan, what we are honouring here today, is one of those things. Another thing is

the kilt, and of course the lovely music that many of us would have heard, as one individual in the gallery had pointed out to me, music from the Gods, if you will, is the bagpipes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those symbols are very important. I just wanted to make note of those three symbols, albeit they do have other symbols, and also give a tribute to the ethnic group of Scots, because as every other ethnic group in the province of Manitoba, they all contribute in such a large way. Manitoba just would not be the same had we not had the Scots participating, whether it was in trade or professions or whatever it might have been, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So again I just wanted to congratulate the government on proclaiming today as Tartan Day and only hope that Tartan Day sometime—from the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) who is introducing a positive resolution of that nature—might be passed so that it will be something that will be fait accompli.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, before I move the Supply motion, we are planning to go into Estimates of the Department of Health and begin the Estimates of the Department of Family Services.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that you, Madam Deputy 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 Health, and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Family Services.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTH

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates of Health.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries on page 82 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Lols (St. Johns): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me carry on where we left off at the last sitting of Estimates for the Department of Health and raise again the policy of this government and this minister with respect to funding of hospitals in the whole context of health care reform.

We have been trying for weeks to get some clear answers and some straight answers from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). We have pursued this matter on every occasion since the House reconvened. We have based our questioning on very serious statements and concerns expressed to us by administrators of hospitals, health care professionals, workers in the health care system, patients, consumers, and volunteers of boards of hospitals.

Day in and day out we have heard from those individuals about directives coming from this government, directives pertaining to targets for bed closures, directives pertaining to reductions in base budgets of hospitals, directions pertaining to monies being designated for so-called restructuring purposes. We know that there are very clear directives from this government.

They come from the top. They are decisions being made around the cabinet table at Treasury Board that the minister and his staff are fully responsible for. We know that this minister and his staff are actively involved in presenting these bed- and budget-reduction targets to hospitals, to urban hospitals.

We know that the highest ranking official in the Department of Health, the Deputy Minister of Health, has taken this message forward to meetings and presented these targets and demanded responses. We know that hospitals have been under great pressure to come forward with responses to these arbitrary and difficult directives.

These are not rumours, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. This is not fearmongering; these are not opposition tactics to get under the skin of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) or to create issues out of thin air for political purposes. We are messengers bringing to this Legislature and to this committee real information, real concerns that require some straight answers.

We have been very unlucky in getting straight answers from this minister. In fact, I want to note that it took us a month of questioning in the Legislature and four and a half hours straight of Estimates time before this minister finally conceded that this government had set a bed-cut target for the two teaching hospitals, the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, of 240 beds.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that after great pain and agony of much questioning and listening to long, lengthy statements that had little to do with the questions in the first place from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), the minister, on Monday, March 23, finally conceded that the government, this government, this minister had set a reduction target in beds for the St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre hospitals. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not need the Minister of Health suggesting I should read this into the record. I do not need to read it into the record. I lived through that horrifying, painful experience of trying to pull information out of this minister and this government, information that should have been presented in full, clear detail to the people of this province because, when it comes to health care, there is nothing more worrying for people in this province than to hear rumours about changes in patient care, reductions in hospital services, the emptying of beds in our hospitals without that being placed in the overall context of a plan that is clearly understood and that makes sense.

* (1500)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are operating in a vacuum. We have a government and a minister and a department who are pulling numbers out of thin air and going to hospitals and saying, here, here is your number; you achieve this; here is your budget target reduction for so-called restructuring purposes, you achieve it—no plan, no comprehensive plan, not the kind of plan that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) talked about in April of 1988 in the middle of an election when he said, no beds would be closed, no hospitals would be emptied without a full, comprehensive plan.

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, you know, I know, we all know there is no comprehensive plan. We have been asking about these studies that are piling high to the ceiling without any release of final reports, without any plan of action around those studies. We know that before any studies get finished, the minister embarks upon another series

of studies, and we are left trying to scramble and figure out: What is the real plan here? Where is it going to come out of? Which group is responsible? Where is the centre of power? Who is making decisions? Where is the reform? Where is the creativity? Where is the intelligence in this whole operation?

So there is no study that has been finalized, that has provided the basis for these bed-cut targets and these hospital budget-reduction targets that hospitals have been hit with this year. On top of that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there has been no public consultation, no input of an open, widespread nature in terms of health care professionals, patients, consumers and community health care interests. So there is fear, and there is understandable fear, growing everywhere in our communities.

What is required is for this government and this minister to be open and forthcoming and straightforward about their intentions. We should not have to waste all the time of the House and the Estimates to pull answers out of this minister. Those things should be laid out initially. I think the minister might find, if he thought about it at all and looked at issue management and damage control, that it might have made sense from Day One if he had simply said, here is the plan; it is based on these studies; this is what we hope to do; we would like your input—open it up and then, on the basis of that input, act and act with confidence.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we will continue to ask for some basic information that the people of Manitoba want and deserve. They have every right to know what is happening to their hospitals, to their major teaching hospitals and to their community hospitals. They have every right to see and to understand the health care reform plans, the so-called restructuring plans, of this government so that they can put things in context and understand and appreciate what must be done.

I dare say, there is not a soul in this province who does not understand the need for changes in our health care system, but they are not going to sit by and see that change on one end of the equation in the form of bed cuts and reductions to hospital budgets without any direct transfer of money saved in that regard being put into community facilities or home care arrangements or into any of those programs and ideas that have been so much a part

of health care reform strategies for a number of years in this country.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we will start again today and ask some basic questions. If the minister—as he has said in the House and has said outside in the hallways that everything is clear and fine and great and everybody is happy, then he will be not hesitating today to give us some of those details. He will have no reason for not coming forward with some of this information.

Let me begin by asking the minister about the budget decisions pertaining to hospitals, particularly to urban hospitals. The minister has said in the House that hospitals—first of all, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me back up. The last budget of this government indicated some 5.7 percent overall increase for hospitals. The minister, after questioning in the Legislature, indicated that each hospital would be getting in the neighbourhood of 4 percent to 5 percent. We are getting different messages than that from hospital administrators in our urban hospitals.

I think, quite frankly, there is confusion and uncertainty and unrest out there among hospital administrators. So we would like to know today, very clearly and very simply, what is the breakdown for each urban hospital? What is the percentage increase that each urban hospital will be seeing as a result of this budget?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am going to suggest to my honourable friend that we can discuss that detail line by line when we get to the hospital line of the Manitoba Health Services Commission, when I have the appropriate staff here.

I want to take this opportunity to follow up on what my honourable friend is talking about because I want to tell my honourable friend that the one thing that I believe Manitobans are demanding first and foremost from health care administrators, board members, health care practitioners and care deliverers, and politicians is a little bit of honesty.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, at the risk of getting into quite a long debate with my honourable friend from the New Democratic Party, I do not sense that coming from the New Democrats, because my New Democratic friend, aided and abetted by her soul mate to her immediate right, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), is not exactly being honest with the people of Brandon or with the

people of Manitoba. The reason I am going to say this—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I hate for us to start off on this note so early on, but it strikes me that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is imputing motive by suggesting that myself and the member for Brandon are not honest, either in this Legislature or outside this Legislature, with the people of Manitoba. I think the minister has a obligation and a responsibility to withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It is not a point of order, to start with, but I would like to advise all members to please pick and choose your words carefully so that we do not stir any unnecessary debate this afternoon.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: I agree 100 percent, and that is why I chose my words extremely carefully about a little honesty in public presentation and statements. I just want to remind my honourable friends, because both of them were in cabinet in 1986, the government under Howard Pawley, a New Democratic Party government, passed by cabinet order a policy which said there will be no more funding of deficits in the hospitals of the province of Manitoba. That policy was put in place along with a plan or retiring, through—and I forget the exact numbers—approximately \$8-million funding, deficits which existed in the hospitals in Manitoba, mainly our urban hospitals. The second phase of that policy decision passed by cabinet, with both my honourable friends cabinet ministers at that cabinet, was the unilateral ordering of hospital bed closures in Brandon, Health Sciences Centre, St. Boniface and Victoria General Hospital.

Now today, we continue to operate under that policy passed by Howard Pawley and the New Democrats, passed by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Evans) while he was in cabinet, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) while she was in cabinet. Today in Question Period, in a press release that my honourable friend the health critic put out and in statements to a public meeting Thursday last week in Brandon, both members are saying, pay the deficit. Both members of the New Democratic Party appear to be reversing the policy

of their government of not allowing deficits in hospitals.

Before we go any further in the debate, I want to know whether the policy of the New Democratic Party today is that hospitals can run deficits large, small, any size they want in government and the taxpayers will pick them up. Is that the new policy of the New Democrats? If it is, I am sorry, I can engage in no more debate with hypocrites, because that is what they would be if that is the policy of the New Democratic Party.

* (1510)

Point of Order

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On a point of order, I tried before to indicate that the minister should watch his language and asked whether or not the suggestion that members on this side of the House were not honest was unparliamentary, and I appreciate your ruling and your caution to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to watch his words. The minister has once again, I believe, used unparliamentary language in suggesting that members on this side of the House are hypocrites.

I would like you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to ask the Minister of Health to withdraw those words because they are clearly unparliamentary. They impute motives and cast slander on members of this side of the House.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Just one moment, please.

I would like to advise the committee that the word in question has been ruled both parliamentary and unparliamentary in Beauchesne under Citation 489 and Citation 490, but I would like to remind the minister that he was impugning motives so that would fall under Citation 489 for impugning motive. So it would be a point of order, and I would ask the minister to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to the same point of order, I would beg of you, before making that ruling, to review the words that I put in Hansard, and I think that is a legitimate request to the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I am going to take it under advisement and get back after I have read Hansard then.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: On another point of order?

Mr. Cheema: No, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I think it is an important issue, and I want to get into this debate of this hospital funding. It is a very important issue. I mean, I understand that my turn is going to come after the NDP, but I think it is an important issue, and I do not want anybody to get the impression that we are not participating. It is a very important issue, and I would like to get some time to speak on the issue.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order, but we will continue on.

Mr. Orchard: Yes, I was interrupted by a point of order, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister was in the middle of answering his question.

Point of Order

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: You will recall, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that the minister in fact said he could not proceed one moment further until we on this side of the House had answered his questions, so I would be quite happy to ensure that our Estimates process is not held up, and that the minister does not feel he can go a moment past this point to answer those questions and to deal with these concerns and ask some more questions.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I indicated to my honourable friend, the policy that was put in place while she sat around the cabinet table was no deficits in the hospitals. As I indicated in Question Period today, one of the very first things that the Deputy Minister of Health, Mr. Reg Edwards, asked me, one of my first briefings, was the question: Will it be the policy of the new government to continue the no-deficit policy that was put in place by the previous administration? My answer in May of 1988 was yes, and it remains yes today.

Now we are going to discuss the issues that my honourable friends laid out, and we are going to discuss the issues of health care reform in detail. We are going to use Brandon as an example. We are going to deal with it program by program, line by line, and we are going to grind it through as a policy

discussion. My honourable friends are going to be asked: Do you agree or do you disagree? Of course, from opposition, they do not have to agree or disagree with any further questions, but the one thing my honourable friends have to do is answer for the public of Manitoba: Have you reversed yourselves on the policy you put in place as the Howard Pawley cabinet in government, of no deficits in the hospitals? Is that policy now reversed by the opposition party NDP, or do you still adhere to the policy of no deficits in hospitals?—a very fundamental question to the whole issue.

I know my honourable friend the critic is anxious to answer it. I will give her the same cautionary advice she gives me: Answer it clearly, yes or no.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Come on, let us have a little politeness.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lois: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, my colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Evans) suggested that the minister try a little politeness. I am glad he said that. However, I want him and others to know that we are getting used to this kind of style and approach and mean-spirited, vindictive, personalized approach to Estimates. We will try hard not to stoop to that level of debate. I am going to try very hard not to call the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) any names, whether they are parliamentary or not.

In the past I have made a few slips. I do not want to personalize this debate. I am not going to. I am going to get into the issues at hand. The minister would like to turn every question back on the opposition. He has tried that over the last number of sets of Estimates. He has always been consistent. He has very seldom answered a question. He has always tried to turn the question back and act like it was the opposition who were up for questioning in Estimates.

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is this government and this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and his department that is under the microscope today and for the next month or more. We will be asking the questions, and we will keep asking the questions until we get some answers.

On the question of deficit, that is a very clever strategy, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because in fact we have not been asking questions about deficit policies. We have not been raising that issue. We do not need to revisit it at this time. We need to hear

from the minister about his directives pertaining to hospital base budgets and bed cuts.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this debate is not about whether or not governments, the government of the day, should tolerate hospitals running up deficits. This is about getting at the roots of why hospitals are presently in such difficulty, and why in fact some are dealing with deficits, why some are in fact looking at cutting into the meat and bones of their operations. It is in fact, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because of arbitrary budget reduction directives from this government that happened last year, are happening again this year and are promised for next year.

Let us use for example the Health Sciences Centre, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. By all accounts, from the highest ranking officials to workers on the wards, this major facility has been asked to chop 160 beds and to reduce its base budget by about \$10 million this year. Now, yes, a small part of that is a deficit from last year, but the bulk of it is as a result of a directive from this minister last year and this year to cut from their base.

The \$10 million that they are looking at chopping, which will affect service delivery and will affect patient care, is a result of the unachieved portion of this minister's \$19-million directive to urban hospitals, \$19 million to be cut from their base budgets, something to which all hospital administrators have indicated and agreed that this was a new phenomenon, this was an absolute change in government policy in terms of funding of hospitals. That is what we are talking about in the first instance in terms of hospital difficulties, budgeting dilemmas.

The second, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, has to do with the new target for restructuring being handed to urban hospitals, the unachieved portion from last year and a new multimillion dollar figure thrown on top of that, making it a requirement for urban hospitals this year and next year to come up with \$27 million from their base budgets. So the difficulties hospitals are facing are not because of poor planning and poor administration and poor budgeting and ineffective management, whatever the minister might want to suggest by those words; the problem has to do with government policy and this minister's budgetary directives to hospitals.

* (1520)

Brandon General Hospital, yes, has difficulties, has a deficit situation to look at, not because of poor

planning and bad management decisions and poor administration, but because last year that hospital was directed, like all urban hospitals, to cut from its base budget a certain percentage of the \$19 million and because that hospital has been asked to do the same this year and to do the same next year. The Brandon General Hospital, like all urban hospitals, has been forced to make some tough decisions about patient care and service delivery. They are not happy with the position they have been put in. They are not happy with being squeezed between a rock and a hard place by this minister and this government, and they do not like being blamed for the decisions that they are being forced to take by this minister and this government.

Let us be clear about what we are dealing with. We are not dealing with a narrow issue that the minister would like to keep coming back to in terms of policies of governments with respect to tolerating hospital deficits. We are talking about a shift in policy, new policy, new directives that get at the heart and soul of our hospital delivery system in the absence of an overall health care reform plan. Is it not interesting, if there is nothing here to be concerned about, why with every question that we ask, the minister first refuses to answer, secondly, talks about previous government decisions and goes back to NDP days even though this government has been in office for—what is it?—four years?

An Honourable Member: Four years and five months.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Interesting. Going on five years and this government can still not stand on its own two feet and take responsibility for decisions and account to the public and the people of this province. Now, those are two tactics of this minister. Now, do you want to hear the third? We will hear it again after every question day in and day out for the next 40 days or whatever it is. We are going to hear about what is happening in other provinces, not what is happening in Manitoba. We are not going to get any answers about what decisions this government is making in our health care system in Manitoba. We are going to hear about other provinces, other administrations, but nothing to do with this government in this day and age, in this province. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that is what the point of these Estimates is.

If the minister wants to make a farce out of them, as he has done in the past, he can be sure it is not

going to work. We are not going to give up. We are not going to stop asking the questions that the people of Manitoba want asked, so we are going to ask again, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. The minister can tell us he is quite well—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The minister does not need to deflect questions about the budgetary increases for each hospital. He can find a way to answer them if under pressure in the Legislature. If we have four or five hours of persistent questioning, he can finally find a way to answer detailed questions about hospitals. He does not have to deflect these decisions to some later line in the Estimates because he knows we are going to get to hospitals many, many hours away from here, many days away from this point when the damage has been done, when hospitals have been forced to take those decisions and when there has been no opportunity for public scrutiny and for open consultation.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there is an urgency, and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has an obligation to answer these questions. He knows the answers. He has the information. He has his top-ranking officials right beside him. So he can give us those answers, and I will ask once again: What is the budgetary increase for each hospital for this fiscal year?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I indicated to my honourable friend, when we get to the hospital line, we will deal with each hospital as she requests.

The policy of no deficits in hospitals is everything in this debate. It is not just a simple little issue that my honourable friend says does not matter. Now, my honourable friend erred rather significantly in the factual accuracy of one of her statements. She indicated that the base budget of the Brandon General Hospital is less last year than the year before, less this year than last year.

Now, I want to point out to my honourable friend, and I will give her these figures, because I have given them to her colleague to her right in the House. This is Brandon General Hospital. This is the budget of net MHSC payment. This is the actual amount of taxpayer dollars which went to fund the operations of the Brandon General Hospital. If my honourable friend has a pen ready, I will give her the figure for 1986-87. With 308 beds funded at the

Brandon General Hospital, there was a net payment, to run that hospital, of \$30,549,816.

Now, in the next year, which was the last year that my honourable friend was in cabinet and set the budget, the bed-rating went down to 279 because my honourable friends in the NDP ordered the cut of that many beds from Brandon General Hospital. The budget increased to \$32,098,104.

An Honourable Member: Did you order these cuts here?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I will tell my honourable friend. My honourable friend from Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) asked, did I order the cuts that have recently been proposed at the Brandon General Hospital? The answer to that is, no, quite contrary, quite contrasting to the ordered cuts that my honourable friend from Brandon East imposed in 1987 on Brandon General Hospital.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me carry on. In 1988—

An Honourable Member: Who reneued that?

Mr. Orchard: Well, we will get to that. We are going to get to the revenues.

In 1988-89 the bed-rating of the Brandon General Hospital, the first full year that we were government, was 279, reflecting the ordered cutbacks by Mr. Evans, Mr. Pawley and the NDP. The budget went up to \$35,178,312.

In 1989-90, the bed-rated funded capacity of Brandon General Hospital went up to 291, 12 beds more. Twelve beds were opened of the ones closed by the NDP, opened by this government, for chronic care. The budget went up to \$37,310,496.

In 1990-91 the bed-rated capacity is 291, increased from the reduced level of the NDP. The budget went up to \$40,975,464. In 1991-92, the fiscal year just ended—just ended, so this is a preliminary figure—the budget is increased to over \$44 million.

Now, I want to deal with that. That is not a reduction in budget as my honourable friend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), NDP Health critic, has said. My honourable friend, in her preamble, her exposition, in the last 10 minutes, said there was a reduction in the budget at Brandon General Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is totally and unequivocally a false statement. It may have been made inadvertently by my honourable friend the New Democratic critic, but I will revisit the figures again so that no one can say that there is a reduction in the budget of Brandon General Hospital. This year—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Evans: Unfortunately, the Minister of Health was not in Brandon on Thursday to hear the nearly 600 people, and I really wish he had been. But the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) can verify that I stated at that meeting that the budget of the Brandon General Hospital had been increased each and every year.

So I did not say it was cut back. Nevertheless, the management has said that they cannot maintain the status quo with even that amount of money. But do not ask me about it. I am asking you—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I thank my honourable friend the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) for setting the record straight, that the budget in Brandon General Hospital has gone up every year.

His soul mate on his left, the critic for Health for the NDP, has said there was a reduction in the base-line budget of Brandon General Hospital.

Well, you know, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in this case I have to congratulate the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). He is right. The budget at Brandon General Hospital has gone up each and every year. It has not gone up by as much as they requested, and that is the same at Brandon General Hospital, at Health Sciences Centre, at every hospital, but for my honourable friend to make the statement, and maybe she made it inadvertently, that there was less money, that budgets went down to those hospitals, is false.

If I from time to time get exasperated and short-tempered, and quite out of character for myself to be this way, but if I do that, I have to say that it is from the extreme frustration of always having to correct, whether deliberate or not

deliberate, false information put on the record by my critic.

I mean, how can you have a budget that went from \$32,098,104 in the last year the NDP were in government to over \$44 million today, '91-92 fiscal year just ended, and call that a reduction? That is exactly why I do not want my honourable friends the New Democrats to dodge the issue, because the budget of the Brandon General Hospital is projected, I believe, to be in a deficit position. That is for this last fiscal year, '91-92, the one just ended March 31. My honourable friend the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), at the public meeting said, I do not care, pay the money, pay the deficit.

My honourable friend the official critic for Health, in a press release about Brandon General Hospital, said, pay the deficit. That is why it is fundamental to know whether the New Democratic Party—and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) is at the end of this room. Maybe he will tell us whether they have reversed the Howard Pawley-NDP government policy of not allowing deficits in our hospitals.

The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is saying, pay the deficit. His critic is saying, just pay the deficit. I want to know whether the NDP have flip-flopped on that policy of Howard Pawley, because it is very fundamental to budgeting. If the New Democrats in government say that hospitals can run deficits and they will pick them up, that is a fundamental change in policy on health care funding, of the NDP.

I do not believe for a minute that the Leader of the NDP would ever enunciate that policy publicly, as his critic has and as the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) has in Brandon. Maybe it was sleight of hand, that they did not realize what they were saying, that they were reversing a policy of the Howard Pawley government, but it is fundamental to planning health care expenditures, because I want to tell my honourable friends the reason the New Democrats, Howard Pawley, et al., in cabinet put in a policy of no deficit was that hospitals can spend not just \$950 million as we are projecting they will spend—you give hospitals no rein-in and no budget and they will spend a billion and a half dollars, and they will spend that two years from now with no controls, no-deficit policies in place. They will do that. Ask your colleague the retired Minister of Health, Mr. Desjardins, and he will tell you that.

That is why if we are talking about health policy and reform of the system, fundamental to that is knowing whether my New Democratic friends have reversed themselves on a policy fundamental to the planning of health care expenditures and reform, that being no deficits in the Brandon, at any hospital in the province of Manitoba, because what my friends have asked is that we pick up the deficit in Brandon at the hospital.

My honourable friend—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Evans: The member keeps on putting false information on the record. I have stated publicly, it has been in the Brandon Sun, my view has always been that each hospital has to be looked at on the merits of that particular case and should not be just treated blanketly without any consideration of the individual circumstances.

* (1530)

I have stated that publicly—

An Honourable Member: So what is the point of order?

Mr. Leonard Evans: My point of order is that the minister states something that is not correct. I want him to know what my position is, and I refer this particularly to BGH, and that is, you have to look at the specific circumstances of the particular hospital—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Brandon East did not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again this is almost getting scary but I agree with my honourable friend from Brandon East that we ought to look at each individual hospital. That is why we put the Peer Review Committee into Brandon, 1988. Do you know what it found? It found that the funding formula for Brandon General Hospital ought not to completely emulate the community hospitals of Winnipeg. Because of their service delivery in Westman Region, they have some services which more closely approximate the teaching hospitals. As a result of that we reflected appropriately the funding level.

Now, who did that? Was it Howard Pawley and the NDP? Of course not. It was Jim McCrae and

the Progressive Conservatives. We went in and took a look at what the hospital did. We found that it was providing services above the community hospital level funding that we had based their funding pattern on and subsequently reflected that—exactly what my honourable friend comes up with as a suggestion—done by us, not by him, not by the NDP. Despite doing that, Brandon General Hospital was running a deficit, and my honourable friend has called for us to pay off that deficit—do not ask questions, pay the deficit. That is a reversal of the fundamental policy put in place by Howard Pawley and the NDP and confirmed by yourselves.

Now, you know, that is why I started this discussion this afternoon by saying, let us have a little honesty. If the policy of the New Democrats has changed from government to opposition then just state so, just be candid enough to say, we have abandoned the no-deficit policy, because that puts us in an entirely different debating forum. That means that if you say that if you want deficits to run amuck in our hospitals then you really do not believe in health care reform, you believe in feeding the monster budgets of hospitals—\$950-plus million to hospitals and you want them to grow without any constraints, any control, because you want to remove the no-deficit policy. I do not for a minute believe that Mr. Doer, the Leader of the NDP, standing at the back of the room, will enunciate that as a policy of the New Democratic Party, but his critic has.

So I just want to get a little clarification, because that is fundamental, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to the debate of health care reform. If you let hospitals run amuck and cover their deficits and no budgetary constraints or discipline on the hospitals, they will consume the entire budget of health care and leave nothing left for home care, Pharmacare, medical services, ambulance funding or any other area. They will consume the whole budget. My honourable friend the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) well knows that.

That is why you cannot have a debate on health care unless you understand the basic starting point for which you are going to debate the issue. Mine is no deficits in hospital budgets, the same policy I inherited put in place by the NDP under Howard Pawley. I simply want to know, when we start this fundamental debate, is the NDP still adhering to that policy of 1987 or have they done a 180 degree

change in policy—fundamental to the debate—Mr. Deputy Chairperson?

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to get into this very serious debate, and I simply want to put some of the things which I think—and most people got in touch with us and most health economists and the health care providers and the groups which are representing many communities, and they are telling us one thing, that the health care debate has to be taken out of the political arena. That was very clear in Brandon and that was very clear for the last one week.

Within four years, as of April 1988, this was the first week where—I mean I was able to discuss this health care issue in many forms, and I have never felt the feeling that people want the truth, the honest truth, and then if they are well informed then they will make the right decision and we should leave it up to them. But the government's responsibility is to educate them and have an at least clear-cut agenda, because people do not really know where we are going in terms of the hospitals are not aware of, the health care providers are not aware of, and moreover our patients are really frightened when there are headlines of 240 beds, 440 beds, 200 beds, 150 beds, 50 beds. That is really causing turmoil and people are saying something is being taken away from them so dear to them.

So I would ask the minister, we discussed this issue on the first day. We asked for an open and frank discussion, and we are still going to do that. I am not going to change one day or the other, because I do not think it is very positive. We are not doing our service properly, because if we are going to discuss one bed there, one bed over there, then I think we are doing the same thing as each and every interest group is doing outside. We have to take care of each and every patient as a whole and the taxpayer, above all, and people want that at debate.

If we are going to cater to the 25 percent to 30 percent of people who are supporting each and every individual party, then I think we should be not in this House, but working somewhere outside and working for a specific organization so that they can pay them their bills so that we are at least doing a service to their communities. I think that is very dangerous.

If somebody tells us here today—I will ask the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) if any party in this country has a monopoly on health care?

Nobody has. That is complete nonsense if you look from Newfoundland to British Columbia starting from the Liberal governments of Frank McKenna and Clyde Wells and Ontarian Bob. Look at what they are doing. They are dealing with the reality of the situation, and we have to deal with it. If we do not deal with it, there will not be a system left.

Who is going to benefit if the changes are made today? Not this government, but the government which is going to come in two or four years' time. The negative impact is on this government and all of us, but I think we have to think about people in the long run.

So, from our point of view, I want a frank discussion. We want a clear-cut direction from this minister of where this government is going to move and what is their time frame, how they are going to deal with all those issues and when they are going to start a public campaign. People in Brandon were telling them that probably they may accept some of the changes, but if they are not well informed because they do not have access to some of the services, some of the information we have or the minister's office has, I think it is very, very unfortunate. We come every day. For ten minutes we are there and in the next 20 minutes we are somewhere else. So we have to make sure that we keep our focus on the debate.

I would ask the minister, please tell us when the campaign to get people involved is going to start, when we are going to have a major restructuring of the Urban Hospital Council. He should not be afraid of making such a decision. It will go in their favour in the long run. Who is going to benefit? The patient and the taxpayers. If a 90-year-old patient is going to be frightened by someone telling them your health care is going to be taken away, it is such an irresponsible attitude because you do not expect each and every person to be a health economist or a health care provider. It is a very, very difficult problem.

So let us not frighten people. Let us not take advantage of the vulnerable people. If we want to have a debate on health care, then let us have an honest and frank debate. If the decision has to be made which may be tough in the short term, it will serve people in the long run. If anybody in Manitoba will tell us today—ask anybody, I was talking on a show that people are saying the same thing in their own backyards, but when they are coming to the

tables in the public forum, they change because they have their own interest.

You have a responsibility, a moral obligation that you have to provide and we have to provide a system. As a member of the Legislative Assembly, I think we will be doing a disservice and as a caucus we have decided that we are going to be very responsible, very open and have a discussion. We are not going to worry every day about making news which could be negative.

Right now, even the media is picking up. I think they are being very, very positive. They want to know how you would do it. That is why I want that each one of us tell us within the next 30 days how we are going to fund it and who is going to pay the bill, how we will deliver different things, because 35-days campaign for 10-second clip does not do a damn thing because people can be fooled very easily and people have done. I do not think that has been the practice, but I would like to know from the NDP how they will deliver the health care in Manitoba.

* (1540)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the kind of debate that we are going to have in these Estimates will bring out many of the details that my honourable friend wants to have presented. I said it before and I will say it again, that there are opportunities to make the health care system in Manitoba change with the dynamics of change that face all health care systems across Canada and to make the change happen with the patient at the centre of the change.

That is where we are heading and, as the course of the afternoon goes on, I want to lay out some information for my honourable friends about Brandon, because Brandon decision—and I appreciate that there are 5,000 people signing a petition circulated by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) at the meeting on Thursday of last week, I appreciate that. When you get into a political issue you can have any number of people sign a petition, but if you do not have a full explanation of the issue before them, naturally people will react in a negative way. Five hundred people come out to a meeting, but you know the results of that meeting, I think, were fairly accurately outlined in an editorial in the Brandon Sun. That is the kind of informed debate that we are going to have.

How that decision-making process and the targets for decision making get laid out in the public will happen in the near future, but there has been a substantial amount of ground work discussions done with the hospitals through the Urban Hospital Council. We have 41 issues before them, all of which are potential issues that may help us reform the health care system. Some of them are common sense popular decisions, some are going to be unpopular decisions, but when arrived at, the justification behind them will be laid out. Any decision that I accept as minister, I will defend on the basis of information arrived at, so that we can conclude a logical decision on whether it is bed closures at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, whether it is a removal of service from inpatient to outpatient and bed closures, whether it is a removal of chronic care patients from teaching hospitals to less expensive facilities with the closure of the beds at teaching hospitals.

Regardless of what the decisions are, when they are made and accepted by this government, I will defend them. I will defend them with the same kind of logic with which I have defended the board of Brandon General Hospital and its administration, because they undertook appropriate decision making facing a deficit and they kept the patient at the centre of the decision making. Unfortunately, that led to some layoffs, yes, and that has caused a great flurry of controversy. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) appears to be concerned about the layoffs and not the services to the people. The health care system is not there to provide forever jobs to people. It is there to provide care to those who need care, and that is where our reforms will move this system.

When I defend the decisions that I accept from our institutions, my critics, whether it be my honourable friend the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) or my other honourable friend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), they disagree. I will accept that, but I will also want them to tell me how I might be able to make the decision better. Simply disagreeing is no longer a reasonable response in public policy, particularly in health care, because simply disagreeing with what government is doing is the easy cop-out. It is the easy placebo that you give to people hoping you can fool them into believing that if you are ever government that all of these nasty problems are going to go away. That is false, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

If my honourable friends disagree with a decision, and my honourable friend the member for The Maples has disagreed with some of the decisions we have made and he has made suggestions, and we have revisited our decisions and incorporated some of the changes he has suggested. I would love to do that for my honourable friend the member for St. Johns, but unfortunately, whenever she has criticized the decision of government she has never indicated what we should do in a more appropriate and better form. That is why this debate today has to be got back to what would the NDP do? Would they fund deficits of hospitals—a fundamental question before we can even get into the debate of whether a \$44-million budget is appropriate for Brandon General Hospital. Whether that is enough, too much, too little, it does not matter until we decide whether the policy of this government, as inherited from the Howard Pawley administration, is still adhered to by the New Democrats.

If they are going to have the luxury of saying, oh, no, no, we were wrong; that man over there hanging on the wall was wrong as Premier; and this person who is now critic agreeing with that decision was wrong as a cabinet minister; and they are going to reverse their decision now that they are in the comfort of opposition—that is a pretty fundamental change in policy.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am going to turn it right over to my honourable friend, provided my honourable friend for The Maples is finished, and I want to hear from the New Democrats. I want to know if they have reversed their policy on funding deficits of hospitals. Are they saying now that government should fund hospital deficits?

Point of Order

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have now been asked by both the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the Liberal Health critic to make some statements, so I presume they are willing to concede the floor to me at this point.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that within these 40 hours we will have a lot of time to explore this, and I have no problem if the member

for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) wants to put some of the policies on the table. I think that would be very positive, and I have no difficulty with that.

Can the minister tell me, to go back to my issue again—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not come to this House to say empty rhetoric. I do not come to this House and put nonsense and irresponsible statements on the record. I do not come to this House for a job. I do not come to this House by putting bloody brochures and putting signs. I want to do my job, and no member is going to stop me because of being irresponsible.

Can the minister tell me when the campaign in terms of public education is going to start, when the minister will initiate a program that will tell the public what is in store for them, how they are going to deal with the health care reform so that people can be primed for a change?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we hope to have a discussion paper—I would liken it to some of the discussion papers we have had in mental health reform—hopefully, ready before the end of April.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the minister tell us in terms of the request we asked him the other day about expanding the role of the Urban Hospital Council, is he going to have the membership reviewed so that other groups who are not on that committee, and also the consumer groups, can be part of the health care reform?

Mr. Orchard: I am not giving consideration to that in terms of the Urban Hospital Council itself because that council is structured deliberately of the CEOs and the subcommittees of it are people involved first-hand with the question being posed.

Now that structure is useful, very useful, and I do not think that it would serve to have the Urban Hospital Council's focus moved away from delivery issues, if you will, into the public forum issues, the public discussion issues.

What I cannot tell my honourable friend is what process we would envision in terms of making the public discussion happen around the discussion paper. We have had good success in the past with fairly substantial distribution of those discussion papers and the subsequent feedback from professional groups and people and consumers alike. Right now, without further thought on it, my tendency is to stick with that sort of process,

because it has worked in at least six other occasions when we have tabled discussion papers.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) then tell us now—I think she is very excited and she is very energetic—has she discussed her policy and the policy of their governments in Ontario and Saskatchewan.

* (1550)

Does she know how they are funding the health care system? Is she going to tell us here today how much they are going raise taxes? How many other people have to lose jobs? How many times do they have to visit New York or somewhere else to borrow money? How many times are they going to do it? How are they going to fund everything that they are promising? Who is going to pay for that? The people demand it. They even want to tell us how we are going to pay our own wages. Are we going to borrow money even for our own salaries?

People want to know exactly because health care for them is a part of the whole package. They want to deal with all issues. They want to make sure that not only will they continue to have health care, but their children can even have important services in the long run. The way we are doing it now, they may not have because the way the NDP is promising I think is irresponsible, not reflecting on a personal integrity of the member.

I think they must rethink, because deceiving the public is not going to do anything in the long run. It looks very good. You go there and make noise, so and so is doing bad things, the Liberals and Tories are co-operating on health care issues. I think any sensible person is co-operating on the issues, it is not Liberals and Tories. A lot of people in Manitoba are co-operating, and they are listening. They are watching and they are reading, too.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to know how many suggestions came out of the NDP within 236 hours?—not even one, and I have been on each and every hour of Health Estimates as of 1988.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to remind all honourable members that the questions are to come through the Chair to the minister and not be put to other members of the committee, No. 1.

Number two, we are dealing at this time with 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries. The issues on the

hospital should be asked under Section 5.(b) which is Hospitals and Community Health Services.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I am glad to have this opportunity now to address a number of issues that have been raised by both the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the Liberal Health critic. I really regret coming in the middle of these two dancing cheek to cheek, in this very cozy tête-à-tête relationship, but let me certainly try to continue to do my job as an opposition critic and remind the Liberal critic why we are all here and what our job is in opposition.

First and foremost, our job is to ask questions and to get answers. When one does not get answers, one keeps on asking questions. What is most interesting about today and about previous discussions of late around health care issues, particularly in Estimates, is that the Liberal critic, the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) is not prepared to continue doing his role, exercising his responsibilities to ask questions.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the Liberal member has challenged me. The Minister of Health has challenged me. I think I should have the courtesy of some time without heckling to be able to address these challenges and to pursue the very important issues before us.

Very interestingly, I noted that the Liberal critic said that this is not about one bed here or one bed there; this is about the overall picture and the role of the public and the consultations and health care reform generally.

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, first let us put this in context. We are not dealing with one bed here and one bed there. We are dealing with 440 beds in the city of Winnipeg. Four hundred and forty beds is a fairly big chunk out of our hospital system without a sign of where the money is being diverted, and how it fits and what is the context, and where is the health care reform strategy?

I think we have a responsibility to ask, as I have done consistently and will persist in doing, what is the reform plan? What are the elements of it? When will the consultation start? Where is the comprehensive review promised in 1988 by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) before a single bed would be closed? That is precisely why we are here—to ask those questions, to get to the bottom of it.

Our job is to clearly find out where this government is coming from and the impact its decisions are having on all members in our society.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, when 440 beds are being cut out of the system without any announcement by this government, without this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) taking responsibility for that big decision, without any clear idea of what the reform plan is, we have to keep asking those questions.

Where are those beds coming from? Why are they being chopped here? What is the rationale? Those are the questions we have been asking for a month and I am going to continue to ask. I think that is an attempt at least to be responsible in this role in opposition and as critics for the biggest policy area in this provincial government.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in line with the Liberal critic's dissertation about his being so co-operative and helpful and this co-operative relationship going on between the two, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) suggested that, yes, the Liberal critic was right, that we should not be about simply disagreeing with what the government is doing.

Well, I agree, but we cannot get to the bottom of what the government is doing because the Minister of Health will not tell us what the government is doing. So we have to go back to the basics and ask, what is the plan? What is the percentage increase going to each hospital? What is the bed cut reduction target going to each urban hospital? What is the base-line budget target reduction going to each hospital? When are hospitals going to be consulted? When is the public going to be involved in the process? We have to keep asking those questions because we do not know what the government is doing, and the Liberal critic should start to realize that all this is happening around us. If he thinks back to the way in which this minister operates he will realize this is a critical situation.

In the past, over the past several years we have heard about things through rumour, through innuendo, through unidentified sources, through confidential documents and had to raise important issues on the basis of that information, only to be told time and time again we were fearmongering, that we were out to lunch, we were making this up, this was a figment of our imagination, it was politics, then only to find out a short time later that those decisions had actually come to pass.

Let me remind the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) about an issue he took up with great vengeance in the last set of Estimates, that of

psychoanalysis and the question of deinsurance and how we heard that this was happening, how when we raised it we were told we were fearmongering, only to find out it was a done deal, it was a fait accompli, it was a final decision without consultation, without input.

Let me remind the member for The Maples about the emergency nursing teaching program at the Health Sciences Centre, where we heard rumours about this program, this important program being shut down at the Health Sciences Centre because of provincial budgetary requirements. We asked about the emergency nursing program at the Health Sciences Centre, and the minister said we were fearmongering and being malicious and raising nonissues, only to find out that that decision was done. It was finished and there was no opportunity for anyone to raise concerns and raise questions.

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we as opposition members have a responsibility to raise those issues when we hear about them, to ask those questions and try to get answers. So, that is what I will continue to do.

The minister, interestingly, said, we cannot proceed any further until we deal with the question of no deficits for hospitals. He said, that is fundamental.

That is news to us. Suddenly this is the fundamental issue. Before, we heard some other wonderful rhetoric about health care reform and about the need to shift resources to community base and about the goals of prevention and healthy public policy and all kinds of other things, but today, now we are hearing that the first, the starting point, the overriding issue, the underriding whatever is the question of deficits to hospitals. We are back to Tory approach to health care issues—bottom-line accounting, budgeting, numbers, costs, balancing the books, the first and foremost, that is the issue.

It is very interesting, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. Let us go back to one of the first speeches that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) delivered back in November 23, 1988. Interesting speech, and I quote: So I have told them that I am not the minister of health costs, I am the Minister of Health. There must be more to government's health policies than a concern about cost. We must be concerned about quality, about insuring that Manitobans have access to health services they need, and about finding ways to improve our health services.

An Honourable Member: That has a good ring to it.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: It has a very good ring to it. I certainly support those words. But that is not the framework from which the minister is operating. He is not operating from the basis of quality and patient care and community service. He is operating from the basis of bottom-line figures and budgeting and accounting, a preoccupation with costs.

So our concern has to keep coming back. We have to keep bringing the Minister of Health back, and obviously the Liberal critic, back to the question of impact of government decisions that are taking place without any announcement, without full exposure, without public revelation. They are being done clandestinely, they are being done secretly behind closed doors, slipped in, and done before you know it, and before we have a chance to scrutinize it, and before the public has a chance to have any input.

So the question, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, comes back to, what is the budget increase for each hospital? It is interesting, the minister again said: Well, we cannot have those figures until we get to the line about hospitals. But he just had, interestingly, all those details ready about the Brandon General Hospital for the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Well, he has all those numbers at his fingertips, okay.

An Honourable Member: Maybe he has more credibility than you have.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: So the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) suggested that perhaps there was some deliberate selection of material, because the member might have more credibility—

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the honourable member has impugned me with her comments, and suggested that I had deliberately done something wrong. I would like her to withdraw that because the reference to the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was that when he was here a few minutes ago, he was speaking the truth when it came to the matter of the policy of the New Democrats, even though he did not answer in the way that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) might have liked.

He was making truthful comments, and making the same points as the honourable Minister of Health, and now the Health critic for the New Democrats is suggesting that somehow I have said something wrong and deliberately, and I would like her to correct that please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Yes, if I have said anything that offends the member for Brandon West or impugns motive, I will be glad to withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Thank you, that concludes the matter.

* * *

* (1600)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I was merely referencing the fact that the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) suggested that perhaps the information about hospital budgets was not available to me, when in fact detailed budgetary accounting statements about the Brandon General Hospital were available for the Brandon General Hospital.

The member for Brandon West suggested that may be because the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) has more credibility. I certainly hope that is not the case, and would question, again—because I know the minister has this information readily available—if he would not, at this point, be prepared to tell us.

This is a basic request for information, the budgetary increase for each hospital. As well, I remind the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) that over the past number of hours, I have also asked for a breakdown of the bed cut targets, the bed reduction targets for each urban hospital.

As I mentioned earlier, in the last set of Estimates, the minister finally did acknowledge that there were 240 beds, that this government was directing the Health Sciences Centre and the St. Boniface Hospital to cut 240 beds from their hospitals. I would like to know specific to that the precise breakdown.

I would also like to know about the 200 community beds, the beds being cut from our community hospitals. Again, I remind the Minister of Health and the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) that that is a fairly large, substantial number of beds for which there is no explanation or plan or public input.

So we need to know what hospital has been hit with which target in terms of bed cuts. What is the rationale for it? Is there a chance that the public can

be consulted and the hospital can be involved in an open, thorough consultation process before those directives are imposed finally on hospitals?

Give us some indication of the overall plan this government has with respect to redirecting any resources saved in those areas directly into the community end of our health care system so that people will know that their services are not being cut back and that there will be other ways in which they can access the health care system to ensure that quality patient care is not sacrificed.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, you might recall that I inappropriately interjected when first my honourable friend made the statement that I had confirmed a given number of bed closures at the two teaching hospitals. I asked her to quote from Hansard wherein she concluded that wondrous statement. She did not then, but she persists in perpetuating the placement of incorrect information on the record.

My honourable friend drew that conclusion. I did not give my honourable friend any such figure on Monday when we started the Estimates, nor will I give her any such figure today. So I just want my honourable friend to harken back to my words about honesty earlier on, because that is not exactly an honest statement that she just made.

My honourable friend was concerned about the budget detail that I had at my fingertips. Surely, my honourable friend must acknowledge that there is some difference between the budgets for this fiscal year, '92-93, which commenced on April 1, which I will give to my honourable friend when we reach the hospital line of the Estimates.

Surely, my honourable friend must recognize a difference between this year's budget and the historic figures that I shared with the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), wherein I pointed out what the actual net payments for a series of years were to Brandon General Hospital and a projection of what the net payment will be to Brandon General Hospital for fiscal year ending March 31, 1992, which will be confirmed in two to three months time as to a final figure, that last figure for Brandon General Hospital being in excess of \$44 million.

There is, for my honourable friend's knowledge, a difference between budget figures yet to be struck for this coming year and finalized and historic figures of what has actually transpired.

My honourable friend talks about the issue being Tory emphasis on bottom line in budget and the Tory policy of no deficits in hospitals. That was not a bottom line, neo-Conservative driven policy of a Conservative government, it was the policy that my honourable friend passed in cabinet in 1986-87 while she served as minister of whatever for Howard Pawley. It was an NDP policy.

It is a very fundamental policy to planning health care. That is why it is rather important that my honourable friend stop ducking the question. Are the New Democrats now ducking and reversing themselves and flip-flopping on the policy they put in place? That is fundamental to the debate today on hospitals because you have got to remember how we got here today. In Question Period I was accused of cutbacks in the hospital budgets. When both the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and the member for St. John's (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) say, just pay the deficit, that begs the question: have they flip-flopped on the 1986-87 policy of no-deficit funding in hospitals? It is very fundamental because that is how the whole issue started today.

* (1610)

My honourable friend ducked the issue. She ducked the issue again. She refuses to answer and I understand that, because, you know what?—my honourable friend does not have the ability to make that statement as party policy of the New Democrats. I watched the body language of Mr. Doer, the Leader of the New Democrats, at the back of the room when I was asking him if he would come forward and put on the record today whether the New Democrats in opposition have flip-flopped and reversed their policy put in place under Howard Pawley of not funding hospital deficits. The leader refused to come and clarify what his critic and his member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) were saying publicly.

So I have to suspect that the policy still exists for the New Democrats that they would not fund deficits and that the request for budgetary money to Brandon and, no doubt, to other hospitals that will be made by my honourable friends in the New Democrats are not a sincere reflection of what their policy would be should they be in government, but merely political opportunism to try to make people believe that they would do things differently when, in fact, they would not.

Now, I asked my honourable friend not to put incorrect information on the record, and my honourable friend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) again did put incorrect information on the record. She said that we deinsured psychoanalysis; that is false. Psychoanalysis was never an insured service that the government paid for, so we could not deinsure a service that was never insured. Now, my honourable friend knows that, but my honourable friend uses the quick-fix, the quick-trick language of deinsuring whenever it is convenient to her.

The second falsehood my honourable friend put on the record, again after I corrected her the first time, she talked about base-line budget reductions in the hospitals. I am going to read into the record again the budget, historic, for Brandon General Hospital starting in 1986-87: 308 beds, \$30,549,816; 1987-88: 279 beds, a reduction under the NDP, budget increased \$32,980,104; budget, 1988-89: 279 beds, budget increased \$35,178,312; 1989-90: beds increased to 291 at Brandon General Hospital, budget increased to \$37,310,496; 1990-91 fiscal year: bed capacity, 291, budget increased to \$40,975,464; budgetary year, 1991-92: bed capacity, 291, estimated budget expenditures over \$44 million.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Every single year an increase, not a decrease. Yet my honourable friend, after me putting that information on the record and correcting her, said: base-line budget reductions in hospital funding. That, sir, is false.

Now, I want to help my honourable friend because I want to take my honourable friend through the rated-beds funding for the Health Sciences Centre. I am going to take her back to '82-83, rated beds: 1,190, net payments from MHSC, \$132,840,912; '83-84, beds down to 1,173, budget up to \$151,072,896; 1984-85—now these are years that the NDP were in government—bed rating down to 119, in other words, 71 beds not funded from '82-83 to '84-85 at the Health Sciences Centre under the NDP, cut by a number of beds, I mean cutbacks, gasp, budget, \$166,692,816, an increase.

Now, I will go right through to '86-87-88, rated beds: 1,113, again a reduction, budget: \$208,414,296. Now, every year there has been an increase in the budget, even though the number of

beds are going down. Since we have come into government, we inherited a budget that was \$208,414,296 to the Health Sciences Centre. That was the last budget in which you removed six beds at Health Sciences Centre, rated beds in the last year you budgeted for them. That was a budget of almost \$208.5 million. Now, my honourable friend says we have—she is going to use this language consistently—“base-line budget reductions” in her discussions because someone has given her that language, not giving her the full explanation. So my honourable friend without full knowledge is coming here saying, there is base-line budget reductions, got to be, because somebody told me.

Well, it was \$208 million the last year the NDP were in government. It is projected to be in excess of \$270 million at the Health Sciences Centre for the fiscal year just ended. Wherein, sir, do you go from \$208 million to \$270 million and have a base-line budget reduction as alleged falsely by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis).

So I just have to put that kind of information on the record because if we are going to have an intelligent debate about health care reform, we cannot be putting false accusations on the record. Beds closed from 1,190 at the Health Sciences Centre in '82-'83 when the NDP were in government down to 1,113 rated bed capacity when we took over budgeting for health care. Those reductions, every one of them, took place out of the NDP. These people now are saying, well, you know, you should not do that. I mean, when they are in government they do one thing, and when they are in opposition, they do the other. That is why we have to know from my honourable friend, do the NDP still believe in the policy they put in place of not funding hospital deficits?

I want to tell you, you know what the Health Sciences Centre wanted to spend in the year that they are probably going to spend \$270 million? They probably wanted to spend closer to \$285 or \$290 million. They ask for more money than we give them. That is the amount of money they would have spent in deficit, and if there was a no-deficit policy in place like my NDP friend is talking about, then that is what they would have spent. Where would the money have come from? Well, it would have come out of Education, Family Services, Highways, higher taxes, or more borrowing to fund a higher deficit, interest on which takes away more services the next year.

That is why Howard Pawley and the NDP put in a policy of no deficits. That is why it is critical to know whether today's version of the NDP are renouncing that policy. You cannot have a debate around hospital budgets if you start from the premise, yes, we are going to give a budget, and we are going to set it at \$270 million, but if you spend \$290 million, go ahead, we will pick up the tab.

Where in the world will that take health care funding? Will that take it and allow you the resources you say are needed for reforming the health care system if greater amounts are consumed by our hospitals? Where in the world does my honourable friend with the NDP think—who does she think she is trying to fool with that kind of half-hearted, feeble attempt at political opportunism? When they are in government they reduce the funding to the Health Sciences Centre, \$2,000 in general hospital for beds because the beds ratings go down, beds close when the NDP are in power, but budgets still go up.

The NDP put in a no-deficit policy. We adhere to it. In opposition, they say do not close beds, which they did when they were funding and managing the health care system, and now they are even saying, do not worry about the deficits, reverse the policy. Well, that is flimflammy of the worst kind. That is political opportunism.

* (1620)

So if my honourable friend thinks that we can have a meaningful debate in health care reform with her trying to be all things to all people, she is wrong. Manitobans and Canadians have said, we want straight goods. We do not want Bob—well, I will not get into Bob Rae, what Bob Rae said in opposition what he does in government. I mean, there is a classic example of people from opposition promising the world and then hit with the reality of government. They even stop buying cars made by auto workers, Bob White's union who support the NDP in Ontario, as a budget constraining deficit control measure. Who is employed making cars in Canada? It certainly is not Manitobans. It is Ontarians. That is even the desperate measures they have had to go to in government, under the NDP guidance of Bob Rae.

When my honourable friend says certain things in opposition, they are seriously questioned by anybody who is paying attention, because they say all of a sudden, well, how is it that in opposition the New Democrats in Manitoba can do things entirely

opposite to New Democrats in Ontario, Saskatchewan and B.C.? What is the magic of the NDP under Gary Doer? Where are these magicians, these charlatans coming from?

That is why we have to have an answer from my honourable friend. I know she is ducking the question. She will not clearly answer whether they are maintaining the policy of no-deficit funding in hospitals or whether they have reversed themselves now that they are in the comfort of opposition.

Mr. Cheema: I just want to get into this debate again on a basic principle.

The member for St. Johns has put something on the record and I think it demands some answers. I should answer her questions and her challenge in terms of the role of the opposition. I think that will probably go in line with the discussion we are having here. Within four years I do not think anybody has raised more questions than me. If you want to look at the whole record of health care, we have raised issues from each and every spectrum.

I think the important thing is, when we are raising the issues and we know what is wrong with the system, when everybody else knows—the patient knows more than all of us what is wrong with the system and they want answers. The role of opposition is, we are going to question the minister, but at the same time we would like to tell him how we would do it. I will tell at each and every point how we would do it, because I think that is the issue people are asking.

I am not questioning her capabilities as a member. I am not. That is the last thing I would do for any member, but I would still demand that the taxpayers have the right to know. They are paying my and her salaries and other people's salaries in this room. Each and every hour is costing a lot of money and money does not grow on trees, I keep on repeating. You have to spend it wisely.

If we are not going to discuss the issue, when I was talking about one bed here and one bed there, she again missed the point. The issue is that we have to discuss patient care whether that involves a bed situation or community care. We cannot say, have community care and then keep everything open.

How do you fund the system? There are going to be a lot of problems. I think the only responsible way that we can do—the minister knows that every time something goes wrong, we will be jumping, but

we want to make sure that at least the taxpayer has given us confidence. Let us do it in a way that they will feel more comfortable.

There is going to be some pain and there are going to be some problems, but the system has to change. It does not matter which government comes. The system has to change, and if tomorrow the member for St. Johns becomes the Minister of Health, she will benefit from what is happening here today. Definitely not this minister and not this government is going to benefit, because that is not the way life is here.

That is what I am asking, an open debate, and I am asking how the government is going to do. We were the first ones to raise the issue of public campaign and I think it is a very important issue. I was echoed by the Minister of Justice in Brandon, because people told them and after the discussion they were more calm, they were more collected, because people understand once they have the full information. I think it is so essential, so I want to reinforce that we are not forgetting our role. We are simply making our role more responsible, and that is what people demand.

Now I will let the member for St. Johns ask further questions.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I would like to pursue asking some questions about government policy on our hospitals, on bed cuts, on budget reductions, on consultation and on reform, areas we have tried to pursue in the past and for which we have received very few answers.

I want to say to the member for The Maples that there are no easy answers in this whole area of health care and change and reform. I said that many times. I said that in my opening remarks. I am not government. I am not executing decisions that are having an impact on people's lives. I am not making those decisions. I am not putting out decrees in terms of hospital base-line budget reductions. The minister hates those words, but we will get back to the source of those words.

It is our job to acknowledge the difficulties, certainly, but when the government makes decisions either in the open and publicly or secretly and clandestinely, then it is our job as opposition to get to the bottom of those decisions, find out what exactly is the precise nature of those decisions and what impact they will have.

Are the Minister of Health and the member for The Maples saying that there are no decisions, that all of these headlines going back two months about 440 beds being cut from urban hospitals is nonsense? Are they saying that all the reports—are they questioning the accuracy of all these reports and the credibility of all these reporters who have been told about \$27-million cuts to hospital budgets? Are they ignoring the letters that we are all getting from patients who are telling us about sitting in emergency wards for five days and 10 days?

It is real out there. There is a reality. Decisions are being made. Maybe they are not being made directly and openly and up-front, but they are being made and it is our job to get to the bottom of them, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson. So I will try again to ask some questions on this very important area, and I wish I had the help of the Liberal critic in asking these questions, because obviously I am not getting very far with the Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) suggests that we are making up this terminology and spreading rumours that are not founded in terms of base-line reductions to hospitals. Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we did not make up the words. Number one, we heard the terminology, the scenarios, the concerns expressed fairly regularly from a great many sources since last year when this government first made a fundamental change in policy and in the funding of our hospitals.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, it is not the NDP making up stories about last year about the \$19-million reduction to the base budgets of hospitals. It was confirmed. It was documented. It was talked about in the media by heads of our hospitals, heads of administrations, and time and time again we heard how this was a fundamental shift in policy. That is one source where this came from—not out of my head or anyone else's, not made up, not fearmongering.

The second source for this information came out of hospital minutes. I have, as one example, minutes from St. Boniface Hospital outlining changes that were being proposed by this government in terms of, in this case they suggest a \$18-million shortfall, which is—we had two figures. Of course, the government has never owned up to any one of these figures, so we do not know if it is a \$18-million cut to hospital budgets or \$19 million last year, but it is one of them. Those minutes

clearly outline that the government came to the St. Boniface Hospital and said: Here is the situation; here is the problem; now either we can impose a solution—and I am quoting from these minutes—or there would be a collaborative attempt.

* (1630)

Finally, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we come to the minister's own briefing book and material provided by his own departmental staff last year. I will refer again to the memorandum done by Sean Drain, Director of Urban Health Facilities in the Department of Health, a memorandum for the minister's briefing book entitled Budget Targets/Larger Winnipeg Hospitals and Brandon. That memo outlines the unique situation facing the provincial government as a result of the reduction of transfer payments by the federal government. It goes on to suggest how that problem was being addressed and it very specifically states, and I quote: Hospitals requested and were provided with specific information on the proposed increases that they might anticipate for 1991-92 and how the overall targeted reduction might affect them if this amount was allocated on a pro rata basis.

Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, these are not our words. We are talking about hospital base-line reductions, acknowledged in the minister's own briefing book, verified in the minutes of hospital meetings, clearly documented by reporters over the last couple of years, not concocted by the opposition.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we know that the government is carrying on with this dramatic shift in policy for this year and next year. We know that this government has said to urban hospitals, they must come up with money for restructuring purposes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are talking about a lot of new language and a lot of new developments that have nothing to do with regular budgeting process. We are talking about government officials from the highest ranking in the Department of Health going to urban hospitals and saying there is a fund that must be met, a target that must be met for restructuring purposes. They are being told that last year's \$19 million or \$18 million, whichever figure you want to choose, was not met and that the unachieved—these are not my words, these are words from hospital administrators—portion would

have to be met this year as well as an additional amount for restructuring purposes.

So this is all new language, new ideas, a shift in policy. I am not dreaming it up. I am not trying to take a normal budgeting process and blow it out of proportion. We are talking about a shift in policy for which there has never been a public statement, an announcement by this minister. We are asking for some details about that. We have been asking for the overall plan into which all of these different announcements or different developments fit. We have been asking for the specific breakdown of the budget reductions for each urban hospital budget. We have been asking for the government-directed bed reduction target for each urban hospital. We have been asking for the percentage increase for each urban hospital. The minister says he does not have that information once again.

I would like to ask him once more if he can come up with that information and specifically put it in the context of the reports, indicating that Misericordia Hospital is not expecting any increase. They are expecting zero percent. They know something. They have heard something, so the minister must know something. Perhaps, he would like to share that with members of the Legislative Assembly. He has told the House, the hospitals will be getting 4 percent to 5 percent. If he knows that much and Misericordia Hospital knows this, then surely the minister can come forward with some specifics about that budget increase for each hospital.

I think it is only reasonable to be able to ask for that information at this point in the Estimates process, given what is happening around us, given the concern in our hospitals, given the growing fear among Manitoba health care consumers. I think it is only reasonable to expect the minister to be able to tell us specifically the basis for the 200-bed target reduction for community hospitals. The minister did, contrary to the impression he has left with this committee today, clearly acknowledge the government directive for a 240-bed reduction at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital.

I refer specifically to page 1569 on March 23 of Estimates where I asked the minister the following, and I quote. I asked him where the 240-bed cut target for the two teaching hospitals came from. That is a figure which came from either the minister or his deputy minister or someone in his department. It did not come from the hospitals. It has been a

directive issue to the two hospitals, a figure put before them for serious consideration.

I am simply asking, on what basis was that figure based? On what research is it founded? The minister responded:

"It was founded on the principle that our teaching hospitals undertake care delivery in sections of the hospital for which appropriate and equivalent and sometimes better care can be provided in other locations, such as the long-term care, such as the outpatient surgery procedures, et cetera, such as lower-risk operations, low-complication operations which can be carried out in less expensive and less complex teaching hospital areas.

"Those services which can be performed"

I could go on. I will stop there, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, but I think you get the drift that the minister responded to a very specific question, took responsibility for the information provided him, accepted responsibility for the decision and gave us the rationale, the reasons and the basis for that decision.

Now I am simply asking the minister today to give us all the missing pieces of information and then, yes, we will be able to understand and play a constructive role in this whole process, but without the information and without the government acknowledging the full range of the decisions that they have taken and are now executing, it is impossible to get beyond this role of asking questions which the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) may construe to be less than constructive, because they do not offer solutions. But I say to you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one cannot offer solutions if one does not know the decisions that are being made in full by this government and what is the plan into which these elements fit.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I note with a great deal of interest, my honourable friend read from a memo from Sean Drain to our major urban hospitals. In that memo, my honourable friend was trying to make the case that we had ordered a \$19 million or an \$18 million—you know, she is bouncing around on the figure—cut from their budgets.

Yet she went on to quote from that letter proposed increases for the fiscal year, not \$19 million less budget, but proposed increases. That is why the net payments from the Manitoba Health Services Commission in 1990-91—and let us deal with the Health Sciences Centre first—were \$256,736,375.

They are estimated that they will receive at the Health Sciences Centre for this fiscal year just ended a total payment in excess of \$270 million. That is not a reduction, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is an increase.

In Brandon General Hospital, 1990-91 the net MHSC payment to the Brandon General Hospital was \$40,975,464. It is projected that this year, the net payment from MHSC to the Brandon General Hospital will exceed \$44 million. Not a decrease, as my honourable friend tries to say, but an increase.

That is why Sean Drain's letter to the facilities say it proposed increases.

Now this fundamental and dramatic change in policy that my honourable friend is alleging that happened last year is this: Hospitals—and let us just deal with the Health Sciences Centre just because they are a major teaching hospital—this year we expect to pay from the Manitoba Health Services Commission in excess of \$270 million. At this time last year they were drawing up their budget and they were saying to government, well, we would like to receive two hundred and—and let us pick a figure because I do not have it at my disposal—but I would suspect the Health Sciences Centre made an initial request that they would like to have their budget for fiscal year ending March 31, 1992, to be \$285 million, some \$30 million over their previous year's budget, would probably have been their initial request.

* (1640)

We said no, we cannot afford to give you that kind of money; however, we believe we can fund you to the tune of approximately \$270 million. Not a decrease year over year, but an increase of some \$14 million. It was not as much as they asked for. The reduction in request to projected funding is roughly the \$19 million. That is what I have explained every time it has been asked of me. There is a difference between what they ask for and what we budget they can receive, and that, sir, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is why we have to get down to this bottom-line question of whether government should pick up the deficits and allow a deficit to become the base-line budget from which further annualized increases will be tagged onto.

Let us do a hypothetical situation. Let us say that out of a \$270 million budget, which we have agreed at the start of the fiscal year to provide to an institution, is overexpended by \$5 million, i.e. a

deficit. Under the policy that we inherited from 1987 from the NDP—I will repeat again my honourable friends sitting around the cabinet table who passed that policy—they said there shall be no deficits. If deficits are incurred that cannot be justified according to program guidelines under the normal review that takes place at the end of every fiscal year, they must come out of the funding increase from the next year. That is the policy that the NDP put in place. That is the policy we adhere to.

If that facility hypothetically with the \$270-million budget target exceeded that by \$5 million, that \$5 million is going to come out of this year's funding because the policy we operate under is the policy we inherited from the NDP of no deficits being funded by government at year end.

My honourable friend is saying, I believe, disregard that policy, fund the \$275 million, the \$5-million deficit, and then add on whatever their request for programming is this year. That is not budgeting. That is not what my honourable friend did in government. That is this dramatic change in policy my honourable friend is talking about, exactly the policy that has been followed probably for 20 years in the province of Manitoba. Hospitals say we need this much money. The government says, no, we only have this much. The difference is not given to the hospitals to spend.

In years previous to 1986-87, the hospitals disregarded in a lot of instances their budgets. They exceeded them, they ran deficits, and then they came to government after the fact—and this was the NDP that were in power—and said, we have got a deficit, pay it. Pay it taxpayers, because we know doggone well that you are not going to stand the heat publicly of us saying, oh, well, we have got to close beds, we have got to curtail operations, we have got to lay off staff, and they put political pressure on the government. They still do that from time to time.

That is why in 1987, Howard Pawley and the NDP said, no, no more deficits as a policy of government. That is why Howard Pawley and the NDP ordered the closure of—I do not know—120, 130 beds without consultation, without discussion, without any programs being in place to underpin the services delivered in those beds in the community, none of them, none of the policies were put in place to underpin that dramatic shift, I mean that callous decision, by Howard Pawley and the NDP.

Howard Pawley and the NDP did it because deficits were looming out of control in the hospital sector. There were a number of St. Michael's Hospitals in the making in Manitoba five years ago, and the NDP said no more deficits, and we agree.

That is why I say to my honourable friend she cannot have it both ways for the NDP. She cannot blithely slip around the issue and say, oh well, really that is not the issue, just pay them what they spend, and then add on to them whatever their request is and everything will be fine.

You did not do that when you were government. You would not do it if you were government today. That is the point my honourable friend from The Maples (Mr. Chœma) is making.

My honourable friend the member for The Maples is in close contact with administrations that may well be Liberal in the rest of Canada. He knows the kind of decisions they are making, and he knows that should he be in government, he would probably have to make similar decisions to what we are making right now. What he is going to do is suggest to us how we make our changes better, and I am listening.

My honourable friend from the NDP contrasts quite dramatically. She wants to have it one way in government and another way in opposition. She wants to tell hospitals, oh well, we would have picked up your deficit had we been government, I mean, no problem. Yet when they were government, they put in a policy of no deficits. That is why this debate is meaningless until my honourable friend stops ducking the question of whether they have reversed themselves on the policy of no deficits in hospitals, because my honourable friend will dig out the information, and they will say that these adjustments were not met.

Do you know what that means in lay language? That means there are deficits at the hospitals. I would suggest to my honourable friend, when she talks to her "sources" in the hospitals, ask them if they are incurring a deficit for their operation this year—just one simple question. You know what the answer is going to be, depending on which hospital you go to? It is going to be, yes, we are. Ask them the next question: Will you have to retire that deficit from this year's funding increase. Do you know what the answer will be? Yes. So the issue is hospitals running deficits, in 1992, the exact same issue that was in place in 1986-87 when the NDP

said that hospitals shall not run deficits; they shall operate within the structured budget.

My honourable friend used Brandon as an example. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) said every hospital should be dealt with individually. We did that in Brandon. We set up a group of peers in the hospital system, independent from the Brandon General Hospital, to analyze their operations and found indeed they were undertaking more complex service delivery than what we were funding them for and we made adjustments accordingly upwards in the budget. That is why the Brandon Hospital budget went—and I can give you those figures again, but it is pointless. I mean there is still a cutback when my honourable friend finally gets around to talking about them.

Today, when we are dealing with hospitals, we have maintained that we will not provide funding for deficits incurred in a fiscal year unless there is a significant program reason which would mitigate against those deficits being incurred. Occasionally, we do make adjustments to the budget end of the funding level, mid-year and post-year, but not very often. That is not a new policy; that is the same policy that we inherited.

* (1650)

My honourable friend, when she quotes her sources had better ask them clearly, are you incurring a deficit for the fiscal year '91-92; if so, how much, and will you have to retire it from this year's increase? Then see what answers she gets, because they will be somewhat different than the painted picture my honourable friend is trying to deliver today. She will find that our budgeting process is not a wit different than what it was when the NDP were in, except for one thing: we are enjoying a substantially greater degree of co-operation between the hospitals in the province of Manitoba so that hospital A will not meet their budget requirements by offloading program on hospitals B, C and D. We have the system dealing with system-wide issues on acute care, and that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is a first. It never happened before in the province of Manitoba, and I simply say to you it is very enviously viewed by other provincial ministries of Health.

Ontario would dearly love to have an urban hospital council, and, in fact, the deputy minister is attempting to structure something of that accord to operate in Toronto with the major hospitals in Toronto, because the example I gave to my

honourable friend that they rightfully intervened in 1986-87 to prevent happening was a mini St. Mike's in maybe several hospitals in Manitoba. St. Michael's Hospital ran a deficit which they believed was going to be \$3 million to \$4 million, and by the time the smoke cleared after two years of investigation the deficit at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto exceeded \$60 million—\$60 million, because Ontario did not have a no-deficit policy.

I want to read, for my honourable friend's edification, Hansard, November 26, 1991, from the Ontario Legislature. Here is Ms. Lankin, who is the Health minister, in response to a question about hospital bed closures, some 3,092 beds that are projected to close in Ontario by the end of this fiscal year, which would mean by March 31, 1992—Ms. Lankin says: The policy established as of 1989 is that deficits will not be funded; we continue to put in place and support that policy.

Do you want to know why Ms. Lankin as Minister of Health in Ontario is adhering to that policy? Because there was not a no-deficit policy in Ontario until 1989, and as a consequence of that, St. Michael's Hospital went from what was believed to be a \$2-million or \$3-million deficit to in excess of \$60 million in deficit. The government fired the entire board, replaced the CEO, replaced all of the vice-presidents and now have replaced the vice-presidents once again, are in the process of doing so, because St. Michael's Hospital ran a massive deficit.

Now, I do not want to do that, and that is why I believe there was some sanity in the New Democratic Party policy of 1986-1987, where they said, no deficits in the hospitals.

Does my honourable friend not understand the fundamental underpinning of that policy that she is now disavowing herself as critic of today? If she says that we should just simply cover the deficits, then I cannot debate budgets of hospitals, because some hospitals overexpended and are running deficits.

If my honourable friend is simply saying to them, pay the deficit, forget about it, pay the deficit and then build your funding on top of a deficit base line, I cannot do that and I will not do that, because of the taxpayers concern over escalating health care costs. It does not help reform of the health care system. It does not help planning. It does not help achieving better management in the health care

system. It just lets managers off the hook. That is why you put that no-deficit policy in place in 1986-87.

So, you know, if my honourable friend is saying that that policy is no longer valid, then I cannot have a reasoned debate with her as to how health care reform will proceed, because health care reform is underpinned by maintenance of budgets as produced. That is a fundamental underpinning of it. It was in '86-87 and it continues to be today.

So maybe my honourable friend could just take a brief moment again and say yes or no. Would you pay for deficits in hospitals and reverse the policy you put down, or are you adhering to the policy that you participated in passing in cabinet in '86-87?

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, first of all I have to give the minister credit for avoiding all questions we have put to him for the last two and a half hours. We have not had a single answer to our questions about the budget reductions being directed by this government, about the bed target reductions being directed by this government, about the lack of consultation with hospitals, with the community surrounding those hospitals, with professionals and about the absence of a plan into which these decisions would fit.

It is interesting that the minister would suggest that the problem rests with the New Democratic Party in wanting it one way in government and one way in opposition; well, interesting, especially given that it was this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who said in 1987 that under a Conservative government not a single bed would be closed; interesting, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the context of the election promise that I referenced in Question Period today when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said that hospital beds would not be closed without a major comprehensive plan being done.

I am wondering, after two and a half hours of the minister avoiding these questions, if there is a reason for that. Is he denying all of these reports from hospital officials, administrators, reporters, concerned citizens, patients, about the number of bed cuts that hospitals are looking at? Is he denying the reports about 440 beds for urban hospitals? Is he now denying the 240 beds for Health Sciences and St. B. that he did acknowledge on March 23, 1992, here in Estimates? Is he disregarding the reports from Health Sciences Centre as they went into retreat, talking about getting ready and prepare for the worst-case scenario? Is he disregarding the

memos from the president of the Health Sciences Centre to all staff indicating that they must stick together through these difficult days ahead and talking about how the government had imposed a plan to restructure the system?

In fact, it provides us with enough information to suggest that it is more than just simply a question of targets, but that the government's plan goes much beyond that. For instance, this memo that I have referenced before in the House and in Estimates states specifically that it is, and I quote: It is our understanding that the province will be taking measures to implement employee adjustment strategies to bring about every effort to diminish the extent of any negative impact on staff.

So is the minister suggesting that there is no plan, that hospitals are being advised government has a strategy for dealing with terms of employee adjustment strategies?

Is the minister denying the reports going back as early as March 10, when CBC Radio first reported from high-ranked officials in the Health Sciences Centre—not from our sources, not from the NDP, but from persons who did not wish to have their names disclosed—indicating that there was going to be the closure or transfer of more than 400 beds, with specific information about those beds and where they would be divided up, and how they would be dispersed?

Is the minister denying all of that? When will he come clean and simply tell us how many beds is this government directing urban hospitals to cut, where are those cuts, what will be the impact of those cuts, and what is the plan into which these cuts fit?

I think that is a simple, straightforward question, and I fail to see why we, after two and a half hours today, after four and a half hours on March 23, and after a month of questioning in the Legislative Assembly, have not been able to get any answers. I would try once again: Would the minister come clean and give us some basic, factual information about those directives and targets coming from his department and this government?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have given my honourable friend more information on the general direction of reform. If my honourable friend cared to revisit my opening remarks, it is there in spades, laid out for my honourable friend.

But my honourable friend, again, in I do not know how many hours today, how many hours the other

day, still has not answered the fundamental question: Has the NDP reversed themselves on no deficits in hospitals? Because if you do not have control over the major expenditure line in your Estimates, and you let it go out of control, you do not have any money for any reform. The system merely spirals out of control. That is why New Democrats in Ontario have a no-deficit policy. That is why New Democrats in Manitoba used to have a no-deficit policy in hospitals. That is why we have, as government today, a no-deficit policy in hospitals.

My honourable friend has ducked the issue, ducked the issue completely, because she is afraid to say, we have changed our minds. Because when my honourable friend admits the New Democrats in opposition are going to say they changed their minds, they admit they have absolutely no concept of health care reform, that they are merely going to try to politicize health care, the funding of health care, the delivery of services, narrowly to get into government, and then to pull a Bob Rae, say anything to get them there and then change their minds on every single policy once in government.

* (1700)

That is why we cannot have a reasoned debate with the New Democrats around health care reform. I can with the Liberals, and that offends the member for St. John's (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), the New Democrats. It offends them terribly that we actually can come to an agreement on process and change. Well, it does not offend the people of Manitoba because they see the Liberals as being the honest brokers in health care reform. They see no such commodity coming from the New Democrats. When they find out today that my honourable friend would not give us the simple indication as to whether deficits would be tolerated in hospitals under a New Democratic government, were they in power today, they will find that extremely offensive, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The time is now 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour. I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee. The Committee of Supply will resume considerations at 8 p.m. Thank you.

FAMILY SERVICES

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the Estimates for the Department

of Family Services. We will begin with a statement from the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Madam Chairperson, I am pleased to present to this committee the 1992-93 spending Estimates for the Department of Family Services. In these difficult economic times, our government has had to make many challenging spending decisions. As in past budgets, our government has clearly demonstrated that Family Services is a priority spending area.

Our budget for the 1992-93 fiscal year shows an increase of 8.7 percent, more than four times the rate of inflation, and more than double the increase in overall government spending. In total our department has been allocated \$640.4 million to provide services and programs to assist individuals and families who are at risk or in financial need.

Overall the increase is one of the largest amongst government departments. In these Estimates discussions it is very easy to focus on dollars, on the bottom line. If you look at our dollar commitment, the priority this government places on Family Services is clear. In the past five years the Family Services budget has grown at a rate more than double the rate of inflation.

But our commitment goes beyond the rhetoric of more spending. Our commitment is the action we are taking, whether it be introducing a monthly supplement for disabled social assistance recipients, establishing an office of the child advocate or injecting half a million dollars of new money in support of family violence initiatives.

We have taken, and will continue to take, steps to improve services, and target our resources to most effectively and efficiently assist Manitobans who rely on our programs. It is a difficult challenge. The national economic recession has limited government resources at a time when demand for services is increasing.

Now more than ever, government must meet the demand for more with solutions for spending smarter. During our last Estimates discussion, I talked about how the national economic recession and federal government offloading were putting pressure on our ability to deliver needed programs. These pressures remain.

Still, we have been able in this budget to introduce new initiatives and enhance existing programs to better meet the needs of Manitobans.

In the area of social assistance we have taken many important steps to target our resources to those Manitobans most in need. Overall, our Income Maintenance area has been increased by 13.4 percent to over \$337.5 million. In part, this reflects increasing caseloads due to the economic recession.

As well, this government has launched several major new initiatives to improve living standards for Manitobans requiring social assistance. Late last year I announced the establishment of a monthly supplement in recognition of the special costs facing disabled social assistance recipients. The new income assistance for the disabled benefit will provide a new \$60 monthly benefit at an annual cost of \$8 million.

Effective this past January we have also increased basic social allowances, the rate, by 3.6 percent, an amount well in excess of recent increases in the consumer price index. Monthly rates have also been increased to provide social allowance recipients with provincial tax credit benefits on a more timely basis and to discourage excessive charges for tax discounting services.

* (1440)

As well, we recently announced a significant increase in the liquid asset at exemption levels under the Social Allowances Program. In consultation with municipal organizations we are undertaking a major initiative to bring equity to social assistance recipients across the province through the standardization of rates and benefits paid under the municipal tier of social assistance. Legislation enabling this important change was introduced on March 25, 1992.

This government has also continued its strong support of Manitoba's child daycare system, increasing funding this year by 6.3 percent. Over the past five years we have made a significant commitment to daycare in Manitoba, injecting \$20 million into the system over five budgets to bring the total funding in this area to \$46.7 million. As you may recall, our government undertook a major restructuring of funding last year, refocusing some of our support from funding spaces and centres to providing financial assistance to Manitobans who can least afford daycare. At that time we made a

commitment to actively monitor the impact of these changes and have been doing so in consultation with the Manitoba Child Care Association, the Family Day Care Association of Manitoba and Manitobans for Quality Child Care.

At the same time and throughout the country, daycare centres have been feeling the effects of the economic recession, particularly in the area of reduced demand for their spaces. We have been discussing these issues with the daycare community. In response, this budget will provide daycare centres with a 4 percent increase in their operating grants. As well, and in response to many requests from operators and their member associations, this government has agreed to temporarily halt the licensing of spaces.

The Rehabilitation and Community Living division will receive a 4.6 percent increase in its funding in 1992-93 bringing its budget to \$102.5 million. This includes increased funding support for external agencies providing residential and support services, day programs and children's special services. Just as importantly, we have been working with the community to find ways to help disabled Manitobans live as independently as possible in their communities. Over the past two years the department and the community have been involved in two major consultation processes. The working group on Community Living has submitted its report to me, and I will be announcing in the near future a series of responses to their recommendations.

As well, the committee established to recommend improved legislation ensuring the rights of Manitoba adults living with a mental disability has completed its work, and I expect to introduce legislation in response to those recommendations.

This area is also the location of our employment programming, and in these economic times it is more important than ever to ensure that programs we offer are effective and appropriate. We have been reviewing our programming and, as part of this review, we will be establishing a new \$1.4 million Partners with Youth program designed to create jobs for young Manitobans and provide lasting benefits for communities. The cost of this program will be shared with Rural Development, and eligible sponsors will be municipal governments, local businesses and nonprofit organizations.

I am also pleased that our government continues to take significant steps in bringing a renewed focus

to quality and service in the area of Child and Family Support. For this coming fiscal year the government has committed \$98.5 million for child protection and family support services. We are proceeding with a series of reforms to Manitoba's child welfare system that I announced last June. As part of that we have allocated, in addition to the Child and Family Services budget, \$250,000 to establish the office of the Children's Advocate. This office will ensure that the rights, interests, and preferences of children in the Child and Family Services system are respected and protected.

We are also progressing with our plans to implement our service information system. Many reports and reviews commissioned over the past several years have pointed to the serious need for such a mechanism to track information on children and families in the system. We will begin implementing the new computerized system this upcoming fiscal year, and I am especially pleased that the first phase will focus on providing needed case tracking information to social workers in the field. Work on implementing the high-risk indicator which will assist front-line social workers in assessing children as they come into care has also begun.

We are continuing to build on these important initiatives in the coming year, and as part of that, I am pleased to advise that our spending Estimates will provide additional funding to support expanded staffing in the Child and Family Services system.

We are also taking significant steps in our efforts to more effectively respond to family violence. As you are aware, we are in the process of modifying the funding formula for shelters. I plan to announce the details of the new funding formula, funding model, which is designed to stabilize revenue to centres in the near future. We have also made a significant financial commitment to this area in the budget, increasing funding by \$500,000 for existing support and counselling services for victims of family violence. In providing support and assistance to individuals and families at risk or in financial need, the Department of Family Services affects the lives of many Manitobans. It is estimated that in the course of a full year, as many as 180,000 Manitobans receive services or benefits from this department or the various organizations we fund. It is a responsibility we take very seriously.

As I stated earlier, the pressures and demands on this department are increasing at a time when the

revenue available is very limited. The public, the taxpayer, is asking government to find new and better ways of delivering important human services within the limits of their ability to pay. They are asking government to make responsible spending decisions. In Family Services we are responding. We are setting priorities and we are focussing on the effective management and decision-making that enables us to re-allocate dollars to priority areas.

We face many challenges in the upcoming fiscal year. I have outlined some of the initiatives we will be proceeding with. As well, we will be taking action on a report this government commissioned to examine the reporting of abuse allegations in children's residential treatment centres. In response to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, we will be looking at more effective ways to work with the aboriginal community, to serve their families in a more culturally appropriate manner.

As this budget and its spending proposals indicate, this government takes very seriously its responsibility to assist Manitoba families at risk or in financial need. We will continue to work with the various groups and organizations that share this responsibility with us as we examine better and more effective ways to deliver these important services.

I look forward to members' questions and comments.

Madam Chairperson: We will now hear from the critic of the official opposition.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Yes, I am pleased to be beginning the Estimates process for the '92-93 fiscal year. I was interested in the minister's comments about the new initiatives and the programming changes that he is currently announcing in his budget or will be announcing through the fiscal year. I will be speaking in much greater detail as we get to the line-by-line items, but I would like to put some general comments on record.

* (1450)

It is particularly appropriate, I believe, to do so before any of the staff come into this process, because the comments that I am going to make, I think, are legitimately directed solely to the minister, who has the ultimate political and fiscal authority to make the decisions as to what money gets spent where in this department. The staff, to a greater or lesser extent, but generally speaking, can make

recommendations but they do not make the decisions upon which the basic thrust of the programming is based.

I would like to say, Madam Chairperson, that I read with great interest the annual report, tabled recently by the minister, of the 1990-91 fiscal year for the Department of Family Services and the five major goals and missions of the department. Every time I read these, I am struck again by the fact that they are excellent goals and missions. They, in and of themselves, cover the broad range of programming that the Department of Family Services is responsible for and talk quite carefully, I believe, and in a very positive manner, about the services that this department is legitimately, legally and financially responsible for.

However, Madam Chairperson, over the past five years of this government, and particularly the last three budgets since the government has had a majority, the implementation of those mission statements and goals has been less than exemplary. The mission to ensure the basic needs of Manitobans while encouraging and supporting efforts to reduce dependency and enhance self-sufficiency is an admirable goal. Again, still Manitobans are less than 50 percent of the poverty line in income when they are relying on social assistance programs. In many cases, the implementation of those basic needs are very difficult to come by, protection of children and insuring the well-being of vulnerable adults, providing a wide range of alternate or institutional care.

We could and have in this House gone on at great length about the protection of particularly children in this province and will be looking at this yet again as we get through the lines in the department, the Estimates of the department. Again I would say that the government has not managed to fulfill that mandate.

The alternate or institutional care for those requiring such services, I will be bringing forth several comments and concerns and suggestions from a range of community interest groups, community groups, agencies, organizations and individuals who have shared with me and have shared with the minister and the department their concerns about particularly the services available in alternate noninstitutional care.

Independent living and participation in the community for Manitobans with mental or physical disabilities, again, the need far outweighs the government's response even in the light of difficult economic times. Assisting families to maintain their integrity, resolving their own problems and fulfilling their responsibilities, this is an area of the department that I think probably has arguably suffered as much as any of the other areas because it is one that is less easy to quantify.

It is an area that talks in terms of counselling and working through emotional and psychological problems in many ways. The resources that the department has available to it do not allow in many cases for that kind of activity to take place, so that this area is also underresourced very clearly.

Finally, to help Manitobans facing serious barriers to stable employment adapt to and participate in the province's work force. Here again, we have seen very little movement over the course of the life of this government's term in office and in some cases step backwards. So we need to look at the missions and goals of this government in this regard.

In many cases, as I have said, they have not moved forward to the degree that the government may perhaps want the people of Manitoba to believe. When the minister in his opening remarks talked about the 8.7 percent increase in the overall department spending, over four times the stated cost of living.

This phrase, this statement has been made time and time again since the budget of the province has been tabled. I find it very interesting because, particularly the 8.7 percent increase to Family Services, 80 percent of that goes specifically to the income maintenance, social assistance programs—80 percent.

That is, as I have stated before in this House, Madam Chairperson, not a reflection of a positive move on the part of the government, but a reflection of their mandated, required necessity to provide the basic necessities, even at the very minimal level that we have in this province.

Yes, it speaks to the federal government's offloading, but it also speaks to the total lack of any kind of meaningful job creation, educational upgrading, support for community colleges, support for programs that can provide job training, job retraining, education upgrading—the sorts of things that families and individuals need to be able to get

off the poverty cycle and get off social assistance. So the concept that the government is being very positive in its response to the requirements of the Family Services department is on the face of it not an accurate statement.

The 13.4 percent increase in the Income Maintenance line, as the minister stated, in part representing the increase in caseload—I would like to ask rhetorically, the minister, what his definition of in part is? The vast majority of that increase is due to the numbers, the caseload increase, not just a portion of it. It reflects, as I say again, not only the lack of any kind of short-term or long-term economic program on the part of the federal government, but also the same shortfall on the part of the provincial government.

When we talk about again—and I will get into some of the specifics—the child daycare program is one of the major areas of concern in this department to me and to many other Manitobans, particularly those who have in the past found the daycare system in this province to truly be accessible, affordable and of high quality.

The restructuring of the fee structure that the government implemented last April has led to a major crisis in the daycare system which the government is partially recognizing through its increase in the operating grants but, again, there are literally thousands of families and daycare operators and daycare parents who are suffering needlessly by this government's ideological change in the funding formula. Again, the lump sum payment discussion that we have had in the past with social assistance recipients, we will continue to have again in its fullest form.

The special employment programs have been cut so that the government can establish its Partners with Youth program. There are some very serious questions that I have to ask about that program, and I am hoping that the minister can provide us with some very specific details about the program and the numbers of young Manitobans that he anticipates being able to assist, particularly in this first year of its functioning. It appears to be the type of program that may be a fairly lengthy start-up kind of program, so that you do not see the benefits as immediately as you might have. We are particularly concerned that money has been taken from the current special employment programs to help fund this new Partners with Youth program.

The reforms to Child and Family Services, yet again, I find the word "reform" very interesting in this context. To our way of thinking on this side of the House that change had nothing of positive reform about it. It was a regressive backward step that was done in a narrow-minded punitive fashion, literally in the dead of night over a weekend, and I would be very interested to see what kinds of positive feedback has come out of that, quote, reform.

Family violence initiatives—since this government took office in May of 1988 the issue of stable funding for the shelter system and other elements of the Family Dispute division have been a discussion for this government. I happen to know that the previous government had plans to within six months make changes to the funding formula, because they realized that the funding formula that was currently in place placed too much emphasis on per diems. It was too volume driven and did not reflect the needs particularly of the organizations outside the city of Winnipeg.

* (1500)

I find it passing strange, as one of my colleagues is wont to use, to see that literally five years later, there has been no major restructuring of that funding formula with enormous costs as we all know to the family violence services that are being provided in this province. I will also be very interested in hearing to what programs and initiatives the additional money in this section is going to be used. There has been no information to date on that, and so I am quite interested in that.

Again, the minister spoke about taking action on the Suche report about dealing with the residential treatment centres. We are looking forward very much to that.

Providing services to aboriginal children and families in a culturally appropriate manner—I would be very interested to see what kinds of specifics there are that are being worked out, because I know that there are organizations and agencies within the aboriginal community that are having serious concerns about the government's commitment to the issues that were raised and the recommendations that came out of the AJI report.

Again, the Pedlar report—most of the Pedlar report dealt with the judicial system, but there were some very interesting, excellent middle and long-term recommendations in that report that I would hope the minister's budget reflects. It is

difficult to see in reading the Estimates at this point how many of those recommendations are being worked on, but we will be asking very specific questions on that.

The other brief area that I would like to talk about, or go back to very briefly, is the child daycare issue, and we will again specifically ask the minister about his consultations with the child care community and would hope very seriously that his consultations with the child care community in this last year since the last time we met in Estimates were a little more forthright, forthcoming than the working group consultations that he undertook in the year and a half prior to that—or that his government undertook in the year and a half prior to that.

In closing, Madam Chairperson, I was interested in the fact that approximately 180,000 Manitobans, at one point or another in a year, use one or more of the services that this department either funds through its own staff or through its funding of external agencies. That is almost 20 percent of the population of the province of Manitoba. It is an enormously important department, particularly when you take into account the fact that virtually all of the people who use these services that are funded out of this department are using these services because they are in a crisis of one sort or another. They are in either an emotional, a psychological, a physical, or a financial crisis.

So the services that this department provides, I believe, are arguably the most important in the province because they are going to the people who are most in need. I wish I could say that the Estimates that have been provided for this department for 1992-93 gave some of those or a majority or even a large number of those 180,000 Manitobans some sense of progress, some sense of security, some sense that the government was actually listening to their needs and prioritizing them in a very high manner.

I am afraid, Madam Chairperson, that the beginning of the Estimates process does not lead me to that conclusion. But I certainly am open to and will be very interested in discussing those particular issues with the minister as we go through the Estimates process.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Madam Chairperson, I did not ever expect to find myself back making opening remarks on the Department of Family Services. It is only that my Leader (Mrs. Carstairs) is unwell today, that I am standing in.

I said at the close of Estimates last year that I would not be back, because in many ways the issues that affect this department are simply too personal to me. They involve people that I have known for many, many years, and people I have worked with, and people whom I have a great deal of respect for.

The feelings that are generated inside of me as I look at the actions of this department, and as I try to bring some level of objective comment to the actions of this minister—the feelings that I feel are simply so negative and so angry and so corrosive that I have difficulty stepping back and being the objective critic of the functioning of the government.

I say that, as much as a comment on myself, as on the minister and the department because I realize that anger of that sort is probably more destructive to the person who is feeling it than the person who is the target of it. So I will attempt to enter these discussions, in part in an attempt to free myself of some of those very black and very negative feelings that have accompanied my presentations in the past.

I want to try in this session to offer some advice to the minister. Now I am of the mind that I have been doing that for the last few years, and I certainly, when this minister was first appointed, welcomed his appointment because I felt that a fresh look at this from somebody who might have something to contribute to a debate on how we provide support to vulnerable people was exactly the thing that this department needed. I tried at various points throughout certainly the first year to offer what I felt were constructive observations on some of the activities that were taking place. My faith in the willingness or the desire of this minister to produce positive changes in the system was shattered rather badly by the takeover of Child and Family Services.

I was at a meeting with the various boards and directors of the old agencies just a few weeks prior to it at which time the spectre of takeover was raised. I went to some length to assure people that no, this minister was positively directed, wished to make improvements in the system, not to destroy it and that they should work with him not continue to battle him. Three weeks later I was proved rather radically wrong.

I want to maybe frame my opening remarks and the work that I will do until the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) is back, by a quote from the

Suche report. In doing that I want to reflect for a moment on what occurred. After the minister had made some rather unilateral decisions and had taken some rather specific actions, he then decided to call in somebody to review some aspects of the damage that he had done. He called on somebody who at the time I think was pretty much unknown to the system, and I proffered no opinion on it in part because I was unaware of who the person was, although as it turns out I do in fact know her from many, many years ago.

I was of two minds. Do you bring in somebody who has a depth of experience in child welfare and therefore is able to comment knowledgeably on various activities in the system but who also brings in a particular point of view and a particular set of values and a particular set of already-formed opinion, or do you do as the minister has done and bring in somebody from completely outside the system who has an inquisitive mind and ability to do very detailed research and most important of all an open mind?

*(1510)

I had an opportunity to meet with Ms. Suche in I believe it was January of this year to discuss some of her findings with her, and she had a series of questions for me. I must confess I was delighted with the experience. I found her to be extremely knowledgeable. She is someone who took this commission very seriously. She worked extremely hard at it. She looked in great detail at the system. She spoke with an enormous number of people and she wrote a report which to my mind is a very thorough, interesting and detailed view of some of the problems that are occurring in the system and frankly some of the strengths that exist in the system.

She ends her report on page 175 with a quote. Her quote I should say—she highlights it. It is not actually a quote from somebody else. It is a statement that she sets apart from the text and says: There is a deeper and more troubling problem. Many senior members of the child welfare community express concern over the lack of direction the system receives. The system seems to have lost sight of the fact that it exists to protect children. Now, if there is any indictment on this minister's term as the minister of this department, I think it exists in that statement, that after a considerable period of time of leading this department, of providing some, shall we say,

buffering to public comment on this department, to have the minister's own consultant go in and utter such an opinion about the work that has been done to date, I think speaks volumes about the work that has been done in this department.

I wonder, frankly, how the minister is able to sleep at night. I wonder how some of the senior staff in the department are able to. I know I have difficulty when I reflect on this. This is, as the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) has pointed out, a department that provides support for people who have a problem, be it an economic problem or some other serious issue that is causing conflict in their life. It serves an astonishing number of people when we look at the fact that we are a relatively small province with a relatively small population and for it to touch on so many people is rather a remarkable statement about the services that are provided by this department and about the relative health or needs of the people in this province.

The minister makes much in his opening statements of the fact that they received 8.7 percent which he identifies as being four times the current rate of inflation. I should point out that is four times the January rate of inflation. One month does not a year make, and we will see just how bountiful that largess is.

I would like to point out, however, that the bulk of it, as has been pointed out by the member for Wellington, goes into income security and is more a reflection of the failure of his government to do anything to address the economic issues that confront this problem, not something to be held up with great pride as though somehow this government has decided in these very tough times to prioritize this particular service area.

When you go through the areas where they have some discretion, you note quite a different pattern. You note that in Child and Family, for example, the total increase is 2.5 percent. In child daycare there is an interesting question here because the increase on the surface, the year over year, would appear to be something in the order of 6.3 percent, the bulk of that in financial assistance and grants. I believe I heard the minister in his opening statements indicate that they were freezing the creation of new spaces.

What we confront when we look at these kinds of statements on the part of the minister and this kind of reality in the documents, is something that we

confront with this government in most of its activities. Certainly, we saw it in the budget. We live in an age of sound byte democracy, it has often been called, a time when information has gotten out to the community not through lengthy discourse, not through careful evaluation of the issues, but in short clips that are presented to the media that average just something under 10 seconds.

Governments increasingly, and this government is a leader in the field, have stepped aside from any attempt to provide a picture of reality and have instead focussed on trying to provide comforting or, I would say, misdirecting messages to the community. So when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) stands up on budget day and says we have prioritized Family Services and we have given them an 8.7 percent increase, that does not reflect any priority at all.

In fact, the reality is quite the opposite. When the minister stands up repeatedly and seeks to emphasize the great priority they have placed on these services, that is simply patently false, that all that they have done is put into their budgets those sums that they have had to put in as a result of the very poor economic climate. It is very difficult to deal with this government in a rational or in an objective manner when they make statements, as the minister just did, about their great concern about unemployed youth and you find that their increase in this particular area is almost negligible, that what they have done is change the focus of it. They have moved some money around, but they have done nothing to substantively address the fact that we have an incredibly high unemployment rate among people under the age of 25.

That is not to say that all they have done is wrong. Some of the changes that they have made to Income Security and changes in the regulation which, while they do not reflect increased costs to themselves, they do reflect some increase in the ability of people to retain income. In these very difficult times I think that is a move that is to be welcomed.

There is, however, a greater concern, and it comes to me in part around the question of, and I think the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) actually made this statement in her remarks, that how a government prioritizes its spending is very much a reflection of its values, that what we are talking about in this department, almost more so than when we talk about any other department, is a

reflection of the values of the government and whether or not it is prepared to do something to advance those people who receive services through its department or whether it is simply attempting to provide some political shielding to the kind of comment that might otherwise come at them.

I think that what we have seen in the actions of this particular minister in this particular department throughout the tenure of this particular minister is the latter. We have seen simply a concerted and continuing effort not to advance the cause of those who receive services from this department, but simply to continue the presentation of comforting 10-second messages to the populace of this province that are not backed up by any reality that is contained in the operations of this department.

To that end, I want to comment on the minister's single initiative that he referenced in his opening remarks, and that is the creation of a child advocate's office. The call for a child advocate came a long time ago, and I am going to speak on this in much more detail when the bill is before the House.

I want to lay out some of it, because if there is anything that I think that this minister can do that might disabuse me of the notion that I have that his interests are simply short-term political and not long-term best interest of the children that this province chooses to parent, it will be to change the current direction that they are heading with this particular office.

The minister has stated—he has used a comforting term, child advocate, and in the sense that we are going to have someone there who will advocate for children and who will oversee the operations of the government when it chooses to be a parent. That is a concept that has been around for a long time. I shall not go into the long list of people who have called for it. I will say that it was raised during the time that I was the director of Child and Family Services, that it was discussed at some length and it was felt then that we would not proceed with it because it was felt that the Ombudsman was able to take on some of those responsibilities.

I think that the subsequent events have suggested that the demand in this particular department is simply so large that the creation of an advocate's office is something that is warranted. I would support the recommendations that have been made, and I support, frankly, the acceptance of that

concept by the minister, because the concept is a simple one.

* (1520)

When a parent does something that falls outside of the law as we write it, particularly child welfare law, we intervene, and we have a great many mechanisms that allow us to go into a home and remove a child and to act as an accountability structure to a parent who is not providing for a child in a manner in which the community thinks is appropriate. However, when the watcher, when the child welfare system does something that can be considered to be not in the best interests of the child, we have no mechanism. We have used the Ombudsman, but we have no formal mechanism whose sole mandate is to focus on children, so we talk about creating one.

I think the only way that this one can have any validity, and the only way that this one can have any substance, and the only way that this can reflect something other than a perversion of the concept is if it reports to this Legislature as the Ombudsman does. To simply enlarge the minister's personal staff and to provide him with somebody that he can hold up to the public and say, you need not worry, I now have a child advocate, I think is a misunderstanding of the concept, but more importantly it is not an advancement of what we are trying to do in this business.

What we are trying to do is provide a political, high quality care for children whose parents are unable to care for them, and to take an accountability structure in that system and to make it simply another political flack is such an incredible perversion of the concept that I simply cannot support it.

So I would hope, and I will offer to this minister my complete support of his bill if he chooses to redraft a couple of the sections of that particular piece of legislation to take it out of the operations of this department and to establish it as it should be, as an arm of this Legislature reporting to this Legislature, because the times beyond the term of this minister—ministers in this department who are driven by very heavy political considerations will have to be held accountable.

That is one thing that this particular position can do. He can keep all of us, from all three parties, at all times, on our toes relative to the provision of high quality services to the children that are in our care.

That is not an abrogation of the rights of the Legislature any more than an Ombudsman is. So that is the—I know we will have an opportunity to revisit that, and I shall not spend a lot of time discussing it in the Estimates today.

I think, overall, if I have any advice to offer this minister right now it is to attempt to get this department off of what appears to increasingly be a very short-term highly political agenda and back onto an agenda of providing high quality support services to the people who access and who have no other choice but to access the services of this department.

I have never, in the twenty-some-odd years that I have worked in services in this province, experienced this department in the way that I experience it now. I have never, ever known this department to be so flagrantly disrespectful of the needs of the clients that it has and so willing to set aside the needs of the clients in order to preserve a very short term, an illusory, political game.

With that, I will end my remarks and allow us to get into the questioning.

Madam Chairperson: The Estimates for Family Services commence on page 57. I would remind all members that debate on the salary for the minister Item 1.(a) is deferred until all other items have been dealt with through the department.

At this time, I would invite the minister's staff to enter the Chamber.

Would the honourable minister like to introduce his staff?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, at the table we have Deputy Minister Roxy Freedman and other members of senior staff—Winston Hodgins, Martin Billinkoff and Wes Henderson.

Madam Chairperson: The item before the committee is 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries \$412,000.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, the process will be a little bit confusing for me since this is the first time I have done this in the House, rather than at committee where it is raising one's hand rather than having to rise, so if you will hold with me for a moment.

I have very few questions in the Executive Support area—[interjection] No, I do have one or two. Very few, I said. Can the minister explain the

indirect salary cost of \$12,000 this year as compared to \$3,500 last year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, I am told that a higher amount has been left in the budget for turnover allowance regarding staffing.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, is that turnover allowance as a precautionary measure or is there some indication that turnover allowance will be required to be used this year? It is quite a substantial increase from last year.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told it is precautionary.

Ms. Barrett: Am I to understand that there is not anticipated to be any staffing changes this fiscal year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Not under Executive Support.

Madam Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries \$412,000—pass; 1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$88,300—pass.

1.(c) Children's Advocate: (1) Salaries.

* (1530)

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, I have the same concerns about this item that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) shared earlier in his opening remarks, and I too will hold my specific comments until we debate the bill in the House.

I would, however, like to ask the minister the rationale for having the child advocate report directly to the minister rather than paralleling the structure that the Ombudsman does which reports directly to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, the member is correct that the Ombudsman, and I believe the Provincial Auditor, who have responsibilities across a number of departments, report to the House. I can give you a number of examples of offices, individuals and advisors who report to individual ministers where the scope of the work deals with the work done within that particular department. I would reference the Chief Medical Examiner reports to the Attorney General, the Public Trustee reports to the Attorney General, the Public Utilities Board reports to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and others so that our legislation which is before the House—I welcome the opportunity to discuss it at a later point in time—is a Children's Advocate for children who are in care of this department.

We have looked carefully at the legislation in the two other jurisdictions where a Children's Advocate is used, namely, Ontario. I believe in Ontario the Children's Advocate reports to an assistant deputy minister, and we have looked even more closely, I would say, at the Children's Advocate in the province of Alberta where the Children's Advocate reports to the minister.

I see some consistency with what other jurisdictions are doing, and I see consistency with what we do within government here, that where an individual such as the Ombudsman has responsibilities across government, across a number of departments, then that individual, that office, reports to the Legislature. Where the individual—and I reference the Chief Medical Examiner, the Public Trustee, the Public Utilities Board—is under the jurisdiction of a particular minister, then the reporting function is to that minister.

I would say that this is one of the reforms that we announced last June and we look forward to bringing forward in legislation and actually being able to get involved in a search for an individual to take that position and those responsibilities as something that has been recommended by the Kimelman Report, by Reid and Sigurdson in a report that they did in the mid-'80s, and again referenced in the AJI. So I say in answer to the honourable member that we are consistent with what is done in other provinces, and that we are consistent with what has been done within Manitoba.

Ms. Barrett: Several questions spring to mind. I would like to make a brief comment on the minister's consistency area of his response as to why this advocate will report to the minister. He uses the Chief Medical Examiner, the Public Trustee, and the Public Utilities Board as examples. I would suggest that perhaps there is not quite as much parallel as perhaps the minister is assuming there is between those positions and the position of child advocate. We, of course, could get into it in greater detail.

I would like to say that those three positions have, to my way of thinking, at least without knowing what the child advocate will actually be doing—but the kind of issues that the child advocate I envisage looking at and dealing with are far more subjective than for certain the chief medical examiner and the PUB and arguably the Public Trustee. I am not saying it is 100 percent, but these three positions have frames of reference, terms of reference, a body

of knowledge that is more specific, is more clearly understood where you have things that you are required to do and you do them.

The child advocate, I would suggest, Mr. Minister, is going to be required if he or she is doing their job properly, to deal with issues that are very much without a clear-cut framework. He or she is going to have to be beginning to lay the groundwork to deal with issues that by their very nature are difficult and fuzzy and unclear and also by their very nature are going to have political ramifications in the sense that as long as the child advocate reports directly to the minister, the minister is the one who has control over what is shared and what comes out of that. I suggest that those three positions are not as parallel as they might be.

The question that I would like to ask the minister is: He talked about looking at the legislation in Alberta and Ontario. Did he do any other consulting with any other groups in the province or any other jurisdictions on this issue before he put this legislation before us?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, I guess the model that we spent the most time reviewing was in Alberta and actually had staff in Alberta meeting with the officials within the department there to look at the legislation and to look at the manner in which the child advocate operated in that province. As well, we looked at the legislation in Ontario and in addition have had discussions with people who have worked in the child welfare field in Manitoba for many, many years. I dare say, some of them could be probably described as experts in that they have been successful in working in child welfare for many, many years, and I think have a lot to offer government and others from their experience and their knowledge and their expertise and the success at which they have done their job over many years.

I guess I also asked, if this was such a great idea that came forward in the early '80s from reports from the legal community and from people who were prominent in the child welfare system throughout the '80s, why had government not acted on it before, because I thought perhaps there was some reason other than financial, other than service, to determine why government had not taken this stand before.

It is recognized I think as a reform and as a bold step to move ahead with providing better services for the children who come into care. I guess, you know, whether it was a lack of political will earlier in

know, whether it was a lack of political will earlier in the '80s or a lack of leadership on the part of those who were prominent in child welfare to put forward a case, I am not sure. Nobody seemed to give a definitive answer, but the same recommendation has come forward three or four times to have somebody advocate for those children who are in care.

* (1540)

I think at any particular time in recent years there are around 4,000 children who have been taken into care in Manitoba. I am pleased also that other institutions within the residential care system and the child welfare system are also moving ahead with reforms within those institutions which are going to ensure that children are protected, that children taken into care are given the treatment they deserve.

I say that mindful of the fact that when we talk about these children we are talking about some of the most difficult children to work with in the system. I say that as a person who has spent twenty-some years in education and has worked with young people from time to time.

In visiting some of the agencies and some of the centres, we have talked about the different profiles and the different characteristics and qualities that children coming into care have, and I have said before and I will say again, I have a tremendous admiration for the people working within the system. There are some who said earlier today that the system is in a state that it just arrived at, that everything was very productive and good and an excellent system before, but I have not heard that from people who have been in the system for a long time, but I see a system that has evolved.

In some of my discussions with Colleen Suche, we have talked about the evolution of child welfare and the residential care system. We still have a ways to go; we still have changes that have to be made so that we know that treatment is taking place, that treatment is effective, that treatment is available. I say that knowing that children have to arrive at a certain stage, I think, where they will accept treatment and be ready for that work that professionals want to do with them. I also say that we also have to get into the area of more training for some of the people who are working with those children.

Over the Christmas holidays, I met with a former student of the school that I was principal at, and she was working at one of the treatment centres. I asked what specific training she had had to allow her to work within that treatment centre. I listened with interest as she told me that her main qualification was an interest in children, not a lot of courses in psychology or sociology or even working towards a degree in social work.

I likened it in some ways to the education system back in the '50s and '60s where in many parts of rural Manitoba—I know that we have had a chance to talk recently and experience rural Manitoba—in those days school boards hired people who were interested, who liked children, but who often were not well qualified and had not attended university, but they were prepared to take a crack at teaching kids.

I see an evolution taking place in the treatment centres as well, and I say we have more work to do and some distance to go there. I want to assure you that we have a commitment to address those issues. It is not just addressing them in a financial way, but there are many, many areas that we have to move in to reach the point where we have the confidence that the care of those children is uppermost in everyone's mind and that we are moving forward.

I say to you that some of those institutions have also taken some new steps to remedy the problems that they see themselves. I would just give you one example. I know you might want to hear a lot of them, but just one is, one of the institutions has come up with a bill of rights. Their mission, when a child comes into their institution, is to be sure that the child is aware of his or her rights as a person, as a person who has come into care so that they are not afraid to ask questions, that they are not reluctant to bring forward concerns. I think there was recognition there that there was some shortcoming in the system and they are prepared to address that.

This is a bigger question, but I think we are taking a very positive step with the Children's Advocate, one that is consistent with the reporting procedures within government in Manitoba, one that other governments are following in other jurisdictions. I would just add a little more comfort to the member that the Children's Advocate is also going to provide an annual report on the workings of the Children's Advocate and have it tabled here in the House. I am sure that she will be pleased to hear that.

Ms. Barrett: Trust me, Mr. Minister, the fact that it is an annual report and will be tabled in the House does not provide me with a high degree of comfort.

The minister discussed earlier about Judge Kimelman and the Reid-Sigurdson Report both advocating a child's advocate. I just want to put on the record yet once again, as I do every time the minister talks about Judge Kimelman and the Reid-Sigurdson Report, that in this context they both were very clear that the child's advocate should report to the Legislature, not to the minister.

The minister talked about the fact that these children would most likely be the most difficult cases that are in the system. I have absolutely no quarrel with that. I am sure that they will be among the most difficult.

I would like to ask the minister in that context and in the context of specifically getting to the lines in the Estimates, two questions. First, when he talked to particularly the Alberta Children's Advocate people, how many staff does Alberta have and how are they ranged in relation to how this Children's Advocate staffing level is put out?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, just something I should have maybe mentioned with my previous answer that I would mention now is that the Ombudsman will still have the ability to be involved in investigating cases and institutions if there is some interest on his part or if there is a request on the part of somebody else who feels that the treatment accorded has not been fair or proper. Again, I would just mention to the honourable member that the Ombudsman will still have jurisdiction over the Child and Family Services system and the Children's Advocate.

We looked, as I indicated, at both Ontario and Alberta. I believe the Ontario model has upwards of seven people involved, and the Alberta model is more extensive. I think there are upwards of 20 people who are involved in the Children's Advocate system in the province of Alberta.

* (1550)

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, that is an interesting response. I asked about Alberta, because I made an assumption that Alberta, being closer in population, although larger in population than Manitoba and having a population spread that is closer than Ontario's to our geographical spread, would be more relevant in the discussion of the

Manitoba staffing patterns. I find it very interesting that maybe it is not.

Can the minister explain why a province that has a child advocate system in place that he has modelled his proposal on fairly closely, I understand, has 20 staff people involved and Manitoba's is anticipated to have four, one of whom would be the managerial function which would actually be the child advocate, and two professional-technical and one administrative. That seems to me to be an incredibly bare-bones child advocate program, particularly in light of what Alberta, with not five times the amount of population that Manitoba has, has in place. Can the minister explain that staffing pattern?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, there is, I suppose, a logical explanation for that. The Province of Alberta looks after all of the child welfare within the province and does not have the variety of agencies that Manitoba has, or that to some extent exist in Ontario.

In Manitoba, as you are aware, we have three agencies operating: one in the Westman area, one in central Manitoba, and one in the city of Winnipeg, as well as those other areas of the province where the department is responsible for child welfare.

As well, we have the native child welfare agencies that are much higher developed in Manitoba than anywhere else in Canada. Probably in your reading of the AJI you took note of some of the positive comments on the growth and the manner in which those native agencies have developed over the last 10 years.

Basically this would be the reason, I suppose, for the difference in staffing, that we have such a variety of agencies involved with those children that perform those functions, whereas Alberta does not. Also, we are in the preliminary stages of setting up the child advocate's office, and while I do not have a lot of experience in government like others around us do, from time to time there is a tendency, I suppose, for bureaucracies to grow as demand is there.

We are starting, I think, with what we feel is right for Manitoba at this time. By the year 2000, when probably there will be another minister in place but still a good government in this province, it may have expanded to take in more people. This is sort of the starting level that we see for the Children's Advocate, and we hope to have an office up and running in the coming months.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, I agree there is no legitimate reason to go directly into 20 staff people, although there is probably the need out there to have even more, and you should start with the basics and expand in that regard.

I am unclear about your response in the sense that you talk about the fact that in Alberta all the child welfare is within the provincial jurisdiction, and here we have a variety of agencies. Is not the Children's Advocate going to be responsible for dealing with all children, no matter what agency it is, that come under The Child and Family Services Act? I am not clear in that part of your response—if you could clarify that for me, please.

Mr. Gillieshammer: Madam Chairperson, in Alberta the child care workers in child welfare are civil servants who are employed by government to perform the duties that our Child and Family Services agencies perform in Manitoba. So here we, I suppose, have two layers of responsibility, one with the agency and one with the directorate to oversee the operation and to work with those agencies. In Alberta there is simply just the one system. So both Manitoba and Ontario have a separation between the department and the agencies that does not exist in the province of Alberta.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, at the risk of being seen as very obtuse, that still does not clarify it in my mind, but I will leave that for further discussion.

I would assume from the staffing level that is in this year's Estimates that the Children's Advocate and the staff will be located in Winnipeg. Is that correct?

Mr. Gillieshammer: I really had not put a lot of thought into that. I am just wondering if the member wanted to give government some advice on the location of that new office. I know from a recent tour in southwestern Manitoba and how she spoke glowingly of southwestern Manitoba that maybe she has another site in mind.

Having said that, though, I am also aware that most of the children who are taken into care and most of the residential treatment centres are here in the city of Winnipeg. I would like to raise that with the department and others, and I always look for good ideas from the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), and perhaps that office could be located

elsewhere. If you have further suggestions, I would certainly listen to them.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Chairperson, yes, my recommendation would be that there be additional staff in the Children's Advocate area so that there could be a Children's Advocate position regionally. I think that the serious answer to my question would be that, yes, given the fact that the majority of children in care and that there are only four staff people in this budget for the Children's Advocate, that logistics and geography would suggest that, at this staffing level, you could not with any degree of conscience locate the Children's Advocate outside the centre of population when you only have four staff people. It is not like the areas that the government has been looking at for decentralization where theoretically at any rate where you do the job is not as closely connected to what it is that you do.

I perhaps should have rephrased the question and said that I thought that four people, while I know it is the beginning and it is the first year of this program, is really very minimal and that while the majority of children in care may be located in the city of Winnipeg, some of the neediest children in care will not be located in the city of Winnipeg and will have problems potentially accessing the Children's Advocate and would suggest that the minister look at that further regionalization. The last thing that we on this side of the House would want to accuse the minister of is having any kind of perimeter mentality in a program that is as important as this.

* (1600)

Also, one comment about the fact that the minister stated earlier that the Ombudsman would still have the ability to investigate cases that came before the Children's Advocate that had not been handled to someone's best judgment, I would assume, that were not handled to the way that the child itself had anticipated, I do not think that the Ombudsman should be the appeal process for the Children's Advocate. If you think it is important enough to have a Children's Advocate process in place, then if there is going to be an appeal process from the Children's Advocate or anything else carrying on, it should be within that process. In a way, perhaps, Mr. Minister, you are sort of sideways agreeing with the argument that Judge Kimelman, Reid-Sigurdson, the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) and I have been saying which is that there should be the recourse to a nonpolitical avenue.

You are saying that if something is not positive with the Children's Advocate process that then there is always recourse to the Ombudsman, that the Ombudsman still has the ability to investigate issues that have not been resolved or that kind of thing. I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that basically that process could be facilitated by having the Children's Advocate report directly to the Legislature rather than to the minister.

I would like to ask one more question, if I may, on this. I am not sure about the legitimacy of the question. You stated earlier that you had discussions with many people in the child welfare field in Manitoba. I am wondering if you can tell me, if not who they were, what areas of the child welfare field they covered.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, I am very interested in hearing the member's comments on decentralization. There was a time that I thought the New Democratic Party was completely opposed to it. Now I see some change and I am heartened by that, that you have a change of heart on that. We will certainly consider it.

I did not refer to the Ombudsman as the appeal process, and I would not want the member to interpret it that way. I am saying that all Manitobans who are involved with government or feel wronged have the ability to contact the Ombudsman's office for some assistance. What we are doing in putting in place the Children's Advocate is not going to prevent people from using that route. I do not see it as an appeal process.

Your question was about who did we talk to. A lot of those discussions that I had were confidential and I am sure the member would appreciate that, that I did not speak with them with the intent of drawing up a list of names to provide in the House or in Estimates. I would prefer that we respect that confidentiality.

Ms. Barrett: That is precisely why I asked the question in the way I framed it. I was not wanting to breach any confidentiality. It was in response to a statement that the minister had made that he had discussions with many people in the child welfare field.

Before I end this part of the discussion, which will of course go on much longer when we get into the discussion of the bill, I just would like to put on record yet again that the New Democratic Party has never been in opposition to decentralization as a concept,

only in opposition to the way it has been implemented or not implemented by this government. If the minister would read his Hansard for the last two years, he would be well aware of that.

I have no further questions in this section.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I appreciate the member trying to clarify the position that has been put forward by many of her colleagues at different times in an unclear fashion. If this is an opportunity for further decentralization, and I did hear what the member said about regional offices and expansion of services, I would think at this time that would have to wait a number of years until we have an opportunity to set up this particular unit and see how it develops and see what the demand is for further staff and for further expansion.

Mr. Alcock: First, just a couple of questions for clarification: Am I correct in assuming that no one has been hired yet for this office?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Let me just say, before I answer the question, that we are pleased to have the acting critic back again, who has such a tremendous knowledge and spent some 20 years in the system, but at the same time we regret that his Leader is ill and look forward to her speedy return because I am sure that she has a lot to offer not only her own caucus, but the exercise of Estimates that we go through. We hope that she will be back soon.

In answer to the question, no, we have not hired for this position.

Mr. Alcock: Can I further assume that these are the full-year costs roughly allocated to these positions, that, in fact, the \$60,000 for the manager is roughly at the high professional officer category or low senior officer category? The two professional-technical positions seem to be somewhere around the middle of the H.S. range, so that these would be the salaries, subject to final classification and depending on who got recruited, that are applied to these positions?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, not having a lot of experience with the Civil Service and some of the classifications, this is an estimate of the costs of those staff subject to the classification of the individuals who are hired. I think the member would appreciate that one would have to take into consideration the positions that they now occupy and the years of experience, and so forth. So this, at this point in time, is an estimate of those costs.

Mr. Alcock: Is it also fair to suggest that the minister will not begin recruitment for these positions until the bill passes the House, should it pass the House?

* (1610)

Mr. Gilleshammer: I have every confidence that the legislation will pass. I am sure that honourable members on both sides of the House see this as being a reform that has waited almost 10 years from its first, I suppose, formal recommendation. I know that while members are wont to play politics from time to time and sort of speak out in the newspaper and say what they plan to do, I see the advantages and the necessity for a child advocate which were there 10 years ago are there now. I could not imagine anyone not wanting to support this legislation.

From time to time, legislation is opened up again and changes are made. In fact, we are looking at some legislation now that has to do with a number of areas of the department where we think improvements can be made, but we have had a number of staff and others working on this and brought forward a bill that is now before the Legislature, and we will have many opportunities, I am sure, to talk about in the coming months, but I have every confidence that it will pass, and we will be proceeding with a child advocate. We have had inquiries from some already who support the idea, from across the country, who want to put their names forward for the position. We have indicated that the legislation is still before the House.

So, while we have not done any recruitment, there are a number of people I think with rather outstanding qualities and experience and history in child welfare who have indicated an interest. What we have said to them in response is that once we advertise we will give serious consideration to all applicants and go through the process that the Civil Service goes through in finding someone who could more than adequately fill this position.

So while we have not advertised, there is interest. There are people submitting their names, and we may formally put an ad in the paper sometime in the near future. That has not been done yet but, again, the interest is there and people are asking about it. While we cannot indicate when the legislation will be approved, as I am sure it will be, some of that work is going on already.

Mr. Alcock: A very short, simple question: Will the minister fill the position prior to the passage of the legislation?

Mr. Gilleshammer: In all likelihood, given the process that we have to go through, which is going to take some time in regard to classification, and I know the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will be vigilant in seeing that the competition is carried on fairly, it will take some time to do that. I suspect that because of the classification work that has to be done, then the advertising and the bulletining and all of this, it will take some time before we are in a position to hire somebody.

Mr. Alcock: Well, perhaps before I respond to some of the comments the minister made earlier on this bill, which I would like to respond to, could you just answer the question: Why are they budgeting full-year cost for a program that will not be up and running at least until the second quarter.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, in preparing the Estimates some months ago, there are deadlines for printing. I do not know how much the member knows about the workings of government and Treasury Board and so on and so forth, but there are some deadlines that we had to meet earlier on, and I know that opposition members are wont to accuse us of underspending from time to time.

These are budget Estimates that we brought forward in the fall and winter, and I think our Estimates over the last few years have been very close to being right on. If we underspend in this area, I know the member will not take that as some indication of our lack of concern, but I would suggest that it is possible that we not spend all of that money as we embark on this process of setting up a Children's Advocate. We have indicated the number of staff. We have indicated the salary guidelines, and because budgetary demands are based on a full-year basis, I suppose if we had budgeted for a part year and then next year turned around and given full-year costs, somebody might accuse us of some slight of hand in budgeting more money for the same number of positions. So I readily acknowledge that this, as we are already into the first quarter, may not be spent in its totality.

Mr. Alcock: I am not accusing the minister of underspending. I am certainly accusing him of budgeting at a level above what their requirements are so they look like they are doing a wonderful thing

in giving big increases to the department when they know full well they are not going to spend it.

I would like though to ask the minister a question that really is a follow-up on a question that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) asked when she asked about why the decision was made to make this simply another ministerial assistant rather than an independent advocate, and ask the minister what he fears. What is the downside, what is the apprehension that the minister has in making the child advocate independent? What is the penalty that the minister will incur as a result of having an independent child advocate reporting to the Legislature?

Mr. Gillshammer: Madam Chairperson, I was going to try my darndest not to make this into too personal a thing, and I am going to continue that, but to describe a position like this and an initiative like this as a political assistant is really, really stretching the imagination of members here and, I am sure, of all Manitobans.

The member is probably aware that ministers do have political assistants. They are called an executive assistant and a special assistant. I have a lot more faith and respect for civil servants than to go around calling them political assistants. These are civil servants with a tremendous amount of training in many cases, with positive experience in the field of social work and child welfare, and I find it regrettable, as we embark on a project that is long overdue, that everybody admits that previous governments of whatever stripe should have entered into this, and two other provinces have. Two other provinces are prepared to share their information with us; two other provinces have some history as far as the Children's Advocate goes.

I could tell you, Madam Chairperson, that these dedicated civil servants in those jurisdictions are not referred to as political assistants. I cannot help but wonder what the motivation of the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) is in using such inflammatory rhetoric as that, and trying to put before Manitobans a vision of a child advocate that is his own, that would refer to this person and this office and these dedicated civil servants as political assistants. I tell you, and I think it is reflected in the Suche report, that one of the difficulties in child welfare in Manitoba is the politics that has been in the past injected into child welfare in Manitoba.

* (1620)

I do not know what the background of other executive directors of agencies would be, or what would motivate them to come to Manitoba, or whom they kept company with, or whom they lived with, but I can tell you that my vision of child welfare is to put in place people with experience and dedication and resolve to make this a better place for those children in Manitoba. As I look back to the 1980s and some of the people involved in child welfare, and the manner in which boards were set up with people involved in the system, it was a system in some ways which was designed for some failure.

When we bring forward initiatives and bring people who have a genuine interest in children, to try and use this "political assistants" terminology to describe them, I think, is terribly, terribly wrong. I would want the member to withdraw that and recognize that what we are doing in setting up this office to provide yet another safeguard for children who are in care, another level of comfort for agencies and parents and government, to know that children who are in the system are not being abused by people who were there to help them. To call these people political, I think, is a terrible slap in the face to dedicated workers, whether they be in the agency or in the Civil Service, who want to use the resources available to assist these children to go on to live proper and meaningful lives.

I think that the evolution of the system still has some way to go in terms of having truly, fully-trained and dedicated people both at the initial contact level and at the treatment level. I think these are people whom we must seek out, whom we must put into place. Certainly this has nothing to do with political appointments to people who are there to work with some very damaged children.

I know the honourable member has some history in the system and has some history as a director of child welfare, as a foster parent, as someone who worked as a civil servant at Seven Oaks and has a career that spanned many facets of child welfare in Manitoba.

You know, I read the papers over the holiday and saw the type of spin the member is trying to put on a truly important initiative that government is taking. I would hope that the member would rethink his terminology and withdraw those remarks, to refer to people who want to come forward in the child advocate's office and work for the betterment of children—in fact, when I think of some of the people who have already come forward and submitted

letters and in some cases resumes to the department wanting to be considered for a job that has not been advertised yet—the legislation has not passed—I would be horrified to call them political hacks, as the member does. I cannot believe—and if I had the liberty to divulge some of those names, the member would be truly, truly embarrassed.

At any rate, we are going to proceed with this legislation, and we will have another opportunity to debate it. I would hope that the member would call on his experience and his background and I believe a true care and concern for children and come forward and support this. I dare say, in five years and 10 years and 15 years, who knows how the office of the Children's Advocate will develop over those years?

I can tell you that I am confident that government and agencies and the public of Manitoba are going to have the comfort to know that we are doing everything possible to provide the security for those children who may be in foster homes or may be in treatment homes or may be under the care of the agency. This is going to give us that next layer of comfort.

I would urge the member perhaps to do some research in Alberta and Ontario and look at the work that the child advocate has done in those jurisdictions and come forward and support this initiative that I think is going to provide a better system for us.

Mr. Alcock: Let me start by just quoting the Suche report: There is a pressing need for a Children's Advocate in Manitoba. The nature of any child welfare system is such that an external means to ensure accountability will always be necessary. The extent of the need in Manitoba is a reflection of how frequently the system fails children. If the advocate is to be effective in protecting children's rights, it is important that the office be completely external to the Child and Family Services system, and that the mandate include individual and systemic advocacy. It is recommended that: the Children's Advocate report directly to the Legislature as recommended in the report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and, two, that the mandate of the Children's Advocate include individual and systemic advocacy.

The minister would like me to support that bill. I can tell him, in its present form, it will not have my support, and it will not have my support for a very simple reason. I think we would be better off without

anything in this province that was called a Children's Advocate than in some perversion of this concept that simply serves this minister's political interests as opposed to serving the needs of children in this province.

Every significant action that this minister has taken since he came to office has been to dampen down and remove dissent, not expand it. He makes some comment about his actions in appointing people regardless of their political background, and yet he appoints his political assistant to act as the director of operations in this brave new agency, a series of political supporters to the board of the agency, and a personal friend to head the agency.

That personal friend of the minister's is also a personal friend of mine, and I think he is probably the best person in this province that could be chosen. I have been notably silent on that particular issue, because I think if there is any saving grace to what this minister has done, it is that he has got at the head of that big, new, ugly agency someone who does in his heart care about kids.

But what this minister is attempting to do now is to add in one more piece of bunting on this illusion of protecting the rights of children, something called a child advocate. I am prepared to support this minister if he does one very simple thing, and that is implement the recommendation in the Suche report.

It is not my report. It is not my analyst; it is not the member for Wellington's (Ms. Barrett) analyst; it is the minister's. He called in somebody to review this system. They reviewed it; they have made a report. If the minister wants to establish an office that is truly independent, and wants to follow through on that recommendation, I can assure him that I will stand in this House and see that everything I can do to facilitate the passage of that bill will be done.

But as long as the minister chooses to include this office in the administrative complement of his department and have it report directly to him, then I am afraid I take exactly the position I have already taken, that this is nothing other than another attempt to quell dissent and to prevent critical comment rather than to advocate on behalf of the interests of children which is something that we desperately need.

I do not say that is something that this particular minister or this particular government needs. I think they all do. I think we could have used it back when

I was in the department. The previous government could have used it, and I think future governments can use it.

* (1630)

My question to the minister, which he has yet to answer, was a very simple question. You have gone on a great long journey about why you are doing what you are doing. Answer one simple question. What is the fear, what is the downside, what is the concern that you have about having this position report to the Legislature? What is wrong with that? Why is it that you go against the recommendations of your analyst and put something in place that does not meet any one of the tests that have been put forward? What do you fear about having this person independent?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, the member started by saying that we would be better off without anyone acting as a child advocate and again, I think the member is so wrong there. As we talked to people in Alberta and talked to people in Ontario who have the experience, who have a Children's Advocate set up—and I can tell you that we did not have to ask, would you be better off without the Children's Advocate and the infrastructure in place?—it is very self-evident that this allows another layer of service, another layer of protection to be sure that children in the system are served and served well.

I dare say, I do not know if there are any Liberals in Alberta, but if your colleagues in other jurisdictions came forward in the Legislature and said, listen, the Children's Advocate should be scrapped, we would be better off without it, I dare say they would be laughed out of the Legislature. I think we have two jurisdictions that have proven that it works and that there is a need.

The member says this is a perversion of the system. Well, this is not a perversion. It is not perceived to be that way in those other jurisdictions that have this history in this particular office. We feel that we are doing something very positive, and I would remind my critics that this was an announcement that we made in June of last year, not an outcome of the Suche Report as the acting critic is suggesting.

I will say again something that I said earlier to the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). In Manitoba, where we have individuals or offices that are responsible across government for a number of

different departments, and I used a couple of examples there, and the Ombudsman is one, and—what was the other one I used?—the Provincial Auditor was another, where those individuals and those offices are involved with a number of departments, not just the Department of Finance or the Department of Justice, they report to the Legislature by way of an annual report. Members are free to see that.

In other departments, and I will use examples again, like the Chief Medical Examiner, and I know that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) would not want to call the Chief Medical Examiner a political hack, but that is an individual that reports to the Attorney General.

The Public Trustee, again not a political person, or somebody reporting on a political basis, but somebody who has a definite workload, a definite responsibility, and follows that and has the respect of people from one government to the next. These are not political positions that get changed as governments change. These are people who have dedicated their lives to those fields, who have worked diligently and have the respect of ministers as they change, as they continue their work, and it works there.

It works with those individuals and those offices that I have referenced, and there are other examples. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission reports to the Attorney General; the Clean Environment Commission—I have heard members speak recently about the tremendous work that the Clean Environment Commission does. I think it might even have been one of the member from Osborne's (Mr. Alcock) colleagues, and I think someone from the official opposition praised the work of the Clean Environment Commission that reports to a particular minister. I say to you, this works in other provinces. We think it can work in Manitoba. It is not out of any fear that we are doing this, or not out of any attempt to appoint a political hack, as the member for Osborne calls it.

We are going to look across Canada for someone who wants this job, and already there has been tremendous interest. We are going to look at someone with experience and with credibility. I do not think that the member does a very positive service to the Civil Service by indicating that in some way this person that takes on this responsibility as a Children's Advocate in any way will be prevented from doing their work any more than the Clean

Environment Commission or the Public Trustee or the Chief Medical Examiner or members of various boards and commissions that report to ministers and who have to examine the manner in which government or agencies do business. So we are confident that, just as this system has worked in Ontario and Alberta, it can also work in Manitoba.

Again, I would invite the honourable member to draw from his vast experience and rethink his position on this, and not say that he will fight it every step of the way, and that we will be better off with no one, and that this is some perversion of a Children's Advocate as seen in other provinces, and support this legislation and, I think, welcome a positive reform, a positive initiative that I look forward to. I think that the agencies we have talked to and some of the long-established people in child welfare in Manitoba and the treatment centres also support and see the advantages of having someone who can advocate for the children who have come into provincial care.

Mr. Alcock: Perhaps I can ask the question in just a slightly different way. The minister has spoken about the positive things that such an office might do. How would those positive activities be inhibited by having this individual report to the Legislature?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This area of endeavour by government called child welfare is part and parcel of the Department of Family Services. It is not part of the Department of Health, it is not part of the Department of Education, and the models that we have looked at have that person reporting to the minister in charge of that department. It works successfully elsewhere; we feel it can work successfully here.

In no way do I accept the arguments of the member that for some reason this person will not have uppermost in his mind the thoughts of the best interest of the child. We will have, I suppose, opportunities as we debate this legislation to go over this same ground again, but it is consistent with what we do in other departments, and I have given the member examples of that. I have given the member examples of offices that have a responsibility across government. There is some consistency in what we are doing. We will proceed with it and look forward to the member's support.

* (1640)

Mr. Alcock: Well, Madam Chairperson, to the minister: What does he fear about having it report to the Legislature?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Pardon me, Madam Chairperson, I say to the member again, there will be an annual report put forward by the Children's Advocate that will be tabled here in the Legislature without any fear. Members will have an opportunity to review that annual report and read it carefully and make any comments they want.

Because the member is presenting an argument and has publicly indicated that he is going to not support the bill, has no bearing on this. We have spent some time prior to and since last June looking at the Children's Advocate in other jurisdictions where it appears to work, where they speak favourably about the Children's Advocate and the work that is done in those jurisdictions. We are going to model our legislation after what we see in those provinces.

At the same time, while the Children's Advocate will report to the minister, there will be also a report to the Legislature in terms of an annual report. The member, I am sure, has taken the time to read some of the annual reports that are tabled here from time to time, and the members ask questions about. There will be an annual report similar to these other individuals and offices that I have referenced, and we will be proceeding with that course.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Chairperson, the minister has said over and over again what he is going to do. He cited examples that he believes support his contention that having this advocate report to him is preferable to having it report to the Legislature. I would just like to know: what is it about having the advocate report to the Legislature that is of such great concern to the minister that he refuses to follow the recommendation of his own researcher, his own review?

I understand there are other models, but you have a very clear recommendation here that says have this person report to the Legislature. What is wrong with that? What is the downside to that? What is the negative in that that is causing the minister not to act on it? That is what I do not understand.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I suppose if this were Question Period the member would be called to order for asking a question that he has asked four times already. The answer is the same.

We feel, in modelling our legislation after legislation in other provinces, that we are on firm ground. We have looked at what works. We are accepting what works in other jurisdictions. I know

the deep interest that the member has in child welfare and his long, long history of working with a variety of agencies and with government through the '70s and the '80s, and a checkered career in child welfare, but we are going to continue and proceed with this legislation. We will have an opportunity. There is no fear involved. We have looked at what works in other areas and we are going to proceed to model our legislation after that.

Again, with the greatest of respect, we will do a search for a professional in this area, who will become a servant of the government of Manitoba, not a "political hack," as the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) chooses to portray it, for his own personal reasons. I am not sure what they are. This is not a political assistant. This is somebody who will have the ability to work with the many, many agencies and government workers who are in the field working in child welfare, a system that has evolved through the '70s and '80s, that everybody admits is not the end product that we would hope to have in the coming years.

The member has read from the Suche report and, I believe, is trying to leave the impression that the residential treatment centres are the way they are today because of what this government has done in the last year and a half or the last four years. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the member knows that. The member, I think, if he was going to be fully honest about this would recognize that these treatment centres have developed, evolved, progressed, improved to the point we find them today, and the point where Colleen Suche found them today, and we still have some distance to go.

We will be making a formal statement on the Suche report in the coming weeks and indicating some of the things that we have already done, some of the things we can do in the coming years, and some of the long-range goals that I probably would invite other significant people in child welfare to bring us advice on and be involved in to make it a better system, because this evolution of the residential treatment facilities that we have at this point, I am sure, is an improvement of what they were five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago.

I readily admit that when we saw some of the shortcomings we did feel that an external inquiry of the residential treatment centres was necessary and the report brings forward a number of recommendations that I think we can move on in the

near future. Some of them have to do with legislation. Some have to do with reporting procedures. Some have to do with standards, and we will move ahead in a number of different areas and already are. We will be giving a formal response to that in the near future, but there are a number of reforms we have already embarked on, and I know the member is supportive of those even though he would find it difficult to articulate any support for government and the department.

Some other examples, I suppose, are the high-risk indicators which are not exactly brand new either, and it is something that government had to show the will to proceed with and to enter into an agreement with Mr. Sigurdson and Mr. Reid to do what I think is somewhat leading-edge information in the child welfare area that is being looked at by other jurisdictions. The member shakes his head and, I suppose, disagrees with Mr. Reid and Mr. Sigurdson in some ways. We think that this is a positive thing that we want to move ahead with and give our social workers, our front-line workers, some basis and some standards to work by.

* (1650)

I can tell you from talking to some of the professionals who are working with the inservicing of the high-risk indicators, they are excited about this, and they feel that this is something that is long overdue. Other jurisdictions in Canada, other jurisdictions in the United States, are accepting this, that there has to be some point at which social workers, who have to make many, many decisions, have some base to operate from and start with.

Another reform that I know the member was interested in, in a previous Estimates that we had the privilege of going through, was our information system. One of the greatest surprises to me in coming to this department was that we seem to be in the Dark Ages as far as gathering and retaining information on clients. A number of the reports that I have read on incidents within the system, child death reports and others, demands of government that some sort of modern technology be used for an information system and for whatever reason.

I know the member for Wellington, had she been part of government in the '80s, would have instituted it long ago but, for whatever reason, the manner of reporting was notes taken by hand and filed by hand and were very difficult to move with the child and, as a result, we did have some consequences that were sometimes tragic and at other times unfortunate.

While the member likes to portray this minister and this government as doing nothing, there are tremendous reforms that are taking place in child welfare. I dare say I would imagine the member for Wellington in her discussions even with some of the consultants that she might come into contact with would ask whether we are moving in the right direction in child welfare, and I would guess that she receives a pretty positive response. If the question was asked, should we go backward, should we go back to the way things were in early 1990 or 1989 or the mid-'80s, the answer is no.

I can understand that the critics perhaps may not, for whatever reason, agree with that, but I dare say I do not think we will go back to those days. Some of the reforms that we have made have been very positive, and when I talked to the member's friend who is the head of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency, there are tremendous reforms and advances being made within the city of Winnipeg that are very, very positive.

The other reform of course will be the child advocate. We look forward to being able to speak on this legislation and to hear the thoughts of members opposite.

I know that part of the job of the critic is to find something wrong with it. Well, we will listen very carefully to the ideas brought forward. Just earlier today the member for Wellington suggested that the Children's Advocate offices be decentralized and could be located outside the city of Winnipeg, in fact, maybe be operating on a regional basis. Quite frankly, it was an idea that I had not thought of before but one that we will certainly take into consideration.

I appreciate comments from the critics, but we think that we have a good piece of legislation. We think it is consistent with the manner in which we operate in Manitoba with other people who report directly to the minister or to the department.

I think there is maybe a little fallacy in the spin that the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) is trying to put on this. This is a big department. Almost 2,000 people work in this department, and a significant number of them work in child welfare. The relationship between the child advocate and the staff who work in the agencies and for government I would hope would develop as a very positive one.

The only person that I have heard call the Children's Advocate a political hack is the member for Osborne. I will tell you that is not the manner in

which those officers of government are portrayed or looked upon in Alberta and Ontario, that they provide a very useful and valuable function. To try and stretch the imagination of his caucus and other colleagues in here to think of the Children's Advocate as a political appointment is very desperate politics.

I am not sure why the member, the acting critic for Family Services, would want to make these charges in the media, but I suppose old habits die hard. I know that the member has a long history in child welfare, and perhaps the critic was out of town, or perhaps the real critic was unavailable, and the member wanted to put some thoughts down for the media. I can tell you I think we are on very firm ground in modelling this legislation after what is done in other provinces and in being consistent with what government does with people like the Chief Medical Examiner, the Public Trustee and others.

While we hope, and as I said earlier, that the member would change his mind and come on board and quickly support this, I also respect that it is his right as a member here to vote against legislation. I am confident that this will pass in due course and that the member would only be doing harm to the system and to the children in the system, the children in care, by preventing or delaying legislation that has been called for through the 1980s and legislation that we think is going to be a very positive reform for the child welfare system.

Mr. Alcock: Madam Chairperson, perhaps I can start responding to this and I suspect I will finish it at eight o'clock tonight, given that private members' hour is nigh.

The minister questions why I am not more positive about this proposal of his. I think I am one in this House who has not been afraid to be positive when the government has taken actions that I thought were worthy of support. I have spoken—

An Honourable Member: Even on Peter Warren.

Mr. Alcock: —even on Peter Warren. Even publicly I have spoken in support of a number of initiatives. I have been quite supportive of various actions of this government, so you think that might raise a question in the minister's mind, particularly in an area where I have some background, that I am not more supportive of this minister.

I think if you go back into the records and look at my first discussions in Estimates when I first got elected, when the former minister was here, I said a

number of things that were supportive. When this minister got appointed, I said a rather large number of things that were supportive of an attempt to improve the actions or the activities of this department.

Unfortunately, after a couple of years, after we have seen the actions of this minister, after we have had some time to examine the activities or the lack of activity, what we find leaves very little to feel very positive about. These are not my words. Once again, from Ms. Suche, your analyst writing about discussions she had this fall and this winter. There is a deeper and more troubling problem. Many senior members of the child welfare community expressed concern over the lack of direction the system receives. The system seems to have lost sight of the fact that it exists to protect children. The system seems to have lost sight of the fact that it exists to protect children. That is what your analyst says after her studies, not two years ago, not four years ago, just a few short months ago.

Now nobody expects anybody, this minister, the previous ministers or the staff in this field to be perfect. This is a very, very difficult business, but the question is, what are your directions? Where are you headed? Are you headed in an attempt to produce positive changes? Are you headed in an attempt to create reform—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings for private members' hour.

This committee will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening.

* (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—CNR Jobs

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that

WHEREAS the rail transportation sector is a vital part of the Manitoba economy; and

WHEREAS it was predicted that free trade would destroy the east-west links that made Manitoba an important transportation centre; and

WHEREAS in 1988, the New Democratic Party leaked Canadian National Railway plans to cut more than 8,000 jobs over the next 10 years; and

WHEREAS these plans were denied by Canadian National Railway and both levels of government; and

WHEREAS since 1988, these plans have been and are being implemented without any fight by the provincial government; and

WHEREAS over 1,000 Manitoba Canadian National Railway jobs have already been lost over the past three years; and

WHEREAS thousands more Manitoba jobs are now at risk; and

WHEREAS the cuts to Canadian National Railway threaten the existence of the bayline and the Port of Churchill; and

WHEREAS only by directly meeting with the Prime Minister can further cuts be stopped.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Driedger) consider striking an all-party task force including representatives of the rail unions, the City of Winnipeg, The Pas, bayline communities and the Port of Churchill to travel to Ottawa to meet directly with the Prime Minister.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased today to say a few words concerning this very important resolution. Since I submitted the resolution to this Chamber some four months ago now, the situation has become even more serious with further layoffs and threats to our transportation sector, particularly as it affects the North.

Transportation has always been a vital sector of the Manitoba economy since the days of the York boats and ox wagons of the fur trade era. With the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railway, this province rightly became a railway center for the country as it also did later on in the trucking industry.

Regrettably, however, over these past six years, the policies of deregulation and free trade are destroying this vital sector on a day-by-day basis. Western Canada was dependent on the traditional

east-west trade to ship goods across this country. Sadly, these links are being cut and done away with and instead we now have traffic becoming one way from the United States up to Manitoba and Canada.

The resulting job losses are evident everywhere in the country as food processors like Paulin's Interbake, Campbell Soup, Lipton's and Catelli close their Manitoba plants and are moving elsewhere. Manufacturers from Varta Batteries to Tupperware, for example, are similarly shutting down as the free trade deal takes more jobs out of this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the costs for Manitoba of all these job losses are greater for northern Manitoba. That is the case when we look at programs and services. Traditionally, northern Manitoba has always borne the brunt of any government inaction or any government policy, and I believe, just to give a couple of examples, the Minister of Justice's (Mr. McCrae) direction in Legal Aid is one example; the health care user fee is another example; the closing down of the employment services office in the North is another example.

The point I am making is, northern Manitoba is always hardest hit by government policy or lack thereof.

The threats are not just jobs either. We have entire communities along the bayline who are facing the loss of their transportation link to the rest of this province. Along that bayline, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have communities who are primarily aboriginal who use the railway as their transportation to and from Thompson, The Pas and Winnipeg.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

The federal Conservatives, who promised to improve passenger rail service and instead increased fares and cut VIA in half, have threatened to cut more rail lines, including the protected routes such as the bayline to the Port of Churchill, Mr. Acting Speaker. As well, the federal Minister of Transport has announced that a final study on the future of the Port of Churchill is being worked on.

His Manitoba colleague the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board has repeatedly attacked the port itself and making it very clear that he wants the port closed. The other Conservative members of Parliament from this province have also refused to support the Port of Churchill. This, of course, is at

a time when there is reason to believe that the Churchill rocket range could be saved if the bayline continues to operate.

* (1710)

Over the past three years, Mr. Acting Speaker, over 1,000 Manitoba CNR jobs have been lost, in addition to hundreds more lost at CPR and VIA Rail. Instead of simply shrugging their shoulders afterwards, this government should be acting to save those jobs that are left. In example after example, whether it was CPR by-passing Manitoba, the Wheat Board and the federal government using American ports instead of Churchill or layoffs at CPR and CNR, this government has been totally unaware of the issue when it was brought to this Chamber.

Mr. Acting Speaker, earlier today my colleague the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) pointed out the latest example of this when the Minister of Trade claimed he was unaware of the situation at Catelli even though the plant closure had been announced two weeks previously.

If we are going to save transportation, the link between those communities in the North with the rest of the province, if we are going to save those jobs in this province, then we must be proactive. We cannot afford to lay back, wait and see what the federal government is going to do or not do. We simply cannot step aside and wait for another free trade deal to come along as this government is apparently doing at the present time.

Mr. Acting Speaker, only by taking our concerns directly to the federal government to Ottawa will we be able to save this vital transportation industry. As I said earlier, it does not only affect jobs and employment; it also affects the lives of people and their way of life. Therefore, I urge all members in the House to support this resolution fully so that we can present a united front to Ottawa to the federal government, to federal members from this province, in favour of those thousands of Manitobans who depend on the transportation industry.

Those were some of the words that I wanted to share with this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, in trying to address, as I said, a very vital issue, that of transportation in Manitoba, but more so as it affects northern Manitoba. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure to put a few comments on the record as it relates to

this particular resolution. At the outset I certainly want to point out that the transportation sector has been and will continue to be a very important sector of our economy whether it is in the area of trucks and highways, rail, air, whatever form of transportation. It is a very important sector within the economy of Manitoba, as I say, both historically and in terms of future opportunities.

I want to just put a few of the specifics of this issue on the record and then add some additional comments, Mr. Acting Speaker. It is recognized that CN Rail have in fact continued to downsize virtually every aspect of their operation across Canada. This has been underway for approximately the past 10 years. Unfortunately, Manitoba is not left alone in that overall review, analysis and impact, and clearly it has had an impact and an effect in our province as it has in provinces across Canada.

The CN employment in Manitoba is approximately 5,700 people of which about 4,700 jobs are located in the city of Winnipeg. While Canadian rail employment has been cut in half over the past decade and Manitoba rail employment has been cut by approximately 35 percent, so very little comfort, Mr. Acting Speaker. While all of Canada is being hit, some parts are certainly being hit significantly worse and harder than the province of Manitoba, clearly an approximate 35 percent impact in reduction in the province of Manitoba.

I guess some of the reasons why we maybe have not been hit quite as hard as most other provinces are in part attributed to the fact that the CN selected Transcona as its single major shop facility having closed their Moncton shops some time ago. Manitoba has 13 percent of the nation's rail employment including the CP major repair shop here in Winnipeg. Both railways, Mr. Acting Speaker, account for an annual payroll in Manitoba within excess of some \$300 million, certainly a very significant economic impact, a major employer, a major contributor to the economy of our province.

Before I dwell on the negative, there has been the odd positive side. I guess one positive side was that we did receive some assurances from CN that they will continue to maintain their training facility at Gimli for the foreseeable future and thus maintain the employment and expertise at that particular centre.

Also, it was announced in February 1992 by my colleague the honourable Minister of Highways and

Transportation (Mr. Driedger), and I am sure he will get an opportunity to speak to it in the next short while, that he has received assurances from Transport Canada that the Port of Churchill will remain operative for at least one more year and that efforts will be made to increase grain shipments from the port in order to attain viability for the continued operation of that northern facility. I certainly know it is an issue that my honourable colleague has pressed and pressed hard on, and our entire government has assisted him at every opportunity.

Certainly in the short term we are pleased with that announcement, and it gives us the time to continue to press the federal government to maintain the railway to Churchill and to maintain both the port and everything else that Churchill has to offer, whether it be the rocket research range or the outstanding tourism potential that Churchill has to offer to the province of Manitoba, whether it be the beluga whales, the polar bears or whatever tourism attraction, just a natural habitat of the northern part of our province, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I do want to say that some proposals are currently being examined by CN and the province and the private sector not only to maintain what currently exists in Manitoba but to create new activity related both to the Winnipeg operations as well as the Churchill operation that I just touched on, Mr. Acting Speaker. So we continue to pursue projects and initiatives in those areas to maintain and enhance job opportunities from CN Railway here in the province of Manitoba. In terms of our role as it relates to the transportation industry and most significantly the railway industry, certainly we as a government recognize the importance of that industry, and where we can, we take the appropriate steps to continue to enhance and build opportunities for that industry.

Just recently, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), as part of the budget tabled here in this House as it relates to the railway diesel fuel tax, announced a reduction in that particular tax, because the government recognizes the importance of the railway transportation industry to Manitoba's economy. As outlined directly in the budget statement, Mr. Acting Speaker, as a measure to improve the competitive environment for railway companies operating in Manitoba, the locomotive railway diesel fuel tax will be reduced

from 13.6 cents per litre to 12.6 cents per litre, effective July 1, 1992.

In addition to the rate reduction, administrative changes to the locomotive railway diesel fuel tax will be made to parallel the collection practices of other tax-levying provinces. The tax will be assessed as fuel is consumed in the province. This results, Mr. Acting Speaker, in a full year revenue decrease associated with these measures of some \$1.6 million.

Certainly as a government we recognize the significant economic impact that this particular industry makes to our province and also the tremendous opportunities that can and do exist here in our province. So it is with that in mind that our government continues to press the federal government, through our Minister of Highways and through every means available, to stress the importance of the strong presence here in our province, the importance of maintaining the existing presence and the opportunities that exist within our province to enhance a further presence for CN Railway and ultimately jobs both within the city of Winnipeg and throughout our province, including the northern parts of our province, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I cannot say it often enough that our Minister of Highways continues to press on this initiative at each and every opportunity directly with the federal minister and will continue to do so, I am sure, because it is a very important issue for the economy of Manitoba and the employees of CN Railway.

* (1720)

With all of that in mind, Mr. Acting Speaker, I do have an amendment that I would like to read and table at this time.

I would move, seconded by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose),

THAT the resolution be amended by substituting all words after the first "WHEREAS" with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba recognizes the importance of the rail transportation sector as a vital part of the Manitoba economy; and

WHEREAS it is also recognized the CN Rail is in a continuing process to downsize every aspect of their operation across Canada and that this has been underway for the past 10 years; and

WHEREAS the importance of CN Rail in Manitoba is reflected in their employment figures of approximately 5,700 people in total of which 4,700 jobs are located in Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS Canadian rail employment has been cut in half over the past decade, Manitoba rail employment has been cut by approximately 35 percent due to the significance of the Transcona shops in the CN system; and

WHEREAS efforts by the Province of Manitoba and others have resulted in the maintenance of the CN training facility at Gimli being maintained; and

WHEREAS Transport Canada has informed the Manitoba Minister of Highways and Transportation that the Port of Churchill will remain operative for at least one more year with continued efforts to increase grain shipments from the port; and

WHEREAS various parties are working together to create new activity related to both the Winnipeg operation as well as the Churchill operation in order to maintain employment levels at both locations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly support the Manitoba government, through the Departments of Highways and Transportation and Industry, Trade and Tourism, and the private sector to continue making further representation to the federal government to ensure that CN Rail and all others within their jurisdiction maintain at least current levels of employment within the province and continue to explore methods of diversification and increased activity in all their divisions in order to contribute to the stabilization of Manitoba as a major transportation centre in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am rising on a point of order in regard to the proposed amendment. It is very similar to a standard amendment that seems to be increasingly brought in by the government in this private members' hour in an attempt to, in many cases, totally change the intent of resolutions.

I would ask for a ruling in terms of the admissibility of this particular amendment. I would point to Beauchesne Citations 570 through 579 which relate to the admissibility of amendments in a general sense. I think it is fairly clear that if the government

members wish to—and this particular resolution would be out of order if it was simply a negative of the previous amendment. That indeed is fairly clear in Beauchesne. I recognize Beauchesne does say that amendments which come to a different conclusion are admissible, but it also indicates that an amendment may not raise a new question which can only be considered as a distinct motion after proper notice.

I think, in this particular case, the amendment is dealing with a different subject matter entirely. The original resolution deals very clearly with one very clear “resolved,” Mr. Acting Speaker, that states very clearly that this recommends to the minister that consideration be given to striking up an all-party task force, including representatives of the rail unions, the City of Winnipeg, The Pas, bayline communities, and the Port of Churchill, to travel to Ottawa to meet directly with the Prime Minister.

If the government wishes to bring in a resolution which congratulates itself, it may do so, Mr. Acting Speaker. It may bring in such a resolution as part of a government motion. In fact, we have one such resolution on the Order Paper. However, I would like to ask that you take under advisement this particular amendment and the other many very similar types of amendments we are seeing increasingly which, I believe, raise new questions, very different proposals than are included in this type of resolution and, particularly in this case, are changing the resolution to the point where it really should, rather than being dealt with through this government amendment, be brought in as a separate resolution, either as a private member's resolution or as a government resolution.

I am very concerned that by allowing this type of amendment, we are not only skating very closely into thin ice in terms of admissibility, in terms of Beauchesne, but we are destroying the intent of private members' hour. This is private members' hour intended to canvass the views of private members. If the government wishes to bring in resolutions, it can do so as government resolution. By doing what it is doing now and bringing in this kind of amendment, it is making a mockery of private members' hour.

I would like to ask once again, Mr. Acting Speaker, that you take this matter under advisement to determine if indeed this matter is in fact in order as brought in by this amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinsson): I am taking the point of order under advisement. We will continue debating the resolution proposed by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) at this time.

* * *

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, in reading the resolution and hearing the amendment, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has a valid case to be put forward. I think what it really emphasizes is that there is a genuine need to revisit or to visit our rules so that the general substance of the resolution, in particular, this resolution, or the intent of the resolution is not changed.

In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, as many other resolutions that have been changed and amended in different forms and another, the intent is far too often changed. One can only hope that through rule changes, in fact the intent in the future will not be changed because it is really something, as the member for Thompson has pointed out, as a private member, one would like to get to debate, allow the resolutions to a vote and so forth.

Having said that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wanted to comment briefly on this particular issue because it is a very important issue. As the Labour critic for the Liberal Party, I find that the job industry, as the previous speaker before me, the Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Stefanson), made reference to the number of employed Manitobans through CN, and the impact that any type of cuts whether they have been 10 years ago, seven years ago, five years ago, however often they are made has a severe impact on the economy here in Manitoba, in particular in rural Manitoba where those jobs are very hard to come by. So, even though a significant portion of those 5,700 jobs are in the city of Winnipeg, there is another portion of those jobs in rural Manitoba that are going to be awfully hard to replace.

The transportation sector, as the resolution has pointed out, is a vital sector of our economy. I can go back from my own family roots where my father and my grandfather worked over in the Transcona yards. We still have some family members out in the Transcona area, some of them in fact still working for CN—

An Honourable Member: Are they Liberals?

Mr. Lamoureux: To the best of my knowledge, I believe, they are Liberals.

There are a lot of jobs, and this resolution deals with CN. It was not that long ago and the minister will recall where CP made an announcement where they were going to start having some of their routes rerouted to go through the United States. I believe that was something like 15 or 20 jobs that were being lost or 17 jobs. The minister had made a commitment that in fact he would come back to the Chamber, he would fight the cause on our behalf, and let us know in terms of what is going on. I hope, because I know he will have time, he will let us know in terms of that particular case.

* (1730)

The resolution that is before us deals in terms of the CNR jobs. Far too often what we have seen from the federal government is action that takes jobs out of the province of Manitoba and gives them to the province of Alberta. We have seen at different areas, not only with CN, whether it was with VIA or whatever else it might be, we have a national government that is intentionally taking jobs out of the province of Manitoba and bringing them over into Alberta, and they talk in terms of making it more efficient.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Driedger) could put forward a fairly persuasive argument, if he wanted to, to the Prime Minister or the prime ministerial staff explaining that in Manitoba, because of our geographical location, we can be just as efficient, and I would argue we could even be more efficient than the province of Alberta. So, if it is just a question of trying to modernize, to make CN more efficient so that it is more of a viable economic being at the turn of the century, well, I believe that Manitoba should be able to win on that particular argument. It is imperative that the minister take this cause to the Prime Minister's Office.

I would like to think that the Premier in fact in the First Ministers' conferences has raised the issue. I am hoping that the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) will give us an update in terms of what the government has done, in particular, himself as the minister and also the Premier, in terms of trying to secure the jobs that we currently have with CN in the province of Manitoba and, quite frankly, what the government is doing about ensuring that Manitoba will have a critical and crucial role when it comes to transportation in rail.

We talk about Churchill, and the minister made reference to a commitment for a year for the Port of Churchill. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, albeit that a year is better than nothing, one would like to think that there would be a bit more long-term planning coming from our federal counterparts. It does not matter which government, which party is in Ottawa, whether it is Liberals or Conservatives or, heaven forbid, NDP, that it is essential that what we do have is communication between the provincial government and the national government in Ottawa.

We in the Liberal caucus are not convinced that that communication has been there. Yes, we see the minister responsible stand up whenever he is asked a question regarding transportation and CN and come to the defense of the government. Mr. Acting Speaker, we are not convinced that the minister is being as persuasive as he could be and would encourage that the minister be a bit more aggressive on this issue, that he not rule out what the resolution is calling for, an all-party task force including representatives from the rail unions and the city of Winnipeg, possibly the Winnipeg 2000.

There are unlimited numbers of groups that we can approach that would help or assist in the government or this assembly in coming up with those persuasive arguments that could demonstrate to the government fairly clearly that it is in CN's best interests to, if anything, start building in Manitoba as opposed to taking it down or whittling it down, one job here, 15 jobs there, 170 here, because of the impact that it has on a province like Manitoba, that there is an obligation for the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) to do whatever he can to ensure that we are moving in the right direction.

I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Minister of Highways and Transportation said, well, we could not accept this resolution because it had that one WHEREAS. I am assuming that the "WHEREAS" he was referring to is that in 1988 the New Democratic Party leaked Canadian National Railway plans to cut more than 8,000 jobs over the next 10 years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if that is the part that the government opposes, they could have quite easily deleted that particular WHEREAS and allowed the resolution to come to a debate.

What I am curious about, and I am hoping that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Driedger)—my

colleague the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) is over there persuading him to comment on the resolution, the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED. That is where I am most interested in: What are the minister's comments regarding putting together this all-party task force? That is what I am interested in hearing from the Minister of Transportation.

You put the WHEREAS to the side, and every one of them with that one possible exception is a valid WHEREAS. Let us just put the WHEREASES to the side and deal with the resolution where it is asking the government to put forward the task force.

Having said that, I will sit down and thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record and hope that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Driedger) will in fact deal with the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that has been put forward from the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin).

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased actually that I have the opportunity to participate in this debate.

I want to indicate though that I feel a little critical of the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) in the way he brought forward the resolution. I think this issue is so important that if he had worded it a little right and rethought some of the WHEREASES in there that probably everybody could have been supportive of it.

What he has done, he has tried to play politics with it and I think that is fair. If he really had been sincere, the issue is so important that I think that it should have really been developed in such a way that we could all feel supportive of it, and that is not the case, because when he is starting to be critical in there, how do you expect the support of this party?

I mean, it just does not work that way, but I will tell you something. I would like to tell especially some of the new members that the history of Churchill, if anybody wants to look at the whole issue over a period of time, it is something that there is a lot of discussion, there is a lot of history in there, and we are at the most crucial stage of the future of Churchill right now.

I just want to make one little comment here before I get into this, that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was making some reference about some of his kinfolk having worked for CN, et cetera, and felt that that was some kind of allegiance about

his concern about it. If that was the case, I would have to indicate, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I was a fireman for CN for some time, so I have had my involvement with CN at the grassroots.

That has nothing to do with the problem we are facing right now. I want to indicate, and my colleague the Minister of Industry and Tourism spoke on the general aspects of, you know, the transportation aspect of it. I think we are pushing very hard for the fact, in trying to highlight in terms of industry, tourism, transportation that we are the hub of the country. We are actually the hub of North America to some degree in terms of our location and as such basically had advantages when CN established, and we still have.

* (1740)

As was indicated before, we have the major shops for CN and CP in this province, and we have 13 percent of the total population for the rails in Manitoba out of a population where I think we are 4 percent or whatever the case may be. So we have an advantage there.

We have been struggling very hard and promoting very strongly the fact that we should retain, that we should be treated fairly. The fact that CN and CP are rationalizing their operations—and I want to indicate a recent CN study disclosed that CN had the worst productivity record of the eight major railways studied and that it also has an excessive number of administrative employees. So, when they do some rationalization, they have to be competitive. They have to be competitive, and what we are saying is that we want to make sure that if they do cut back, that we get treated fairly, as fair as everybody else, that we do not have jobs moving from here to Alberta.

(Madam Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

I will tell you something, if you want to really look at the figures, Montreal and Quebec have suffered dramatically worse than we have done in this case. To this point, we are being treated fairly, you know, compared to the other provinces, and I can get the details in terms of how much everybody else has lost and how much we have lost. We have done well.

That is small comfort to the people who lose. But I want to indicate that I do not think the time is long enough for me to really go into this whole aspect of Churchill and CN. I am looking forward during the

Estimates process where we can spend time in terms of really going at it.

I just want to give a little bit of a case history because there is no comfort for me in the fact that we have one year's operation left in Churchill, or that they have given us and said we will operate for one year. That means nothing. Basically, the challenge right now for us is to fight hard to make sure that we have an ongoing commitment, not a one-year commitment.

What happened, and why we have this situation develop is because the federal minister indicated a decision on Churchill will be made before this shipping season, and then we continue to start lobbying on them. I had the privilege of bringing Shirley Martin out who is responsible for grain transportation. She is a junior minister, state of transport, and she is the one that is in charge of grain transportation and also Churchill. I brought her out last year and took her to Churchill to show her first-hand, and when we came back she gave me the commitment that no decision would be made until they had all the facts and that we would have input as a province. All the affected people would have input in the decision making.

I have to indicate, I think we have to be very concerned and organized in terms of our presentation because we have, in my mind, six months before the final decisions on Churchill get made. I am doing everything I can in terms of meeting with the federal government, meeting with the rail lines and meeting with the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board is the big element in here that has a big role to play because the Wheat Board has been strangling Churchill on an ongoing basis. I can tell you and make a commitment to all members in this House, that within the next month there is going to be a fight with the—not a fight, I am going to ask the Wheat Board to co-operate with us based on the grain sales to Russia, that we have a fair amount of movement through the Port of Churchill. Realistically, I want 750,000 tonnes committed to go through Churchill this year. The Wheat Board is the key player at this stage of the game, and I will be working very actively with them.

I also indicate that next week Monday the Hudson Bay Route Association is having a meeting in Yorkton. I intend to be there. I do not know whether a critic is coming or not. I know the critic from the Liberals is prepared to come along at that time, and last year I extended an invitation to my colleagues

and we all went down together because I think we all work together on this.

The reason why I put that out as a little—the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), my critic, knows why I say I am asking whether he is coming or not, because I am prepared to talk to him about it, but I have a concern that I want to raise.

However, I want to indicate that I have sometimes felt as if I am alone fighting for Churchill because—I mean not alone in the sense from our government here, but the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has mandated me to fight and do everything I can to make sure that the Churchill line stays.

The enemies that we have—and you have to understand that the private grain companies are all opposed to Churchill, CN is opposed to Churchill, the ports people basically say, yes, we are prepared to go with it, but we have so many enemies out there. The Wheat Board is a key in this thing, and whom do they report to? They should report to the producers. Basically, they are working for the producers. Where are the producers in this case? I am going to challenge the producers of western Canada at the Hudson Bay Route Association meeting next Monday and say, you get off your duff and you tell us whether you want Churchill or not, because they have not been doing that. The grain companies, basically, have not been doing that. So we have, all of us, major decisions to make.

Reference has been made here that we should have an all-party committee. We tried that the first year we were in. We started off with good intentions that had representatives from the NDP and from the Liberals and from ourselves. We sat together as a group, and after the second meeting the whole thing blew up. Everybody was playing their politics with it. Everybody was playing politics, so we disbanded it. I will tell you something, I think we all have a concern here. I do not think there is any member in this House that is opposed to Churchill. I do not think so. How we do it is a matter of, I suppose, choices.

I will tell you something, I have a commitment to Churchill and I am going to fight for Churchill. There is going to be a lot of dust flying before this decision is going to be made this fall. I ask members to support, I ask all of us in this House to support, you know, our position on Churchill because I say, there is no comfort in the fact that we have one year of operating. We have to have a long-term

commitment. I have been working and pushing for a long-term commitment with the federal government on Churchill since the day I got into office. What have I got? I have got exactly zippo.

If we can get the Wheat Board to move grain through there, based on the fact that we have 125 million tonnes of grain shipped to Churchill, the Canadians are financing it, so we should be able to dictate the fact that they should be able to take it up to Churchill. There are so many issues that are involved with this whole thing that I find that this resolution—I think the intention of the resolution that the member put forward is not that bad. I think that he should have maybe thought it through a little bit so that we could all take and jointly support it.

The fact that it has been amended does not mean anything as far as I am concerned for the simple reason that I think that by and large we will have the debate here. We will discuss it, and I am prepared to work with members of both opposition parties in terms of if you want information where it is at, my door has always been open. You can come and ask me. I will give you everything I have. I think both critics—I have offered this many times. If you need information, I will tell you exactly what I am doing. If you have advice you want to give me—but this business of an all-party committee going out to see the Prime Minister, I will tell you something, I think we are not at that stage at the present time. Because I think that we have to see what the federal government, once they bring forward accurate information—because accurate information has not been available, Madam Deputy Speaker, to any one of us, not from CN, not from the federal government.

We have to have accurate information so that we can say, is it cheaper to ship through Churchill? What is our cost shipping through Churchill? We also have to talk with the Russians in terms of making sure that they want to pick up grain, because we have a five-year agreement, five years, not one year, if we get the Russians to say they will take the grain through there. Or if the Wheat Board would say to the Russians, we are financing you, you pick up the grain through Churchill, at least 750,000 tonnes—which then makes the port viable. With CN, of course, they would like to give us their line for a buck, and that is why I had my arguments with the critic, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), when he says we should all hold hands and jointly help financing the operations of the line. I say no; I will fight that to the last breath because that is

offering exactly what the federals want. You are offering them an offload, and I will not accept that offload. I will fight that.

They have their responsibilities for Churchill, and they have to honour that, and we will fight for that. But to start saying that we are going to offer them money to help support the line is foolhardy, and I will be critical of that member every time he gets up and speaks and says he is supporting the federal government in terms of closing Churchill or taking the offload from them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I get pretty emotional with this subject here because this has been my Achilles' heel since the day I got into office. It has been the government's Achilles' heel, and I think we have to all be very concerned about that, not just for the jobs, for the services.

One final comment I want to make to the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). He made reference to the native communities that are affected by the line that has shut down. I want to encourage him and his people to put forward a very strong position to the federal government in terms of the importance of that line. I have not heard that from you people there, so I need to have that come from the native community in terms of the importance of that line. Where has it been?

I mean, I know the communities are affected, but where is his support that you talked about? I know the impact it has there. I need to have action from you. You have a very strong lobby group and you have a strong voice there, bring that forward. Bring it forward to the feds and bring it forward to us here, and we will use that.

Anyway, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know we have a long way to go with this. I just suggest again that for the future that if we have issues when it is nonpolitical, and should be a nonpolitical issue of this nature, that we should take and maybe draft our resolutions in such a way that it can be supported by everybody and which would have more effect rather than playing games.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (1750)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I am sure if the Minister for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) did not want to listen to this, he has the opportunity to leave the Chamber. His comments indicated he was not going to be interested in this topic. It is somewhat typical of his government in general.

To go back to the subject at hand, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a very, very important issue for the province of Manitoba, for the people of northern Manitoba and for all of the employees who are employed in the railway jobs in the province of Manitoba. The minister has made many comments about the Port of Churchill and what it means to Manitoba, and I will get to that in a moment. But I must refer to some of the press clippings that have been taking place in this province and in this city during the term of the minister's tenure as Minister of Highways and Transportation: Good productivity earns layoffs. Notices for 117 at CN Transcona Shops. Workers derailed by CN. Transport hub dying, report says.

There are many, many transportation problems in this province, not all of them brought about as a result of this Manitoba minister's doing, but has a lot to do with the role that this provincial government in conjunction with their federal cousins, and the decisions that are being made on a national level and how they are impacting the employment opportunities for us in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I myself have—[interjection] Madam Deputy Speaker, CN jobs in this province have been historically very, very important to us, and they still are important. That is why we are fighting so hard to make sure that they remain in this province. When I was an employee of CN rail, when I first started, we had over 100,000 employees across the CN system in this country. The current employment level of CN now across this country is some 30,000 jobs—over a 70,000 job drop, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That trend is still continuing, and as is pointed out in this resolution, when Bill Blaikie, the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg-Transcona, leaked a document that had been brought to his attention showing that there was going to be some 8,000 jobs lost as a result of CN's cutbacks and downsizing—rightsizing they call it now—the government took no steps to correct that, to protect those jobs. We continue to see the job erosion of the CN jobs in this province. We see 18 from the real estate division being moved to Alberta. We see the other sectors in the equipment repairs moving to Alberta. There are many functions within CN that are moving out of this province.

We have lost 75 jobs back in 1990, another 117 in 1991. On top of that we had a 1,500-person layoff last year, and we are expecting another

1,300-person layoff this year. On top of that, they have cut management staff out of this province as well, 125 positions.

So when we take a look at the job losses, they are very, very significant for us in this province. That is why we on this side of the House are fighting so hard to retain those jobs in this province, because they have historically been good-paying jobs.

I listened very intently to the comments that were made by the Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Stefanson), and he talked about the 5,700 CN jobs that were in the province of Manitoba.

Then I take a look at the comments of one Charlie Mayer, our illustrious federal minister from this province. We are not sure whose interests he is representing. Manitoba's Minister of Industry and Trade talks about 5,700 jobs. Charlie Mayer talks about 5,200 jobs. Now, why is there a discrepancy in the figures here? Whose figures are right and whose figures are wrong? It leaves a lot of doubt in my mind on the type of juggling that is taking place here.

One of the comments that the Minister of Industry and Trade made, talking about the reduction in fuel taxes for the railways, where it was reduced from 13.6 cents a litre to 12.6 cents, I believe that was brought about and forced upon the government, to a degree, as a result of CP Rail's decision to divert rail traffic around the province of Manitoba, but the question that I have for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is: What long-term commitments did he get for job protection for the railway industry in this province?

I bet you, Madam Deputy Speaker, not one job is protected by that tax reduction for the railways. We are going to continue to lose jobs in the railway sector. Employed at the Transcona shops currently are some 1,900 employees. At the CP Weston shops there are 630 jobs, a far cry from what it was in years past, and we are going to continue to see an erosion of those jobs.

The Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) talks about Churchill and its meaning to the province of Manitoba. I think the minister, who has been up there a number of times, has a feel for what is happening in Churchill. I think he is sincere to some degree when he tells us that he is fighting for Churchill and to try and retain the jobs there, but I do not believe in my own heart that this minister has the support of his caucus colleagues when it

comes to Churchill or the northern communities in this province.

The minister likes to talk boldly about the 300 direct jobs and possibly the 1,000 to 1,500 spin-off jobs that could come about as a result of the rocket range reactivation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I made my proposal to the federal Minister of Transport, the two federal Ministers of Transport, some months ago, when I proposed a cost-sharing arrangement, a partnership arrangement—because I can see this as our last window of opportunity to make some inroads to ensure Churchill's long-time future.

If we do not take those steps now and play a role in that partnership arrangement, we are going to lose that window of opportunity, while this minister sits in his chair and dithers, not taking any concrete actions or coming forward with any concrete proposals to solve this problem.

Some Honourable Members: Dithers, dithers.

Mr. Reid: You like that word.

If the minister spent his time convincing his caucus colleagues and his federal colleagues about the merits of Churchill and had them go around the province and the country explaining the good points about Churchill, and quit being negative about it, like Charlie Mayer has done to the Port of Churchill at meetings in the last month, Madam Deputy Speaker, where he accused the port of Churchill of being responsible for ice damage to grain vessels coming in to load. He does not have a clue, Madam Deputy Speaker. The ice damage that occurred on those vessels happened in the St. Lawrence.

An Honourable Member: That is close to Churchill, is it not?

Mr. Reid: Pretty close. It is only a little over 1,200 miles away but that is close enough for Charlie Mayer, I suppose.

He goes around spreading, a Manitoba minister goes around spreading false information about a port in his own province, his own home province—what a disgusting sign of a minister, a federal minister who is supposed to be representing the people of Manitoba and their interests.

Yet I do not hear the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) condemning the statements by this minister. He sits quietly in his office and his chair here refusing to take any actions to have this federal minister censured.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I can see that this minister here is not interested in a partnership arrangement. We had a \$93-million ERDA agreement in this province that was negotiated by the New Democratic Howard Pawley government. Yet this minister here refuses to recognize that that was a partnership role at the same time, and that he could also take a similar action to strike a partnership arrangement with the federal government.

The plan that I had proposed, Madam Deputy Speaker, was a minimal impact on the capital cost expenditures for this minister's department, some \$3 million per year per partner, spread over three or four years. That is why I made that proposal, as I can see that may be our last window of opportunity.

Yet this minister continues to berate those who come forward with constructive criticisms and suggestions in this House, something that they continually call for and say they never get, and yet when we come forward with those ideas, they refuse to accept them. They would rather condemn them than accept them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wrote a letter to this Minister of Highways and Transportation, telling him that I did not condone off-loading by the federal government onto this province or onto any other jurisdiction in this country. This is a partnership arrangement. We have had it in the past under the ERDA agreements and we can have it again if this minister would take that suggestion and go forward to Ottawa and have his department have meetings to discuss ways we could bring that into being.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., I am interrupting proceedings according to the rules. When this motion is again before the House, the honourable member for Transcona will have five minutes remaining.

I am leaving the Chair, with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. in the Committee of Supply.

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Monday, April 6, 1992

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